Tange's concerns with the civic realm are examined in Yatsuka's essay, which shows that a consideration of the human as the measure for the built environment ran as a thread through the architect's urban propositions. Referencing William Whyte's concept of “the organization man” (1956), Tange described the inhabitants of his projected megalopolises as parts of political, economic, and communication networks.2 But unlike Whyte's suburban, asocial, listless individual, Tange's was a “superman” of the information society (53), and a reflection on his social and mental life was integral to projects like the 1960 Tokyo Plan, featured here in drawings and images of finely crafted models. Tange foresaw that individuals might feel isolated in such techno-utopian cities, but he believed that mass-communication networks would still sustain these environments as well as relieve some of their psychological side-effects. Such foresight is one example of the pertinence of Tange's thought today.

The editors' proclaimed ambition for this book is to cast the figure of the master architect under multiple rubrics, as architect, medium, process, network, modernist, and internationalist. While almost all of these are addressed in one way or another in the essays, the volume falls short on the last—cultural historians have focused on key specific sites or individuals. They have not engaged the topic, such as Peter Eisenman figures within contemporary practice who attempt to do just this by asking what happened at such specific sites or individuals. They have not systematically asked whether there is something common about responses in the built environment to the Jewish genocide—that is, whether there are stylistic or conceptual trends and patterns in those responses.

In Shoah Presence Eran Neuman attempts to do just this by asking what happens when cultural forms try to engage this difficult history through representation. For him, the specificity of architecture as a
medium has been overlooked by standard accounts of the cultural response to the Holocaust, which tend to favor narrative analyses of form rather than critical evaluations of the physical “presence” of architecture. He argues forcefully that the immediacy of architecture and its phenomenological relationship to viewers and their reality produce specific effects that engage history and memory in ways distinct from other cultural responses. Neuman introduces a more complex theoretical perspective than has previously been found in most architectural histories dealing with the Holocaust while not losing touch with institutional and social histories of some relevance. While the emphasis on the former can at times overwhelm the interest in the latter, on the whole his book represents an effective and evocative new take on cultural responses to the Holocaust and contemporary architectural practice.

Neuman makes his agenda and his intellectual affinities clear early on. He is interested in the tension between representation and historical event, so he focuses predominantly on examples of Holocaust commemoration that are “offsite”—that is, not at well-known locations of destruction such as Auschwitz, but rather in places such as Israel and the United States, where “a historical narrative is inserted into another reality” (4). In the book’s early pages he signals his interest in the tension between architectural language and embodied experience. In other words, his argument “leans more to the side of phenomenology than to the politics of representation” (13), the latter being predominantly the case in the work of James E. Young, for example. This book follows Neuman’s professional commitment to the potential of phenomenological analysis for the built environment, signaled not only in his own previous scholarship but also in references to Martin Heidegger sprinkled throughout the text. This approach is not without its problems, but it does make for a consistency and complexity in the argumentation that is a refreshing change from most texts on the subject, which tend to analyze the Holocaust as a monolithic and relatively uncomplicated postwar signifier taken up transparently in memorialization.

Shoah Presence is arranged roughly chronologically, following four case studies and highlighting the different ways in which the physicality and experience of the built environment have intersected with Holocaust representation and commemoration. Neuman opens with the founding in April 1949 of the Ghetto Fighters’ Kibbutz in the Western Galilee and subsequent attempts over the next sixty-plus years to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and its survivors as well as the Holocaust more generally. In a fascinating history of a site that has previously received little scholarly attention, Neuman covers the intersection of memorialization with the social development of the kibbutz members and their changing relationship to the past over time. This process would extend from the first temporary 1949 exhibition of simple photo panels to socialist-Zionist architect Samuel Bickel’s Ghetto Fighters’ House (cornerstone 1952) to the latest addition by Efrat-Kowalsky Architects (with Dror Aviram). Through these and other structures, Neuman traces an alienating presence in architecture that distances local viewers through the use of abstraction or unclear metaphors. Such alienation engages the tension between the buildings’ presence in the kibbutz and the historically and geographically remote European past.

Following this analysis, Neuman tackles the relatively well-known building complex of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. Again he looks at the entire sweep of construction, from Arieh Elhanani, Arieh Sharon, and Benjamin Idelson’s Hall of Remembrance (1961) through the new Holocaust History Museum by Moshe Safdie (2005). Regarding these works and others, Neuman analyzes claims of territoriality embodied in the relationships between buildings and the land, architectural gestures problematically loaded in their relationship to a Zionist narrative. He follows this with the very different ideological context of James Ingo Freed’s U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (1993) in Washington, D.C. Including discussion of new research into the stretch of architects and projects that preceded Freed’s final design, Neuman argues that the issue in this highly symbolic architecture rested on questions of authenticity of experience and history. This was particularly fraught for the patrons given the geographic and social distance between a Washington museum and European sites of genocide or survival.

In his final chapter Neuman takes on a slightly different tone as he turns away from an analysis of institutional place and toward an analysis of the theoretical meaning of form. This chapter focuses on Eisenman’s memorial in Berlin (2005), read in the context of the open-ended nature of the conceptual and physical experience of the monument. Neuman derives this interpretation by relating the Berlin memorial to Eisenman’s previous writings and architectural works. In sum, the book’s case studies show that the presence of architecture dealing with the Holocaust “offsite” can be understood phenomenologically in this range of terms: alienation, territoriality, authenticity, and open-endedness.

Still, Neuman’s precise emphasis on presence and embodied viewers can isolate the buildings and projects; there are moments in the text that would benefit from a more engaged use of the broader historiographic debates on the Holocaust in architectural, ideological, and political terms. For example, his tight focus on Eisenman’s theoretical and architectural career to explain the monument in Berlin avoids interrogating Mark Godfrey’s broader semantic interpretation of how abstraction works in communicating meaning in a wide variety of Holocaust artworks and monuments, including this site.1 Nor does Neuman take up the social question of the “Jewishness” of Eisenman’s work in relation to that of other postwar Jewish American architects dealing with the Holocaust, Gavriel Rosenfeld’s main concern.2 Even James Young and others’ accounts of the institutional politics of the monument’s history in post-Wall Berlin concerning how Helmut Kohl and others instrumentialized Holocaust representation get relatively little attention here.3 While Neuman’s focus is to be commended, an integration of the broader social historical or art historical debates would have given this account greater complexity.

At its best, however, Shoah Presence provides new insights into how concepts of the Holocaust can be engaged by architecture. Neuman makes one such compelling argument when discussing Safdie’s design for the Children’s Museum at Yad Vashem (completed in 1988) by focusing particularly
on the dark spaces of the interior design. He contextualizes the form with a discussion of the complexities of the institutional development and decision-making process at Yad Vashem, which was not without its difficulties. Turning to the finished site, he analyzes the descent into the memorial through an entrance tunnel leading to a dark space inside the mountain on which it was built. In a careful critique of the physical experience of this space, Neuman concludes that Safdie “refers to the architectural discourse of absence and applies the rhetoric that resists rationalist representation as a way of commemorating the Holocaust” (84). Referencing Étienne-Louis Boulée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, among others, he continues with a discussion of the sublime and links form with theory effectively in an attempt to widen our understanding of each.

This book engages with the dominant strain of postwar discussion of architectural and memorializing responses to the Holocaust, focused on theoretical interpretations of particular sites, even while it brings greater complexity to that discussion. In addition, Neuman offers new institutional history to provide context, especially in the first three chapters. While I would have liked as well a broader range of historical references, he does his phenomenological approach justice by attending to the physical “presence” of the architectural experience as a distinct site of meaning. Hence, this is a book that not only extends our knowledge and interpretation of Holocaust-related buildings but also furthers the scholarship on representation and architecture after postmodernism. It fights against the isolation in architectural history of studies of postwar representation of the genocide and, instead, shows what can be learned about architecture as a whole through the complex study of the difficult sites that respond to the enduring memory of the Holocaust.

**Notes**


Alessandra Ponte

**The House of Light and Entropy**

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In an era when global scale and New World histories steer the agendas of historical discourse, Alessandra Ponte’s insistence on looking at the specificity of places, sites, and landscapes has gained exceptional momentum. The six essays in *The House of Light and Entropy* span the spectrum of Ponte’s far-reaching research interests, woven into a tight fabric of critical reflections. They trace histories of the cultivation of nature, of mapping, and of media in the context of American sites that have one characteristic in common: the lawn, the sand desert, and the ice desert are vast. As landscapes conceived of as “empty,” they have repeatedly been claimed as sites of scientific and artistic testing. Recognizing the futility of hegemonic claims on these overpowering landscapes, Ponte’s narration acknowledges the volatility of any historiography of such sites, illuminating them via contrasting multiple arguments as she draws them into and out of perspective. In terms of the choreography of the six essays, the reader is left without doubt that Ponte’s interests lie far from the picturesque and from visual studies. On the contrary, what is at stake are social, cultural, and economic questions relating to the occupation of land by humans, by machines, and by media.

The first subject of Ponte’s investigation is the ubiquitous suburban lawn. This essay was originally published in the catalog for the 1998 exhibition *The American Lawn: The Surface of Everyday Life* at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, which Ponte cocuratoried with a team of seven architects. She points out that at the beginning of the twentieth century the concept of the “landscape garden” was replaced by that of a “natural landscape,” thereby alerting us to the idea that naturalism is a construction and preparing us to follow her further arguments. The two quotes that open the chapter, one by W. H. Whitman and one by Marshall McLuhan, not only span the time frame of the essay from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century but also clarify Ponte’s interests beyond the visual and introduce her technique of constructing an argument by juxtaposing and mediating different points of view. Ponte’s “sample excavations that reveal fragments of history, opinions and definitions” (3), like Ariadne’s thread, guide the reader safely through her interpretation of the lawn as a pastoral lost, but ever present.

The second essay, “Photographic Encounters in the American Desert,” written in the form of a personal travelogue, is an enjoyable, thorough lesson in the ethnography of Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico. It differentiates between two kinds of tourism in the sand desert: visits to places associated with the indigenous population starting in the late nineteenth century, and more recent trips that began in the 1950s to see atomic testing sites. Again, Ponte’s argument scrutinizes visual culture, from the Native Americans’ aversion to being photographed to the tourists’ weaponry of cameras, concluding with James Luna’s 1992 performance *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* at the Whitney Museum in New York. Landscape is no longer physical, or outside. If Leo Marx’s 1964 book *The Machine in the Garden* marked a breakthrough in thinking about the pastoral, Ponte’s essays fifty years later accelerate the critique and ask what the garden is in the machine of media representations.

In the third essay, “The House of Light and Entropy,” Ponte investigates the desert as a discursive, aesthetic, literary, and technological space. She presents the desert as a landscape and an object, and also as a place where disciplinary boundaries are at risk, by juxtaposing John Ruskin’s “visual innocence” and “abstraction of the gaze” with the thinking of art historian John Charles Van Dyke. Van Dyke’s 1901 *The Desert* was largely overlooked until its 1980 reprint, when it became a cult classic, thanks in great part to Reyner Banham. For Ponte, the American desert is a “house of light and entropy” in that we see it but we don’t—what we see is always in the eye of the observer, as exemplified by Banham’s perception of the desert. Invoking Ruskin,