



**THE CUT: READING THE HOLE ON THE LAST ADDRESS  
MEMORIAL PLAQUES IN MOSCOW**  
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*To Sasha Sorokin*



The *Last Address* plaques are an iterative monument that consists of nearly identical commemorative signs that are placed on the façades of buildings in Moscow and other Russian cities to remember the last residence of a person arrested during the Stalinist Terror of the 1930–50s. Initiated by distinguished journalist Sergey Parkhomenko, the project has been managed by a handful of historians, researchers, and activists for over six years. These ‘memory activists’ aim to mount a plaque for each victim of the Stalinist political repressions. The stated aim of their version of memory activism is to remember everyone: the people who run this project seem to subscribe to a recent historical idea that ‘everyone – not only famous and distinguished – is entitled to a monument.’<sup>2</sup> Each new plaque becomes a part of the whole monument, dispersed across multiple locations in Moscow.

So far, more than five hundred have been installed in Moscow alone. The plaques have appeared in other major cities in Russia, such as St Petersburg, as well as in the Perm region, a former location of many Gulag camps in Soviet Russia. However, the list of the dead is interminably long. The imperative to remember everyone is fraught because of the scale of the mass atrocities that the *Last Address* project commemorates. Therefore, a politically laden mode of remembering the difficult past depends on finding an adequate architectural form that establishes a relation between the one and the many killed during the Stalinist Terror.

The plaques have a simple aesthetic. To the left, a cut-out square hole evokes an absent face; the hole is roughly the size of a passport photograph. To the right are a proper name, occupation, the date of birth, the date of arrest, and the date of execution or death. The two main elements on the plaque – the name of the dead and the hole in place of a portrait – indicate two different modes of historiography

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above: The *Last Address* plaque near Bolshaya Nikolskaya Street.  
(Image by the author).

of a mass atrocity. The name-focused historiography accords precedence to the idea of the facticity of historical events. Here, names of the dead appear as witnesses to many historical killings in 1930–50s Soviet Russia. In contrast to the concreteness of names of the dead, the hole as a substitute for a human face is a murky space that seems to forego the value of realist representation in memorial architecture. Instead, the hole predicates memory on abstraction. I would like to contextualise the activists' work to elucidate their practices and underpinning assumptions about the salience of proper names in creating an account of a mass killing before I make a case for reading the non-accidental hole of the *Last Address* plaques as a form of abstract, non-representational historiography.

### Monumental Names

Some memory activists spend considerable time sifting through declassified state archives and private collections of documents to trace names of the 'victims of the Stalinist repressions', a commonplace term used in numerous legal, historical, academic and other settings. Many documents are presumed missing or inaccessible, which compounds a sense of the indeterminacy, even impossibility, of remembering 'everyone'. The ambition to honour everyone ('one name, one life, one plaque') is also hindered by a lack of public funding. The memory activists encourage descendants, friends and strangers, such as new occupants of the apartments of the dead, to commission the project coordinators to do the background research on the circumstance of the arrest, engrave a plaque and prime the wall for the eventual installation of the plaque.

Before attaching a plaque, the activists need to collect consent forms from the current residents of the buildings that are identified as sites for potential installations. Few residents object to the plaques, although recently a newspaper article by a Moscow 'industrialist' sparked a debate about whether the plaques, with their ability to proliferate, threaten to transform the city into a graveyard. Despite this analogy between the plaques and tombstones, the activists do not call the plaques 'monuments'. They are 'information plaques', in the activists' own words. This simple rebranding of the plaques reduces the amount of bureaucratic paperwork the activists need to carry out as installations of information plaques do not need a planning permission from the city. The memory activists are committed to a mode of historical justice that foregoes conceptual analysis for the sake of the empirical veracity of historical 'facts'. On the one hand, the plaques affirm the primacy of biographical evidence of the committed crimes against Soviet citizens. On the other, the plaques embody Joseph Beuys's notion of 'social sculpture', an artistic process that aligns an aesthetic with a social 'in-forming',<sup>3</sup> that is communicating a political message through art. However, in-forming goes beyond an explicit statement of a political message and instrumental uses of art for political ends as it blurs the distinction between art and the political, and between art and justice.

The activists' aim is to trace the myriad names of the dead in the Russian archives, compile them into an inventory of the dead such as books of memory and digital databases of the murdered, and then take a fragment of their archive into an open urban space. Thus, names of the dead are carried across different archives, the original archive of the Soviet secret police, the dissident archive of the activists and a public archive that exists as a monumental or architectural form. This way, the city-dwellers would be reminded of the past crimes of the Stalinist rule, the crimes that continue to reverberate in the lives of many people, such as the children and grandchildren of the wrongly killed. Indeed, many descendants of the political dead still live in exile from the Russian capital, unable to afford the relocation costs from remote areas in Russia back to the main city. The perpetual copying and rewriting of names of the dead in different media give the impression of a dispersed and all-encompassing archive that transforms the city into filing cabinets and index cards that are normally kept in the basement corridors of the activists' office. Inadvertently, the opening of the activists' archive implicates the living in the fate of the dead.

The plaques are installed ceremonially, usually in the presence of family members or current residents of the buildings who have fallen into this history of terror by purchasing a flat in the prestigious central parts of Moscow. On the day, a small group of activists, relatives and friends of the dead gather on the pavement or the backyards, usually in the historical neighbourhoods of Moscow to read a brief biography of the dead, exchange words of gratitude and attach the plaque to the facade. Usually, the next of kin or grandchildren are offered an electric screwdriver and a wooden stepladder to drive the four screws in the holes, drilled in the morning by one of memory activists. Young children are welcome but are expected to stay silent. The procedure takes 30–40 minutes before the activists say goodbyes and move to another location to repeat the same ritual—a ritual subdued yet poignant in its ordinariness.



The plaques are left on the façade, exposed to the harsh weather, city pollution and occasional vandalism of urban Moscow. It is not clear whether the plaques fulfil the activists'

above: An installation process of a plaque (image by the author).

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dreams of historical memory in a multi-million city where many buildings in the centre are decorated with commemorative plaques, busts of famous writers, composers and communists, as well as brightly-lit shops and restaurant windows. What's more, the plaques are often attached just above the average height of a passer-by, making them difficult to spot without knowing where to look. Rita Astuti, a renowned anthropologist, has explored tomb sculptures in the cemeteries of Vezo in Madagascar.<sup>4</sup> These sculptures are 'invisible objects', situated out of sight of the villagers, far in the jungle. Vezo graveyards are not filled with 'conspicuous monuments'<sup>5</sup> to gaze at as local people prefer to keep their dead at a distance from the living. In contrast, the plaques in Moscow are meant to capture attention and attune passers-by to aspects of historical violence in the city. Yet, they are inconspicuous in the city's texture, engendering a paradox of being hidden while created to be seen.

Despite the contradiction between being seen/unseen, the plaques have a potency to demarcate sites of historical consciousness, which pertain to a heavily contested and emotively charged history of the difficult Soviet past. Although the plaques re-iterate a well-known fact of Stalinist atrocities, the activists are subject to low-key but relentless harassment by the city authorities. The plaques do not say anything new, conceptually speaking. They do not offer an interpretation of history that cannot be found elsewhere. For instance, numerous television drama series, such as the recent *Voik (Wolf)*, popularise the events of the Stalinist past. Bookshops sell cheap and luxury editions of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Varlam Shalamov and Vasily Grossman, the authors viewed as dissidents for their literary realism in descriptions of the Soviet Gulag camps and the Second World War experiences. Of course, despite this overt acknowledgement of the difficult history of Russia, the scale and justifications, specifically the political utility of a mass murder, are often debated in televised and private discussions of the past among high-profile Russians and anonymous people I chanced to talk to in parks, libraries and at public events. In particular, the figure of Stalin is approached with ambivalence as an architect of mass killings and a perceived saviour of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. The memory activists I met in Moscow aspire to eliminate this ambiguity. Instead, they co-opt names of the dead into the rhetoric of historiographic and political persuasion so that the f(acts) of mass killings in Soviet Russia cannot be embellished or exonerated. In sum, within the framework of realist historiography, the activists posit the factuality of the killings as paramount.

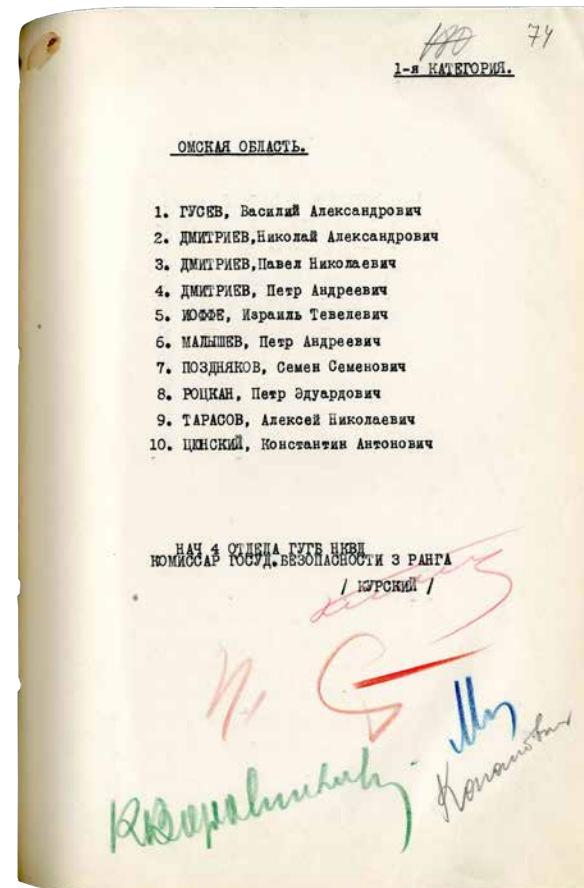
The political and historical salience of the plaques as well as their capacity to generate controversy is undeniable. However, the political effects of these commemorative practices do not exhaust their meaning. It is worthwhile considering the aesthetic of the plaques, their form and polyvocality as memorial architecture per se. Designed by a renowned 'paper architect' Alexander Brodsky, an artist who builds on paper, each plaque is the size of a postcard. The plaques are etched in a font designed by the leading Soviet and Russian graphic artist Eugene Dobrovinsky. Their participation in the project suggests that the plaques

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call for a commentary on their architectural form that exceeds the plaques' function as a memorial monument to many victims of the Soviet repressions.

Despite the plaques' artistic quality, the activists' own interpretation of their work is grounded in the significance of the right side of the plaques where the names and skeletal factual biographies of the dead are inscribed. Names of the dead play the central role in these commemorative practices: names are anchors for any archival research in Moscow. They are used to trace who was arrested and executed and where they were buried. Names of the dead can be found on important documents that include personal files (*lichnoe delo*) compiled by the secret police, interrogation paperwork and, especially, the execution lists signed by Stalin and various members of his government. The execution lists are alphabetical registers of names of people sentenced to death or imprisonment. The lists were compiled for cities and regions such as the enclosed list for the Omsk Oblast region in southwestern Siberia, on the border with Kazakhstan.<sup>6</sup> This list is typical in its layout, containing the full names, including surnames, first names and patronymics, of ten people sentenced to death. The death sentence is coded as 'category I' in the top right-hand corner of the list. This particular list was prepared and signed in red by the Head of Department Number 4 of the Main Directorate of State Security. Another signature in red belongs to Stalin. Some lists were accompanied by a numerical sum total of people to be executed. Thus, the lists constitute a cartography of terror, evidence of homicide, and an iconography of the scale of murders that were carried out by extra-legal (or unlawful even within the legal frameworks of those days) hit squads of two or three secret police officers mainly in the 1930s.

In contrast to the matters of political memory and justice that the etched names convey, the square hole to the left is interpreted by the activists as a symbol of absence. One memory activist supplied me with an explanation of the meaning of the cut: 'it represents a gaping void of being'.



At first glance, the void refers to a missing family member. It also signifies one or several locked-up apartments within a building; there was a certain seriality to the killing of people in the same building as they frequently shared professional affiliations or places of work. Thus, the square hole is a rather straightforward representation of loss and oblivion. The cut-out hole on the plaque reminds us of a responsibility not to forget the events of the past but also to confront the limits of what can be known and remembered. Furthermore, the hole is symbolic of the inversion of absence into presence, a process that underpins well-established arguments that absence has a degree of corporeality.<sup>7</sup> To see omissions, loss and oblivion as material is to draw attention to absence as an interval in our lifeworlds and to re-affirm the rights of the dead to spaces and people, among other things. Coupled with memories of unnatural deaths, that include murder and suicide in some Russian imaginaries, the hole, or the monumental cut on the plaques, allows the interpretation to drift from establishing the facts of killings to a possibility of haunted presence by the dead Gulag prisoners that some people sense near former prison camps across Russia.<sup>8</sup> These are well-trodden explanations.

above: An execution list for Omsk Oblast region (the image is courtesy the International Memorial in Moscow and RGASPI, The Russian State Archive of the Social and Political History 1.17, op. 171, d. 409–419). The complete archive of the available lists can be found at <[stalin.memo.ru/all-lists](http://stalin.memo.ru/all-lists)>.

### Faceless Hole

However, the juxtaposition of the hole with the names, the size of the plaque, and other architectural aspects of the plaque nudge us toward another interpretation of what the hole might suggest. To me, the hole demarcates a space for a face that is not there. It is a faceless portrait of a verifiable victim of a politically motivated killing. What can be made out of this faceless mode of remembering the dead in their concreteness?

The faceless plaques exist in sharp contrast to the makeshift tomb stones in Kommunarka, the mass burial ground in Moscow. Here, the transient tomb stones consist of washed out photographs and photocopied portraits pinned to random trees that grow above the human remains. Similarly, the tension between nameless and faceless burial sites and named portraits is evident in three mass graves in Donskoe Cemetery in central Moscow. The mass graves contain the ashes of thousands of corpses burned in the first Soviet crematorium built in the basement of the cemetery's church. Today, the mass graves are marked with numerous miniature gravestones to the buried people. Next to them are a few empty cenotaphs to the buried in those mass pits as many burnt bodies cannot be found or easily disinterred from the mass graves. It seems as if the purpose of the cenotaphs is to provide a space for a gravestone that features a human face to personalise a death. These efforts suggest that names of the dead are not seen as guarantors of living memory; family members and strangers who visit the place seem to be looking for a face to make a felt connection with the dead.



Similarly, facial profiles grace many Soviet-era commemorative plaques to distinguished writers, composers, actors, poets, and many others. To be remembered by the face

above: Makeshift tomb stones on one of the mass graves at Donskoe Cemetery in Moscow (image by the author).

is not only the prerogative of the famous. All the war dead in Russia are remembered by their faces during the marches of the *Immortal Regiment (Bessmertny Polk)* when family members and citizens carry portraits of the participants in the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> On May 9th, the Victory Day in Russia, many cities and towns are swarmed with faces of the dead. Names are only used if no photograph is available. From this perspective, a photographic portrait can produce an illusion of likeness of a portrait to a sitter. It presupposes that the portrait and the person it references have a common identity, a pervasive yet inaccurate view of photographic and painted portraits.<sup>10</sup>



In contrast to the *prosopocentric*, or face-centred, mode of remembering the dead, the provocative hole on the plaques insists on a faceless, abstract mode of remembering victims of political atrocities of the Soviet period. It seems that, in situating the documented names next to the hole instead of a portrait, the plaques refuse the relationality of the living to the dead. Such a refusal of likeness and relationality is not entirely unusual. Many monuments to mass atrocities, such as Sol Lewitt's *Black Form* outside *Munster Palace* or The Vanishing Monument by the Gertz are hostile to intimacy with the dead.<sup>11</sup> In the same vein, some philosophers ask if a human face is a nexus of relationality to the dead whose faces connote an 'odd decline of reality'.<sup>12</sup> Together with Bataille, Derrida warns against a 'diabolical impulsion to find resemblances in faces'.<sup>13</sup> For Derrida, the face is a ghostface that 'signals an unreadable alterity, a disfiguration where it

above: A commemorative plaque to Alexander Vertinsky, a Russian-Soviet artist, composer and poet. It features a sculpted profile of the artist (image by the author).

gets caught in the process of a folding back to the absence of the face'.<sup>14</sup> For Derrida, a photographed, painted or sculpted face is an image of the dead. Deleuze and Guattari do not give a face a privileged status of a signifier of a living human, either. They insist that the face is inhuman, not least because it imposes on us a universalizing aesthetic of a white wall with two black holes.<sup>15</sup> What is shared by these philosophers is the rejection of a face as a representational locus of a concrete person.

In sum, to insinuate presence with a portrait is not an obvious architectural requirement for memorial architecture. For instance, the plaques in Moscow are modelled on the *Stolperstein* monuments created by Günter Demnig to remember Jewish and other victims of the Nazi-perpetrated crimes in Germany and across Europe. The *Stolpersteine* resemble cobblestones that are embedded in the pavement outside of victims' homes. Like the plaques in Moscow, they contain names and dates of birth and death for the murdered. Unlike the plaques, the *Stolpersteine* do not feature the cut-out hole. Without an allusion to a face, Demnig's stones obviate the tension between the politics of memory and the aesthetic of a square hole as a substitute for a face.

I wonder if the square hole is a redundant aesthetic feature. Or is it an indispensable, non-accidental element on the minimalistic monument, such as the plaques of the *Last Address*? If the politico-historical purposes of the memory activists can be served with the names of the dead alone, why introduce a seemingly non-essential element such as a square hole? Simply, names, or remembering names of the dead, are sufficient for the politico-historical intention to remind Russian citizens of the mass atrocities of the Stalinist Terror. Names are factual as they refer to a record of an actual person. However, names fail to signify a human being and to reconstitute them as a living presence as they have little content. Names desist from tracing a symbolic connection between themselves as a typographic image and an actuality of the lost life even though the activists' mode of remembering mass atrocities is to see the dead as real people, to proclaim 'the lyric singularity of each name'.<sup>16</sup> Yet, the square hole to the left of each plaque derails rather than aids this effort. If names of the dead reinstate the victims of a mass murder from a presumably nameless domain of the dead, the square hole, instead of a face, plunges the dead back into the pit of history. Without a claim to likeness or mimesis, the square hole demonstrates what Jean-Luc Nancy calls the 'infinite detachment' of Rineke Dijkstra's decontextualized photographic portraits that experiment with anonymity and withdrawal from the 'identity of self to self and identity of one self to another'.<sup>17</sup>

If the square hole is not essential on a monument of this kind, what, if anything, lies behind the symbolism of the square hole as an act of political commemoration? While some suggest that a monument to a mass atrocity should have a pedagogical function of denunciation,<sup>18</sup> a monument to a mass atrocity can be momentarily dissociated from its explicit commemorative purposes, as the memory activists in Moscow have articulated to me. For now, I would like to sever the plaques from their socio-political contexts to look closely at the architectural affordances of the plaques as

monuments. Here, the non-accidental square shape of the hole is important as it has certain parallels with sculptures and monuments that might or might not be placed within a political realm of remembering mass atrocities. The planar square, cube, or imperfect cuboid are focal conceptual schemes of many monuments. They are recurrent tropes of minimalist plastic art and architecture. Tony Smith's *Die* is a cube of approximately human proportions, which suggests a surrogate of a person.<sup>18</sup> It is a specific conception of a person as a unitary being with an unknown interior who is a member of a symmetrical, infinitely repetitive order. An inverted cube/hole features in the Ground Zero memorial to the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Designed by Michael Arad in collaboration with Peter Walker and David Brody Bond, the memorial complex consists of two square voids, the receding pools of water that reproduce the footprint of the buildings reduced to dust.<sup>20</sup> The complex also contains bronze parapets inscribed with nearly 3000 names of people killed at the site. The cube is central to the suspended, yet to be built, *Monument to Tolerance* by Eduardo Chillida in the Canary Islands.<sup>21</sup> The work of Kazimir Malevich, the Russian Suprematist painter who died in 1935, is an important influence here too. His most famous work, *Black Square*, is a 53.5 × 53.5 cm oil on canvas painting of a black square with a white border that doubles up as a metaphysical nod to the immortal self and an artistic search for 'zero of form'.<sup>22</sup> These are abstract painted and sculpted squares. What does the non-accidental square hole encourage us to think when we encounter it on the plaques in Moscow with their explicit function to remember the facts of death of many real people?



Artem, one of the memory activists, drove the car recklessly. We attended three installations that day; it was

above: Another plaque, ready for installation (image by the author).

Sunday evening in late October and getting cold and dark. Unable to secure an interview with the architect of the plaques, I kept asking Artem about the day a group of architects isolated themselves from a group of memory activists and historians to decide on the aesthetic form of the archival project that the activists had initiated. I hoped he would clarify why, in the process of designing the prototype plaque, the architects had to be segregated from the historians in a separate room. Artem was frustrated with my questions about the meaning of the event.

"You underestimate the power of abstraction," he snapped at me.

His angry outburst and reluctance to answer my questions surprised me but not because of his irate tone. Artem was right that, caught up in the activists' reading of history as factual evidence of mass atrocities, I could not see what an abstraction could offer apart from the symbolic task of indexing the presence of the dead or clarifying the logic of this mode of memory activism. Yet, Alexander Etkind notes that monuments to victims of political repressions in Russia highlight that 'the imagining of meaningless suffering requires nonhuman, abstract, or monstrous symbols'.<sup>23</sup> The aesthetic of boulders, half-humans, death masks, and formless human bodies that are elements of monuments to political atrocities in Russia, points to a possibility that mass atrocities are a limit case of imagination as they confound us with the enormity of a killing while we tend to isolate people as 'individuals', fashioning their biographies and endowing them with intimacy. Artem reproached me for failing to embrace the aesthetic of abstraction as a mode of non-representational historiography, a parallel rather than subsidiary narrative of a mass killing.

We seek to restore names and faces of the dead because extreme violence is often associated with anonymity; such violence creates 'images of formless and literally faceless terror'.<sup>24</sup> Erasure, absence, loss, unmarked graves, silences and so on are gestures of specifically political violence that renders people faceless, nameless, and generic 'exemplars of horror'.<sup>25</sup> The Stalinist Terror erased thousands of people, killing them physically, removing people from family homes and rubbing out their faces and figures from collective portraits and newspapers.<sup>26</sup> David King reminds us that, while archives preserve documents, interrogation files, signatures on death warrants and photographs of the arrested, the archives also show how professional censors and ordinary Soviet citizens inked, scratched or cut out faces of the 'disgraced' communists such as Trotsky. It does not matter if the reasons behind acts of violence against paper were to vent citizens' anger or demonstrate their commitment to the regime. Photographic faces of the first revolutionaries were attacked because, if one concurs with Levinas, faces are an ethical guarantee of the inability to kill.<sup>27</sup> The stabbing of paper removes this guarantee and makes one complicit with the state-led terror.

Perhaps I could re-think the hole not as a metaphor of absence but as a mode of abstract historiography that remembers a subject-less event. Architecturally, a cut-out hole is an abstract geometry of an empty space. In contrast to the names on the right-hand of the plaque that

posits 'history-as-chronicle', or fact-driven history, the square hole alludes to abstract subjects of a mass killing.<sup>28</sup> Instead of re-enforcing the idea that history-writing is a documentary register, the plaques in Moscow instantiate a gap between archival and aesthetic figuration of acts of defacement and obliteration of people, one by one and on a mass scale. More, the plaques collapse the hard and fast distinction between the concrete and abstract figuration of history. In other words, figurative and object-less modes of remembering the many dead of an atrocity are not a binary choice; a cut is a portrait of no-one and anyone. Just as the word 'no-one' is a 'capacious' term that contains everything,<sup>29</sup> a non-accidental hole on the plaque can fit an indeterminate number of beings while each individualised plaque continues to signal a concrete death.

It follows that the square hole on the *Last Address* plaques speaks to us in the language of the intensities of abstract art, in addition to its symbolic, conceptual and political purposes of representing absence. The hole is an ultimate non-referential and non-representational form that, nevertheless, is capable of speaking simultaneously about the specific and the generic history of the Stalinist Terror.

The non-accidental square hole is a manufactured opening, a deliberate cut-out that subsumes a flattened out cube. Didi-Huberman looks at variations of the cube in the drawings and sculpture of Giacometti to illuminate that tears on paper and plastic, sculpted forms partake of the same 'geometrical massification of volume'.<sup>30</sup> The key principle of holes and cubes is that they swallow up faces and bodies to act like 'a faceted machine for embedding them, burying them, devouring them, depleting them – but also as the subtle principle of its own destruction, or in any case of its self-alteration'.<sup>31</sup> A square hole, just like Giacometti's disproportional, irregular cubes, is a strange object that contradicts efforts to comprehend and give form to a past mass murder. The square as a reduction of the cube radicalises Giacometti's notion that death 'abstracts'<sup>32</sup> as it imposes impossible, contradictory dimensions on beings and objects. For Giacometti, 'only people themselves ... are genuinely true to life'.<sup>33</sup>

My contention is that, replicated in the plaque, the square hole – a nod to Malevich's zero of forms – foregoes the value of portraits of the dead to inaugurate a different kind of response to a past mass atrocity, a response that does not hinge on conjuring life but on raw exposure to a killing. The square hole, which is a planar cube, posits a non-figurative, abstract claim to memory of a mass atrocity. The idea that a faceless hole can constitute a presence or articulate a refusal of oblivion and loss through the use of architectural means is valid but partial. There is yet another way to engage with a mass atrocity as something that invokes and inscribes us together 'in the anonymous continuity of humanity'.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, the square hole is a portrait after all, a portrait of such anonymous, external humanity without identity, face, or resemblance.

<sup>1</sup> I have borrowed the term from a study of memory activism in post-Franco Spain because it has resonance with the active civic position of the *Last Address* researchers, historians and citizens involved in the project. Jonah S. Rubin, 'How Francisco Franco Governs from Beyond the Grave: An Infrastructural Approach to Memory Politics in Contemporary Spain', *American Ethnologist* 45 (2018), 214–227.

<sup>2</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 315.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Michaud and Rosalind Krauss, 'The Ends of Art According to Beuys', *October* 45 (1988), 36–46 (41).

<sup>4</sup> Rita Astuti, 'Invisible Objects: Mortuary Rituals among the Vezo of Western Madagascar', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 25 (1994), 111–122.

<sup>5</sup> Astuti, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1930s, Omsk oblast had a heterogeneous ethnic population. Some people were categorised as members of unreliable ethnic or social groups (such as ethnic Germans in Russia, wealthy peasants, to name a few).

<sup>7</sup> Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen, 'Introduction: An Anthropology of Absence', in *An Anthropology of Absence. Materializations of Transcendence and Loss*, ed. by Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup and Tim Flohr Sørensen (London: Springer, 2010), pp. 3–22 (p. 12).

<sup>8</sup> Olga Ulurgasheva, 'Ghosts of the Gulag in the Eveny World of the Dead', *Polar Journal* 7 (2017), 26–45.

<sup>9</sup> <moypolk.ru> [Accessed 7th May 2021].

<sup>10</sup> Jan von Brevem, 'Resemblance After Photography', *Representations* 123, 1 (2013), 1–22.

<sup>11</sup> James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Georges Bataille, 'Human Face', trans. by Annette Michelson, *October* 36 (1986), 17–21 (19).

<sup>13</sup> Laurence Simmons, 'Jacques Derrida's Ghostface', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16 (2011), 129–141 (p. 131).

<sup>14</sup> Simmons, 131.

<sup>15</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minnesota and London: Minnesota University Press, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, 'The Names of the Dead', *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1997), 176–190 (p. 189).

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Portrait*, trans. by Sarah Clift and Simon Sparks (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Levine, 'Mediated Memories', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 11(2) (2006), 117–136.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Marita Sturken, 'The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero', *American Ethnologist* 31 (2004), 311–325.

<sup>21</sup> Isaac Marrero-Guillamón, 'Monumental Suspension. Art, Infrastructure, and Eduardo Chillida's Unbuilt Monument to Tolerance', *Social Analysis* 64.3 (2020), 26–47.

<sup>22</sup> Yekaterina Andreyeva, *Kazimir Malevich. The Black Square* (St Petersburg: Arca Publishers, 2019), p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Dead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 638.

<sup>24</sup> Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. by Pamela Selwyn (New York: Zone Books, 2008), p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Groebner, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (London: Tate Publishing in association with Francis and Taylor Publishers, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-other*, trans. by Michael B. Smith

and Barbara Harshav (London and New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 9–10.  
**28** Jacques Ranciere, *Figures of History*, trans. by Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 21.  
**29** Daniel Heller-Roazen, *No One's Ways: An Essay on Infinite Naming* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), p. 62.  
**30** Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Cube and the Face: Around a Sculpture by Alberto Giacometti*, trans. by Shane B. Lillis (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 19.  
**31** Didi-Huberman, p. 49.  
**32** Didi-Huberman, p. 66.  
**33** Didi-Huberman, p. 106.  
**34** Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 7.