**Shared Histories and Commemorative Extension: Warsaw's POLIN Museum**

**Bryce Lease**

On a walking tour of the Warsaw Ghetto, my Polish tour guide began, "I want to tell you about the Jewish quarter," and then paused, changing his mind. "The *former* Jewish quarter," he corrected himself. Muranów is a complex palimpsest of pasts and genealogies, a place where for hundreds of years Polish Jews lived and thrived, and where they were later corralled, starved, murdered, and transported to death camps. At the conclusion of the Ghetto Uprising in spring 1943, when Jews fought in the face of certain death and extermination, the Nazis completely obliterated the district, block by block. All that remained was a "moonscape of rubble, piled sixteen feet high, covering hundreds of acres."[[1]](#endnote-1) On top of the rubble, a postwar, ethnically Polish, socialist neighborhood was constructed. Today, there exists a line of monuments to Polish Jews that form a memory pattern across this scarred terrain.

 For contemporary visitors to Warsaw, this district is a mnemonic puzzle. Many know what has occurred on this site to lesser or greater extents--some historical knowledge or shared or collective memories have likely brought them to visit Muranów--and yet amongst the memorials the traces of former Jewish life and the atrocities of the Holocaust can seem frustratingly difficult to detect. How and where does one look for the past? In the period of postwar reconstruction these substantial layers of rubble that served as evidence of Jewish extermination presented a crucial ideological problem. The rebuilding of Muranów was attended by particular feelings of shame, embarrassment, indignity, and even indifference from ethnic Poles. Should one rebuild the district as a memorial to the painful past or as an optimistic expression of the future? In other words, clear away the rubble of the ghetto or use it as a foundation for reconstruction? This question has dominated the construction of Warsaw's postwar memorial landscape, whose newest addition, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, has revivified symbolic investments in the district's architectural destruction and the absence of its Jewish populations. Topographically, the significance of the museum is signified through the centrality of its location in the district and its proximity to Nathan Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes erected in 1948. POLIN's head curator, performance-studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, described the museum as the completion of the memorial complex of Muranów, the district that made up the majority of the Warsaw Ghetto from 1940-43.[[2]](#endnote-2)

[Insert Fig 1 here]

I have visited Muranów on many occasions over the past fifteen years as part of my research into Polish cultural and social performance and politics, which has included a particular focus on the representations and embodiments of Polish/Jewish relations. This has resulted in my observation of, and participation in, multiple commemoration rituals on the site. Given its position and relationship to the monument, I anticipated POLIN would function as a memorial museum dedicated to the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto. However, the focus in POLIN Museum on historical narrative and Jewish presence in Poland over a millennium offered an innovative alternative to what Paul Williams has defined as *memorial museums*, which are "dedicated to a [specific or particular] historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind."[[3]](#endnote-3) Seeking to find points of overlap between history and memorial museums, I will analyze how POLIN's establishment of a public historical record and narrative in a museum environment that promotes and encourages the memorialization of Jewish life invited me to revisit and engage differently with the district. Sites memorialized in the surrounding vicinity converge around a shared form of commemoration of Jewish resistance, suffering, death, and extermination. These include Umschlagplatz, where ghettoized Jews assembled for transportation to Treblinka; Ulica Miła 18, a hidden shelter that functioned as the headquarters of the Jewish Combat Organization (ŻOB), a Jewish resistance group in the Warsaw Ghetto, many of whom committed mass suicide when the bunker was discovered by the Nazis during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; and the infamous Pawiak Prison, which was used by the Gestapo from 1939, forming part of the Nazi concentration camp system and later serving as an assault base for the Nazis during the Ghetto Uprising. The museum required me to reconsider how I moved through and interpreted the district in relation to these surrounding memorials, which commemoratively positioned Muranów exclusively as a site of death and genocide rather than one of historical Jewish presence.[[4]](#endnote-4)

POLIN Museum is entangled within complex processes of nation building that galvanize the past in an effort to produce the future, thus redetermining and redirecting the present. Mãlina Ciocea and Alexandru Cârlan observed that history museums "are places where public memory is built as a symbolic and political resource both through exhibits and deliberation on the meanings of history," where meaning is invoked both through categorization and the consequentiality of the museum "in and for the social and ideological context."[[5]](#endnote-5) As with any history museum, POLIN redeems particular forms of heritage, propagates its own understandings of the past, and appeals to historical memory that is either still an active constituent in the formation of collective memory or which has been neglected, ignored, eschewed, or forgotten. In her discussion of POLIN Museum as a "theatre of history," Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that until the museum "opened its doors to the public in 2013, one honored those who perished by remembering how they died--at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes. Today, we can honor them, and those who came before and after, by remembering how they lived--at the museum."[[6]](#endnote-6) My contention is that POLIN Museum does not function exclusively as either a site of history or a site of memory, which Pierre Nora famously conceptualized as discrete categories--the former produced through the motivation to learn historical knowledge and the latter through a will or injunction to remember.[[7]](#endnote-7) Rather, the museum harmonizes commemoration with historical learning and curiosity, wherein memory and history are generatively overlapping and mutually informed.

In this article, I analyze POLIN Museum in its relational engagements with Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes to demonstrate how commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto and the victims of the Holocaust penetrates the entirety of the museum's historical narrative. This museum, I argue, encourages the visitor to honor both the dead and the history of the living, thus making commemoration and learning mutually generative. Placing historical consciousness in a commemorative frame that extends memory across multiethnic groups, I argue that POLIN Museum offers a *shared* history, which is constructed through its wider relations to the memorial terrain of the former Warsaw Ghetto and its architectural and design forms. Contrasting POLIN with the Warsaw Uprising Museum, I consider how a commemorative register can engage with a museum's use of theatricality to activate visitors as historical agents and critical interpreters of the past. My aim is to demonstrate how POLIN Museum extends the scope of--and breaks down perceived binaries between--history museums, memorial museums, and monuments.

**Commemorative Extension**

[Insert Fig 2 here]

The establishment of authenticity is one crucial mode for museums to assert and propagate a particular version or account of the past. For many museums, authenticity is predicated on a collection of original historical objects. Breaking with this tradition, I would suggest that POLIN, a museum that is object poor as result of the Holocaust, establishes authenticity through its relation to the monument and to its historical site in Muranów. I am particularly interested in how the production of authenticity through site offers new insights into the imbrications between history and memory. Historian Daniel J. Sherman has noted that museums traditionally have stressed "their 'historical' rather than commemorative or celebratory orientation in seeking to justify their enterprise."[[8]](#endnote-8) In POLIN Museum, however, the historical is encountered *through* the commemorative. By first setting out how the architectural history of Muranów and Rapoport's monument sets up visitor expectations of the museum, I want to argue that history in the museum is experienced within the discursive space of loss and mourning. Here, categories of memorial and museal are not opposed to another but are productively in flux. History and memory, and learning and mourning, cannot be easily divided between the monument and the history museum. While memorials have traditionally acted as "staging points for mourning,"[[9]](#endnote-9) conjoining personal and historical consciousness, POLIN Museum offers a new function for history museums by taking up this task in its relational positioning to site and monument.

After the conclusion of the Second World War, the first attempt at reconstruction of the Muranów district was imagined by the modernist, avant-garde architect Bohdan Lachert, whose design concepts offered unembellished, purposeful buildings integrated with generous green spaces. The foundations of these housing complexes were to be made from a mixture of the ghetto rubble and concrete, while the façades would be constructed solely of exposed red brick. As historian Michael Meng observed, Lachert's buildings "infused the modernist future with the past" in his combining of functional accommodation with a memorial to the extermination of Polish Jews, a form of architecture that effectively "dramatized Rapoport's monument" and successfully conjoined Polish and Jewish memory without producing a hierarchy of suffering.[[10]](#endnote-10) The refusal to produce a hierarchy of ethnic suffering that split Jews and Poles demonstrated a deliberate effort on Lachert's part to produce a multiethnic socialist future. In this project, the incorporation of the rubble was an explicit attempt to think about regeneration as linked to and incorporating destruction. It was an architectural venture that cast the past in the present as an incongruent unity to generate a reordered vision of a shared future.

However, given the rapidly shifting political ideologies of the immediate postwar era, which included the implementation of Stalinism and Soviet-enforced communism, Lachert's project was doomed. The mandate of Socialist Realism was embedded in Poland by 1949-50, which foreclosed any such commitment to inclusive memory in favor of socialist-inflected ideals of beauty, scale, and political significance. As a result of architect Jerzy Wierzbicki's searing attack and antagonistic stance towards Lachert's designs, the buildings were stuccoed and painted in an effort to efface their gloominess and to make the Muranów district "a cheerful, bright, and colorful place for the working class."[[11]](#endnote-11) The rubble was the ideological counterpoint to the stucco, which offered a positive expression for the future of the Polish proletariat that insulated against a past that did not fit with the ideals or representational indices of an emergent socialist Warsaw. In this district, regenerated life and communist triumph were both directly and tacitly emphasized.

[Insert Fig 3 here]

 On the fifth anniversary of the Jewish uprising in 1948, before reconstruction on the site commenced, Rapoport's Monument to the Ghetto Heroes was installed amongst the ruins. As Lachert would later attempt to do in postwar architecture, Rapoport, a Polish Jew, incorporated the rubble of the ghetto into the foundation of the monument, making it a manifestation of memory as much as its aesthetic evocation. Historian James E. Young claimed that Rapoport's monument has emerged as possibly the "most widely known, celebrated, and controversial" of all Holocaust memorials despite its heroic statuary receiving criticism for its ideological ("proletarian pap") and aesthetic ("kitsch figuration") failings.[[12]](#endnote-12) Rapoport was unyielding about the location of the monument, which he wanted to be placed on the site of the uprising's first armed conflict and where, later, one of its leaders, Mordechai Anielewicz, died in his bunker. One side of the monument depicts the heroes of the uprising, while the opposing side portrays Jewish martyrs retreating with heads bowed, a procession representative of Jewish exile. The placement of the monument on this site had further implications for the reconstruction of Warsaw. Given that this was the first significant architectural edifice built on the rubble, the monument was no less than *the* anchor point for future urban reconstruction, though, given the shortage of building materials and financial resources, city planners were anxious whether they could, as Young has suggested, "politically afford to reconstruct the entire city around a Jewish monument."[[13]](#endnote-13) While Alison Landsberg argued that monuments traditionally offered a stable shared recognition of the past that serves as a "bulwark against further social upheaval,"[[14]](#endnote-14) the Rapoport monument stands as a crucial point of countermemory in relation to the stuccoed and painted housing complexes that surround it. It is therefore no surprise that this became a primary public space for collective assemblage and served as a politically eruptive site for the communist state that attempted to control acts of dissenting commemoration that proliferated around the monument.

The performances of atonement and protest that Rapoport's monument has generated suggest a complex relationship between memory and history, and between mourning and monumentality. The state has historically been unable to contain the memories invoked by monument at both official and unofficial commemorative events. These include the commemoration of members of the Bund, a secular Jewish socialist movement, shot by the Soviets at the conclusion of the Second World War; the "Warschauer Kniefall," when German Chancellor Willy Brandt dropped to his knees in an act of humility and reparation as a gesture of penance for German culpability in the Jewish genocide as well as an indication of his commitment to *Ostpolitik* that attempted to forge postwar diplomatic bridges between Germany and Eastern Europe; Pope John Paul II's act of commemoration that, by extension, was a way of remembering Polish resistance to Nazi occupation; the Solidarity Movement's defiant commemoration that signaled a desire to reenact the uprising against communist oppressors; the Palestinian Liberation Organization's commemoration that uncomfortably signaled the end of the Jewish ghetto as the beginning of their persecution; and, most recently, the funeral of Mark Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, that placed emphasis on his choice to remain in Poland after the Holocaust, and the 1968 anti-Semitic purges by the communist authorities.[[15]](#endnote-15) One memory does not take away from or erase another; rather, they are added in such a way as to produce a palimpsestic cacophony. The excess or surplus of memory that Rapoport's monument proliferates (rather than contains or congeals) leads to the indefinite and uncontrollable management of memory and commemoration. The key point for my argument is that while these forms and purposes of commemoration dramatically differ from one another, they are all refracted through the lens of Holocaust commemoration in their reliance on Rapoport's monument. I would contend that this is also true for POLIN Museum. While curators have articulated a relation between the monument and museum that is complementary but also conceptually distinctive, I would suggest that Polish Jewish history is refracted through Holocaust commemoration because of the museum's site and its foundational relationality to the monument.

[Insert Fig 4 here]

Rapoport's monument forms both the beginning and the endpoint of any visit to the museum. Visitors first see the monument before walking through the front door and, in a circular movement, again stand before it when exiting the museum. In the circulation through the core exhibition's historical narrative, my relationship to the memory of the site changed. The monument thus penetrates and orients the museum. Once the center of Jewish life in Warsaw, the Nazi occupation of Poland made Muranów into a primal scene of mass suffering, where--as one survivor remarked at the conclusion of the Second World War--"[e]very stone, every heap of rubble is a reminder of the Holocaust."[[16]](#endnote-16) Unlike many history museums, then, POLIN's geographical positioning prompts deeply felt concerns over its forms of representation and curated displays. The architecture of POLIN Museum building and its interior designs offer a polyvalent and open-ended understanding of history and memory. From the initial conceptual plans, there was a distinct effort not to reduce the history of the Polish Jews to a lesson in (in)tolerance or to scale down Jewish presence to a footnote of *Polish* history. Equally, curators were anxious not to misrepresent shared history as a common history or to understand a relational history as a history of Polish/Jewish relations.[[17]](#endnote-17) These distinctions were crucial to the museum's architectural and exhibitionary designs. The Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki was particularly attentive to the scale, materiality, and symbolic value of Rapoport's monument when conceiving his entry into the public competition to design POLIN Museum, which were key factors in the selection of his design.[[18]](#endnote-18) While the minimalist exterior of the building reflects both the dimensions of the monument and the broader architectural environment in which it was built, the visitor is invited to revel in the visual experience of the dramatic and highly abstracted interior. The tall pale walls, which are animated by light from what is currently the largest (hanging) window in Poland, soar upwards in soft, voluminous waves. Sculptural, flowing shapes are used in place of hard angles or sharp corners. The political strategy of the curators is embedded in the interior design that suggests "reflection, transparency, and openness,"[[19]](#endnote-19) and the high ceiling of the foyer is crowned with a bridge that metaphorically forges a link between the visitor and the history of Polish Jews, while also acknowledging the Holocaust as a (crossable) temporal chasm that bifurcates the historical narrative.

[Insert Fig 5 here]

The museum building reproduces the scale of the postwar blocks, but its symbolic façade made of glass fins with the word POLIN inscribed across its surfaces figures differently than Lachert's original project, whose red bricks--filled with the rubble of the ghetto--represented the space "soaked with the blood of the Jewish nation."[[20]](#endnote-20) In POLIN Museum's façade, rebirth rather than death emerges as the major component of its intended symbolism, the wave-like opening in the glass fins suggests both the biblical story of Moses parting the Red Sea, an analogy for Jewish survival, and simultaneously the Holocaust as a break in historical continuity that does not resume but nevertheless persists. There is no single interpretation that solves the foyer's design ambiguities, no readymade narration on offer. Dariusz Stola, the museum's director, argues that looking for meaning is productive because visitors need metaphors to help them contemplate and process the past.[[21]](#endnote-21) Windows open out from the foyer onto the surrounding park and apartment buildings. The outside permeates this part of the museum's interior in a mode that is not possible in the permanent exhibition, which is confined to the subterranean level. The entrance foyer is a transitional space; it offers a relationship to the future--in this sense, the concern over memory in the design is generative rather than representational--and a new way of interpreting the past in a present gesture, thus offering a potential transformation of cultural memory. This is a kind of architectural construction that compels one to move forward, the visitor's eyes tracing the undulating and infinite lines and curves that refuse climax; it is exploratory and unconfined.

POLIN's architectural design both contrasts with Rapoport's determination to cast literal human figures in his monument as an effort to connect with and stimulate the memories of the wider public (indeed, he saw epic realism as the condition of a public monument) and it also offers an alternative narrative of "hope and life" to the Jewish Museum Berlin, which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has described as "Holocaust through and through": jagged, fractured, severe, and made of brutal materials such as concrete and zinc, which highlights "violence and void."[[22]](#endnote-22) Museum narratives are also constructed through the global networks in which they participate, and POLIN was not intended to participate in such networks as the Jewish Museum Warsaw. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has observed that Jewish museums are commonly immigration museums "by another name," while in Israel they are almost entirely national museums, and in Europe they are in effect Holocaust museums that are built on axes of genocide rather than Jewish history.[[23]](#endnote-23)

Yet, Holocaust museums themselves--many of which are not in situ--have become global paradigms for museums that do not exhibit the Jewish genocide but which display and transmit painful pasts through affective encounters. Indeed, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is one of the most recognizable examples of the emergent trend in international museums to construct historical narrative and pedagogical encounter that is predicated on affect. The emphasis of affect may override historical knowledge and specificity, as exemplified by the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance, which deploys the Holocaust as an interpretive frame for broader understandings of human rights narratives that are shored up by highly emotive encounters. As the German literary theorist Andreas Huyssen has argued, the Holocaust is losing its indexical quality and has begun to function as a "metaphor for other traumatic histories and memories,"[[24]](#endnote-24) and the same is now also true of globalized museum display practices. History museums not only display historical events but also actively engage in the ongoing work of preventing the reemergence of atrocity. This is the well-known appeal to "never again" that is the ultimate pedagogical horizon of Holocaust museums. Currently, narrative museums also recognize that historical knowledge itself is not a sufficient aim; indeed, history unadulterated by memory can be concatenate with a betrayal of the dead.

For many international visitors to POLIN Museum the pedagogical and commemorative aims of Holocaust museums may be a primary point of reference, even if an implicit or instinctive one, and the journey through the museum may appear to be inflected by strategies of display and immersion used to embody Holocaust historical narratives that the museum curators did not intend. The curators were concerned that the Holocaust is overdetermining and, in reflecting backwards, has the power to reinscribe and potentially co-opt Polish Jewish history. If the genocide becomes the primary referent, they feared, history would be experienced by the museum visitor as a graspable totality with the Holocaust as a teleological certainty. The problem is therefore how to prevent the visitor from experiencing the Jewish genocide within this experiential history environment as inevitable. For the curators, the question of engaging with Jewish life requires the suspension of knowledge of the Holocaust in the chronologically ordered exhibition. Stola emphasized the importance of the visitor's experience of "not knowing what comes next," which mirrors that of the historical agent who, unable to see into the future, must negotiate the demands, expectations, and decisions of the present moment as shaped and co-determined by the past without a guaranteed or predictable outcome.[[25]](#endnote-25) Scenographically, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues this is accomplished by "keeping the horizon in front of the visitor short, just as it was for those in the period, who could not see into the future."[[26]](#endnote-26) This sceongraphic suspension of knowledge demonstrates the Holocaust as historically determined, but not as a predestined or inexorable certainty.

Even if the museum attempts to avoid a teleology of the Holocaust, visitors not only know where these cataclysmic historical events are placed on the chronological timeline, but they also move in a circular motion that begins and ends at the monument, which makes it impossible to fully engage the mandate of suspending knowledge. What's more, the relationship between Jewish history and memory of the Holocaust is ambiguously figured in the opening installation of POLIN's permanent exhibition, the Forest Gallery, which channels memory through metaphor before introducing the visitor to historical narrative. This gallery is composed of a digital installation of a forest that is intended to signify the "Polin myth" of Jewish arrival, acceptance, and endurance in Poland.[[27]](#endnote-27) However, for some visitors the forest explicitly evokes sites of Jewish genocide where Jews were shot and buried in mass graves, or sites of former death camps such as Treblinka. Such sites conjoin the image of the forest with the mass death of Jews rather than Jewish refuge. I would suggest the ambiguity and polyvalence of this gallery's central metaphor with its multiple interpretive possibilities further reinforces a commemorative register as the overriding framework for experiencing the historical, chronological narrative that covers 960CE to the present.[[28]](#endnote-28)

Rather than asking visitors to suspend historical knowledge, I would argue that it may be more productive to consider social anthropologist Paul Connerton's distinction between histories of mourning and legitimating histories. These categories offer a useful mode of distinguishing between a history museum like POLIN and its ideological and representational counterpart, the Warsaw Uprising Museum. While the latter museum attempts to legitimate the suffering of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising through brash displays of ethnically Polish heroism, the former functions as a turn to history in the absence of transnational bereavement customs. Though history is differently understood in POLIN and the Warsaw Uprising Museum, in both museums it is displayed and narrated as a bereavement custom. As Connerton has argued, "people turn to histories in order to cope with an otherwise uncontainable experience of loss."[[29]](#endnote-29) The fact that the monument casts a melancholic shadow over the shared histories between ethnic Poles and Polish Jews and their most joyful or laudable achievements displayed in the core exhibition further reinforces this encounter within the frame of a commemorative ritual.

POLIN Museum then counters any that claim that museums, as opposed to monuments and memorials, construe history as "scientific" rather than commemorative.[[30]](#endnote-30) In the disjunctures between the embodied acts of affectively experiencing the displays and objects, and the tensions between the visibility and invisibility of the site (between the foyer and the galleries) the visitor has an opportunity to engage in historical education, connecting mourning (monument) to the awakening of a historical consciousness (museum), which are not incompatible but mutually generative.

**Feeling History**

I would now like to turn to the question of affect in the history museum in order to consider how they can be employed in either critical or obfuscatory manners. Keeping in mind Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's claim that POLIN is a "theatre of history," I will consider how affective registers in museums engage with historical learning in complex ways that can be differentiated between theatrical and theatricality. Emotional engagement is also important for Alison Landsberg, who argues in *Prosthetic Memory* that experiential encounters in museums invite the visitor to adopt certain memories into their consciousness, which may have the ability to (re)shape their subjectivity and political positioning. Landsberg theorizes "prosthetic memory" as a phenomenon that "emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site."[[31]](#endnote-31) This encounter has the potential to suture the spectator or visitor within a larger history, which is not limited to apprehension but the adaptation of "a more personal, deeply felt memory" of a past through which they did not live.[[32]](#endnote-32) What's more, the transmission of memory is not essentialist. The spectator or the visitor encountering and adopting memory within the available forms of mass cultural technologies does not have an authentic claim to it, and the transmission of memory is predicated neither on the bounds of kinship ties nor on claims of biological ancestry. As a result, memory is untethered from particular ethnic or familial groups and becomes transportable. Prosthetic memory starts from the point of difference rather than recognition or similarity. The transportability of memory might then, Landsberg argues, "serve as the grounds for unexpected alliances across chasms of difference," in which disparate groups "feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the 'other.'"[[33]](#endnote-33) In this way, Landsberg's concept works in tandem with Marianne Hirsch's argument that identification must resist appropriation and uphold difference. The reader, spectator or museumgoer must retain the "otherness of the other."[[34]](#endnote-34)

While Landsberg is a proponent of affective engagement in the museum, Jens Andermann and Silke Arnold-de Simine are skeptical of an overreliance on empathy that could prevent reflective criticality. Andermann and Arnold-de Siminie argue persuasively that empathetic identification requires a sanitization or banalization of suffering that makes violence palatable for museum visitors.[[35]](#endnote-35) The difficulty is that the opposite is also ethically problematic. The gruesome and explicit portrayal of suffering not only places pressure on the boundaries of good taste and decorum, it is also questionable whether such depictions are pedagogical or merely promote unreflective voyeuristic display and enjoyment. What has been absent from all of these discussions is the relationship between affect and theatricality in the museum. I find it productive to compare two affective environments, POLIN and the Warsaw Uprising Museum, in an effort to consider the ethical limitations of affect and empathy in the representational space of the history museum that does not always engage with theatricality.

The question of affective register is a primary point of debate around POLIN Museum, particularly the fraught relationship between the site and the core exhibition, which is located in a windowless subterranean space.[[36]](#endnote-36) The museum was built in a plot of land that once held nineteenth-century Jewish tenement housing and an artillery building also used as a jail, a post office, and, after the liquidation of the Ghetto in 1942, as the headquarters of the Judenrat. This was also the site where the Ghetto Uprising started, at the intersection of Zamenhof and Miła Streets, and a primary route to Umschlagplatz, where Jews were transported to Treblinka. Digging 5.8 meters down through the rubble of a primary site of the Holocaust suggests an equivalency between museal and cemetery spaces. It requires the visitor to reflect deeply both on how we feel in the space and how we feel about the space. Polish artist Artur Żmijewski even compared the act of moving down the stairs from the foyer into POLIN's core exhibition to the experience of visiting Auschwitz.[[37]](#endnote-37) Regarding the Holocaust, there is what I would term a commemorative imperative. Not only does the Holocaust require us to fundamentally reconsider any artistic or cultural form of representation, but it also confronts historians with the ethical concerns of writing history and the limits of objective knowledge. For Robert Eaglestone, at stake is "our way of thinking, criticizing, doing history itself," which is still "striving to respond to the Holocaust."[[38]](#endnote-38) I would suggest that the ethical mandates of representing Holocaust memory and the discourses that determine those debates are attended to by an ethical imperative to commemorate victims of the genocide.

 It is crucial to question why the core exhibition is underground. The museum's privileging of Jewish life over Jewish extermination in the exhibition produced in a contained, windowless environment has been interpreted by cultural studies scholar Konrad Matyjaszek as a concealment of the site of mass atrocity and death. This, he argues, works in tandem with attempts to polonize Jewish history and to deny a commemorative frame for witnessing the materiality of destruction that would complicate historical narratives of Polish victimhood or indifference to Jewish suffering.[[39]](#endnote-39) There are, however, numerous examples throughout the museum that invite visitors to reflect on conflicts between ethnic groups, on pogroms, on historical moments when Jews were explicitly subjugated or oppressed or when their suffering was ignored, disavowed, or inflicted by ethnic Poles. One wall catalogues all of the ghettoes that existed in Poland during the German occupation. On numerous occasions, I have witnessed the affective response (shock, surprise, or sadness) of a Polish visitor discovering a town or village that is personally meaningful to them on this display. From the twentieth century onwards, archival photographs or films of Jewish suffering are made small and or placed below eye level or within containers so that the visitor is invited to reflect on the voyeuristic quality of consuming such images and the stakes of the ethical confrontations they produce. In the postwar gallery, visitors are asked to choose between remaining in Poland after the war and the 1968 anti-Semitic campaigns or to emigrate; each choice necessitates a different path for the visitor, which is both affectively and critically engaging.

While I appreciate that attempts to reinterpret history that conceal Polish anti-Semitism continue to be a major concern in Poland, I am not convinced that the subterranean exhibition reproduces such efforts. Rather, I would suggest the movement downwards reinforces the museum visit as a commemorative act. As Żmijewski suggests, this movement affectively intensifies the visitor's engagement with the historical narrative. The choice to use copies of the rubble into which the museum is built also impacts the affective engagement with this memorial space. Rather than using the ghetto rubble in a mode akin to Lachert and Rapoport, curators chose to produce a copy of the rubble for the permanent exhibition. Literary theorist Elżbieta Janicka claimed that the actual ghetto rubble was "deemed too obscene to be introduced into the field of visibility."[[40]](#endnote-40) I would argue that although the museum might frustrate a more heightened affective register by denying the visual cues of the authentic rubble through the choice to display the copy (the copy allows for an emotional distancing that would be morally suspect if the visitor was faced with the actual rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto), this curatorial choice serves the aim to focus on the lives rather than the destruction of Polish Jews.

While the decision to display a copy of the rubble has implications for our emotional engagement with the site, it does not fully counter a memorial register. My own multiple experiences of walking through the core exhibition indicate that the subterranean location of the exhibition is suggestive of a tomb or burial site--implanted inside the rubble, which is un*seen* but not un*felt*--and as a result the movement through the museum's galleries remains affectively commemorative even if the museum does not offer a direct visual encounter of the original rubble. Thus, I propose that the site of the museum ultimately imposes itself upon the historical narrative of the core exhibition. In the disjunctures between the embodied acts of affectively experiencing the displays and objects and the tensions between the visibility and invisibility of the site (between the foyer and the galleries) the visitor has an opportunity to engage in historical education, connecting mourning to the awakening of a historical and memorial consciousness. Thus the museum offers an engagement with history that is affective without being solely confined to affect. A commemorative register that only allows for affect also works against the museum's intention to critically communicate and educate visitors about the specific historical conditions in which genocide was experienced, devised, and enacted.

While I support the focus Landsberg places on the recognition of the other in the adoption of memory, I fear that understanding the museum as a *transferential* space that is predicated on affect finds its ethical limits when it comes to an example like the Warsaw Uprising Museum (WUM), in which affect is deployed in order to revise history without making evident its own political investments in history-making. I would suggest that the WUM offers venerated rather than shared histories, which produce hierarchies of suffering that do not serve multiethnic publics.[[41]](#endnote-41) This museum clearly intends to operate as a cohesive force for a national memory community, as a tribute to those who fought and died for a liberated, autonomous Poland and its capital city, which curators decided required the positive self-image of the Polish partisans who fought in the Warsaw Uprising. Made up of over 1000 exhibits and 1500 images and films, the permanent exhibition illustrates the horrors of occupation, the struggles before and during the uprising and its aftermath, and the fate of insurgents in the Polish People's Republic (PRL). From its conception, the museum has been embroiled in a tense power play between Polish anti- and post-Communists. Anti-Communists, who were victimized under communism and see its continued legacies in the present, interpret the Solidarity Movement as "betrayed and defeated." For this reason, anti-Communists supported the museum as a marker of the heroic efforts of 1944 that could be "written into a longer-term national narrative of resistance to occupation and the fight for independent statehood."[[42]](#endnote-42)

Upon entering the permanent exhibition of WUM the visitor is confronted by mood-establishing music, the reverberant thud of a heartbeat, reminiscent of a thriller or horror-film soundtrack. It is not a soft, reassuring noise, but the pounding of a body charged with adrenaline. In the first gallery, this beat punctuates the opening moments of the encounter with uprising, which caused my own heart rate to increase. Although the heartbeat is no longer necessarily heard by the time a visitor reaches the material dedicated to the uprising itself, one has to return to the opening gallery at the conclusion of the visit in order to exit the building. While the visit to POLIN is determined through the monument and abstract foyer, the visit to WUM is framed by the reiterative circulation of this metrical, percussive beat. Through the imposed soundtrack, emotional (over)identification is emphasized and invited over intellectual or critical reflection. It becomes all too easy as a visitor to prevaricate between responses of awe, shock, and grief. Whereas I was invited to reflect on history within a commemorative frame in POLIN, I was uncritically caught up in the affective environment of the Warsaw Uprising Museum.

Equally problematic is the subterranean space and the positioning of the Nazi and Communist sections of the WUM exhibition. While the Soviet refusal to help in the uprising and their subsequent occupation of Poland, Stalin's puppet government, and the fate of the Polish resistance in postwar communist Poland are all depicted in the main rooms of the core exhibition, the horrors of the German occupation and the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the uprising are singled out in an underground room that I entirely missed on two separate visits to the museum and only discovered when speaking to a Polish guide. The basement contains the history of the Nazis in Warsaw and a replica of the sewage canals, which were themselves subterranean, that Polish partisans used to move between different districts of the city during the Uprising. This basement then offers the base point of a hierarchy of suffering and heroism (which are themselves co-organized on the supraterranean floors) that places the Nazis beneath the Soviets. If the story of the perpetrators also functions like a dirty secret--one has to walk through a heavy black curtain to enter the space, which reinforces the sense of privacy and also of obscenity--then the canals are constructed as the Polish heroic act uncontaminated by dirt. In the WUM's replicated canals, it is precisely the absence of sewage--both its material and olfactory presence--that recasts the canal as a venerated tomb of historical knowledge. Through its cleansing, the visitor experiences history's veneration, both historical time and space are thus mythified. Such embodied strategies in the history museum offer an experience of affective intensification; however the bleaching of environments bespeaks an unacknowledged symbolic investment in honoring particularized history that is anything but *shared*.

A way of differentiating between POLIN and WUM is to consider theatricality, which needs to be carefully positioned in relation to affect. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues that POLIN stages 1000 years of Polish Jewish history in chronological order as a "continuous visual narrative that is organized in acts and scenes, much like a play."[[43]](#endnote-43) Theatricality in POLIN Museum can be interpreted as the scenographic attempts to lay bare the constructedness of its exhibitions and its multiple and conflicting historical plots and narratives, and the refusal to depict historical figures within seamless or coherent biographies. What is crucial to point out is that the exhibition's theatricality offers a critically engaged interaction with history making, that is, history as process, position, and active interpretation. Following Tracy C. Davis, I would propose an understanding of theatricality as a “process of spectatorship” rather than a mere reflection of “the amount of spectacle.”[[44]](#endnote-44) The enacted construction of history from particular points of view of historical agents, the dramatis personae who simultaneously play a role both in history and in the museum's storytelling, calls upon Brechtian techniques of exposing the socio-cultural formations that result in oppression. In this museum there is a connection between apprehension and aesthetic encounter, such as low horizon lines, lighting, and stage sets, whereas the Warsaw Uprising Museum's essentialist impulses (with regard to ethnic identity and its legitimating claim to historical truth performed as a social remedy to the evils of the communist period) are not openly or explicitly disclosed. Its scenographic constructions conceal rather than reveal. The focus is on depicting personal grief, sacrifice, and heroism rather than on the social and ideological conditions that produce these states. Contrasting these museums, it is useful to consider how Davis has distinguished between theatrical ("overblown spectacle") and the more complex meaning of theatricality, which she equates with the activation of self-reflexivity and the "self-possession of a critical stance."[[45]](#endnote-45) As opposed to theatricality, I would suggest WUM offers a "theatrical" form of representation, which invites over-identification with a subject that is visually stimulating, auditorily overwhelming, and affectively overpowering. The fact that the museum is evocatively contiguous with an anti-Communist agenda may not immediately strike the uninformed visitor. As I have suggested, the affective confrontation with the aftermath of the uprising and the persecution of its leaders by Soviet forces may easily produce an impression that the Warsaw Uprising was against Soviet communists rather than German fascists, and that the Polish insurgents were in fact successful in their campaign rather than overwhelmed, decimated, and defeated. The potential reading of the Warsaw Uprising as a problematic event that could have been avoided is eschewed. It is presented as a historical necessity of Polish patriotic heroism and sacrifice that needs to be honored.

The resignification of history in the exhibition is affective and experiential rather than factually erroneous, which means it can be explicitly denied by the museum's organizers. This is a crucial strategy of constructed memory environments. Visitors can be blamed for leaving a museum with the wrong impression if the curators can point to the accuracy of the displayed facts, although the environment has lucidly, if implicitly, constructed an alternative narrative. This conflict between facts and experience should not be seen as an exception to the experiential museum but one of its potential constitutive and distinguishing features or characteristics. The major problem I locate in this museum is not one of theatricality but rather of a reliance on affect that undermines criticality. In this sense it is theatrical, that is to say, an overblown spectacle. WUM depicts a highly emotionally charged subject in a manner that proposes both an affective response *and* a historical interpretation as immediately and effortlessly identifiable. The visitor feels the narrative but its constructed nature is rendered invisible. I see two problems with WUM's strategy. Firstly, the affective environment does not substantially enrich our understanding of the depicted subject, which makes it identifiable with kitsch, and secondly, it actively misrepresents particular historical narratives.[[46]](#endnote-46) Verifiable facts are frequently unable to compete with the overall impression offered by the museum's intensively affective environment.

Commemoration as an affective register is used and experienced differently in these spaces. In POLIN, I was invited to engage with the construction of history as a bereavement custom within the framework of commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto. This was an affectively heightened, but no less critically engaged, encounter with history making and historical learning. Whereas in WUM, affect was deployed to discourage criticality and to maintain a particular version of events that concealed an anti-Communist agenda. When analyzing history museums in relation to theatricality, it is crucial to attend to reductive attempts to depict narrow and ideologically oriented versions of history that, by means of the intensification of affect, fail to expose their political agendas and constructions of narratives.

**Between Monument and Museum**

Before the opening of POLIN Museum, I often wandered around Muranów, "the *former* Jewish quarter," searching for traces of the past. I can walk freely around the district without attending to commemoration, while the monument concretizes the act of looking at the site, and the history museum places its energies into chronicling historical events as experiential and affective encounters. When I enter the museum the distinction between past and present is blurred and I am placed in syncopation with certain histories. An early temporary exhibition in POLIN suggested that donated objects had found their "most fitting resting place" in the museum, in which the objects had "been returned where they belonged."[[47]](#endnote-47) This return does not mean that the museum confers the memorial complex with an authorized, final, or immoveable interpretation, which would further infer that the museum functions as the site's ultimate object. POLIN moves away from the traditional role of the history museum, where cultural value and historical explanation are cemented spatially and temporally. Rather, POLIN participates in a form of cooperation with the memorial site that contests any claim to completion of the relationship between memory and history. Neither domesticating memory nor compartmentalizing history, the museum sets them up in a dynamic, relational mode.

If a history museum, such as the Warsaw Uprising Museum, makes its mandate the task of assigning culpability and valorizing heroism, then it can fail to offer any process for the production of shared histories. In a museum determined by cultural exclusivity and an overblown theatrical register, the visitor is not invited to reflect on their own social obligations, political participation, or that of their forebears, whereas the theatricality of POLIN's core exhibition and the its interactions with the Rapoport monument encouraged me to reflect in this way. POLIN demonstrates how Polish history is inclusive of Jewish lives and reveals the intimate cultural proximity of Jews to Polishness, categories that are not hermetic but overlapping. The historical narrative of the museum produces ancestors and ancestral traces, which both refurbishes Polish national identity and reestablishes ancestral lines and familial presence for Jewish visitors to Poland.[[48]](#endnote-48) It also generates a space for international visitors who make no ethnic claims to Polish history. Embedded in the rubble of the ghetto, walking through POLIN Museum is a *commemorative* act defined by site and design. Walking out of the museum, I feel the presence of the rubble under my feet, not only of death and destruction but also of many centuries of life, in an effort to commemorate and to animate, to celebrate and to mourn, and to position myself in a world that I reproduce or produce otherwise, within the sticky interactivities of memory and history, between the monument and the museum.

1. James E. Young, "The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument," *Representations* 26 (1989): 69-106, quote on 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews: A Postwar, Post-Holocaust, Post-Communist Story" in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*,ed. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2015), 267. The decision to call this the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and not Jews in Poland was a deliberate one, which countered an essentialist impulse to understand Jews as visitors, foreigners, or outsiders in Poland. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted, to "speak of Polish Jews rather than Polish Jewry is to keep open the diversity of Polish Jews, rather than to treat them as one body" (ibid., 264). This name also extended the discursive limits of the museum from Jews living in Poland to include the global diaspora, which cannot be considered a single group with a common heritage. Rather, the diaspora experiences memory through geographical ruptures, and complex and multiple affiliations and beliefs. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York: Berg, 2007), 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. For this reason, I participated in the "Jewish Warsaw" walking tour after attending "From Ibrahim ibn Yakub to 6 Anielewicz Street," the international conference that marked the opening of the museum's core exhibition in April 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Mălina Ciocea and Alexandru Cârlan, "Prosthetic Memory and Post-Memory: Cultural Encounters with the Past in Designing a Museum," *Revista Română de Comunicare şi Relaţii Publice* 2 (2015): 7-20 quote on 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "A Theatre of History: 12 Principles," *TDR/The Drama Review* 59: 49-59, quote on 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Daniel J. Sherman, "Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums," *French Historical Studies* 19.1 (1995), 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Williams, *Memorial Museum*, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Michael Meng, "Muranów as a Ruin: Layered Memories in Postwar Warsaw," in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*,eds. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2015), 76; Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Meng, "Muranów as a Ruin," 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Young, "Biography of a Memorial Icon," 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Young, "Biography of a Memorial Icon," 81. Though Rapoport's monument was the first architectural edifice built in the rubble of the former ghetto, there was what Elżbieta Janicka has called a "commemorative object" designed by Leon Marek Suzin that was unveiled on the site on April 16, 1946. This is formed of two plaques on a slightly raised structure made of red sandstone ("The Square of Polish Innocence: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and its Symbolic Topography," *East European Jewish Affairs* 45.2-3 (2015): 200-214, quote on 209). My thanks to the anonymous reader who pointed to the importance of Suzin's monument to this discussion. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. For an instructive overview of many of these commemorative acts see Young, "The Biography of a Memorial Icon" (1989) and Jerzy Elżanowski, "Memorials and Material Dislocation: The Politics of Public Space in Warsaw," in *Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe* eds. Ali Madanipour, Sabine Knierbein and Aglaée Degros (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 88-102. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall* trans. Steven Meed (New York: Holocaust Library, 1993), 262. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 277. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The Polish-American architect who designed the Jewish Museum Berlin, Daniel Libeskind, also submitted a design pitch for the competition, which was in the shape of an open book. However, the Mahlamäki's design was accepted as it complemented rather than dominated the Rapport monument, which was seen as the primary failure of Libeskind's proposal. (Dariusz Stola, public lecture, Jewish Culture Festival, Kraków, Poland, June 27, 2016.) [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 266. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Cited in Meng, *Shattered Spaces*, 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Stola, public lecture. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 272. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 272, 271. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Stola, public lecture. This technique is neatly figured in the postwar gallery, which includes a room that is doubled between the 1950s and 1960s and separated by a one-way mirror. When visitors stand on the 1950s side of the mirror visitors see their own reflection. In contrast, from the 1960s side, visitors are able to look back at the previous decade. By the 1960s, one then has a new perspective on Stalinism and its gruesome effects on society and culture. The curators understood this as the best metaphor for experiencing history: the historical subject cannot look ahead but can see behind. I worry that this metaphor might imply the clarity of a single position of vision that returns the visitor to the position of the objective, positivist historian that has been critiqued so heavily since the late twentieth century. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "A Theatre of History: 12 Principles," 53. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. The museum guide informs visitors: "According to the legend, Jews fleeing persecution came east. When they arrived in a forest, they heard the word *Polin*, which sounded like 'Rest here' in Hebrew. They knew then that this was the place to settle. Polin is the Hebrew word for Poland and the inspiration for the name of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews."  "A 1000-Year History of Polish Jews" (PDF). POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (accessed March 3, 2017), available at http://www.polin.pl/en/system/files/attachments/miniguide\_en\_0.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. History is periodized through the main galleries in the core exhibition, which include: Encounters (960–1500), Paradisus Iudaeorum (1569–1648), The Jewish Town (1648-1772), Gwoździec Synagogue Reconstruction, Encounters with Modernity (1772–1914), On the Jewish Street (1918–1939), the Holocaust (1939–1945), and Postwar Years (1944 to the present). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Sherman, "Objects of Memory," 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 3, 9.  [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14.1 (2001): 5-37, quote on 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Jens Andermann and Silke Arnold-de Simine, "Introduction Memory, Community and the New Museum," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 1 (2012): 3-13, quote on 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. There has been a broad range of criticisms directed at the museum, many of which were voiced a conference on Polish-Jewish Studies held at Princeton University in 2015. The Holocaust remains the core issue that still needs to be addressed in the Polish public sphere, according to Jan T. Gross, and Jan Grabowski claimed the museum domesticates and tames the Holocaust. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir questioned the premise of a museum dedicated to Jewish life on the site of Jewish extermination, and accused the curators of historical revisionism through the eschewal of Polish antisemitism; Elżbieta Janicka charged the museum with gross omissions and forms of censorship, further arguing through semiotic analyses of the architecture and design that the contexts of the Holocaust were marginalized or obfuscated. For a full survey of critiques of the museum see Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Iwa Nawrocki eds., *Poland and Polin: New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016). As I have argued, commemoration of the Holocaust penetrates and orients the museum in a mode that these scholars have not fully taken account of or acknowledged. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Żmijewski cited in Matyaszek, "Wall and Window," 88. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Konrad Matyjaszek, "Wall and Window: The Rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto as the Narrative Space of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," in Grudzińska-Gross and Iwa Nawrocki (eds.), *Poland and Polin*,78-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Elżbieta Janicka, "The Embassy of Poland in Poland: The Polin Myth in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews as a Narrative Pattern and Model of Minority-Majority Relations," in *Poland and Polin: New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies*, eds. Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Iwa Nawrocki (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016), 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. The building of WUM must also be seen in relation to Rapoport's monument. While in the 1980s the monument became a locus of politically dissident collective resistance, particularly, as I have mentioned, for the Solidarity Movement--who, the state feared, could have commemorated the uprising by re-enacting it--it had formerly been a site that generated great bitterness for many Polish patriots, who felt resentment that Jews had been given a monument for their uprising while nothing of equivalent consequence had been built to honor the Warsaw Uprising. What's more, in the same year Rapoport's monument was erected there was a campaign in the communist press to discredit the heroes of the Home Army. Not only did the Jewish heroes depicted in the monument--Jewish socialists--then stand in for the partisan heroes of the Uprising, but it also served as a way to "expunge memory of the Red Army's passive role in the Nazi's brutal crushing of the rebellion" (Young, "Biography of a Memorial Icon," 91). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 16. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "A Theatre of History: 12 Principles," 58. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Tracy C. Davis, "Theatricality and Civil Society," in *Theatricality*, eds. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Davis, "Theatricality and Civil Society," 153. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. For an interpretive analysis of kitsch in relation to sentimentality and understanding see Tomas Kulka, *Kitsch and Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Informational placard in the first temporary exhibition in POLIN, visited by the author in May 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. The museum then also intervenes into potentially problematic forms of ancestral tourism that fail to articulate or reject hybridized or coalitional forms of memorialization. For example, see Erica Lehrer, "Jewish Heritage, Pluralism, and Milieux de Mémoire: The Case of Kraków's Kazimierz" in *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland*,eds. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-48)