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Places of Holocaust

The twentieth century was décor to numerous important historical events with massive traumatic consequences, the Holocaust being one of the most radical of them. These events sought representation in order to be remembered and be written into a collective memory. Yet the nature of traumatic events is that they evade representation, making it impossible to grasp the complete impact of what happened. For a traumatic event to be represented, the means of representation have to be explored in order to redefine its borders and shift its frame.

In my paper I will discuss how, in the twenty-first century, representation of trauma is changing from (insufficiently) depicting the traumatic event, to *performing* the traumatic event in order to make its public *experience* the trauma. In exploring this shift, my focus will lay in what I will refer to as my focus will lay in what I will refer to as 'places of Holocaust'. These are spaces where the Holocaust took place and/or is remembered and in which a representation of the Holocaust is performed. In the Low Countries as well as the rest of the world these places are changing through performativity and the use of mass media.

I will consider the particular example of the *Achterhuis* in Amsterdam, where one can walk around and see the actual spaces Anne Frank and her family lived in hiding from the nazis. On the museum's website (www.annefrank.org), however, a virtual tour is under construction and will be launched in 2010. This tour will enable the 'visitor' to see the rooms in their original state, as if people still lived there, and virtually walk around while additional information is provided per room. Thus, while the *Achterhuis* itself seems to be a mere museum, a static place of history, the virtual tour will try to give the visitor the experience of living in the *Achterhuis*. It is a virtual tour in historical reality.

This specific Holocaust representation wants to give its public an experience of the traumatic event. My paper will question the authenticity and legitimacy of these

(often mass -mediated) experiences, while at the same time asking if these qualifications matter in representing an event which will in the near future disappear from first-hand experience and memory, as no survivors will be alive anymore. How can we deal with the precarious matter of transferring these memories? I will explore these issues through the use and analysis of the notions of representation of trauma and performativity (see, for example, Van Alphen 1997 and 2005, Ankersmit 2005, and Young 1997), and touch upon the subject of prosthetic memory (see Landsberg 2004). This last concept will lead me to conclude that, when combined, mass media and memory can reset the limits of representation.

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