

## Rebeka Vidrih

### **Death as the Murder and the Void, and How to Remember It. Libeskind's museum and Eisenman's memorial in Berlin.**

Two architectural projects in Berlin – a museum which does not want to be (merely) a museum (Daniel Libeskind, *The Jewish Museum Berlin*, designed 1988, executed 1991-1999) and a monument which does not want to be (merely) a monument (Peter Eisenman, *The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, designed 1997, executed 1999-2004) – pose an interesting methodological problem. Namely buildings are only rarely first created and then explained according to some sort of iconographical principles, that is, in themselves, in their very own form, and not by their sculptured or painted decoration. However, Libeskind intended »to create a building that could tell a story [...] of Berlin, of Jews and of exile, of the deportation, but also [...] a story about hope«, and thus the form of his museum itself is based on specific contextual/textual sources. Both projects commemorate the Holocaust, a death »on a scale which had never been seen before« (Libeskind), a death which, because of its »enormity and horror«, actually »defies representation« (Eisenman). A death that is an enormous *murder*, a murder of an entire people, a murder that left behind an enormous *void*, which cannot be and *must not* be forgotten. In fact, it is not really possible to tell a story about this death (a story which would make the event understandable, which would point to some meaning of it), therefore Eisenman, somewhat contrarily to Libeskind, says about his project that he »was trying to do something that had no center, had no edge, had no meaning, that was dumb«. Both projects offer no clear message about this horrific death, they do not (merely) represent or symbolize it, but intend to enable and to trigger in a visitor a certain psycho-physical experience of this void in the centre of the museum and of these paths between the pillars of the memorial. They intend for the visitor to experience as similar sensations and emotions of disorientation, insecurity, fear as possible to the sensations and emotions of the deported and murdered Jews. They stand against stand against a reconciliation with this loss, demanding this death, this murder and its effects, to be experienced again and again, with every visitor's every visit. However, interpreting the Holocaust in this way, both projects are a part of a specific politics.