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Master Thesis

The Heldenplatz Balcony

Recontextualizing historically charged spaces

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Abstract (English)

How does one deal with historically charged spaces? The Heldenplatz balcony, located in the heart of Vienna since its construction in the early 20th century has served as a tool to symbolize power. First, as a representation of monarchical power, then when Hitler announced the annexation of Austria from the balcony, it became a symbol of the Nazi regime and its propaganda. Since then, the space has been closed off, leaving the ambivalent memories associated with this architecture undealt with, particularly in terms of post-war Austrian collective memory. Now, with a generational shift, the balcony, along with its history, is vulnerable to erasure. The complicated questions that arise when confronted with such spaces, which are a part of an apparatus of perpetration but where suffering was not directly inflicted, are explored theoretically, and applied in a study of the balcony. By creating a comprehensive overview of the role that the balcony has played politically, historically, and socially until present day, paired with research on how similar spaces in Austria and Germany are being dealt with, a vision for this space is conceptualized. This vision should serve as a starting point action aimed to recontextualize the balcony and other similar locations in Austria.

Abstract (German)

Wie geht man mit historisch belasteten Räumen um? Der Balkon am Heldenplatz, der sich im Herzen Wiens befindet, wird seit seiner Errichtung im frühen 20. Jahrhundert als Ort für Symbolisierung von Macht benützt. Zuerst, als Repräsentation der monarchischen Macht, dann, als Hitler von dem Balkon aus den Anschluss Österreichs verkündete, als Symbol des NS-Regimes. Seither ist der Balkon für die Öffentlichkeit geschlossen, daher bleiben die mit diesem Balkon verbundenen Erinnerungen unbearbeitet, insbesondere im kollektiven Gedächtnis Österreichs im Kontext der Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Mit dem Generationswechsel droht der Balkon mit samt seiner Geschichte in Vergessenheit zu geraten. Die komplexen Fragen, die sich bei der Konfrontation mit solchen Räumen stellen, die Teil eines Täterschaftsapparates sind, in denen aber nicht direkt Verbrechen begangen wurden, werden theoretisch und praktisch in einer Studie zum Balkon untersucht. Durch die Schaffung eines umfassenden Überblicks über die Rolle, die der Balkon politisch, historisch und gesellschaftlich bis heute spielt, gepaart mit Recherchen zum Umgang mit ähnlichen Orten in Österreich und Deutschland, wird eine Vision für diesen Raum entwickelt. Diese Vision kann als Ausgangspunkt für eine Aktion dienen, die darauf abzielt, den Balkon und ähnliche Orte in Österreich zu rekontextualisieren.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be
changed until it is faced.”

James Baldwin¹

“The ‘whole truth’ of history is and always will remain inaccessible, and
this is precisely why we are constantly being forced to find new ways of
approaching it. The future of memory essentially depends on whether the
impulse to do this remains alive.”

Aleida Assmann²

¹ James Baldwin, “AS MUCH TRUTH AS ONE CAN BEAR; To Speak Out About the World as
It Is, Says James Baldwin, Is the Writer's Job as Much of the Truth as One Can Bear,” *The New
York Times*, January 14, 1962.

² Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham
University Press, 2016), 205.

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Table Of Contents

Abstract (English)	1
Abstract (German)	2
Acknowledgments	4
Introduction	6
Chapter I: Strategies for recontextualizing spaces of perpetration	11
A. Recontextualization strategies in the context of Viennese Holocaust memory	11
B. Dealing with the architectural remains	14
C. Inviting artistic interventions	19
D. The debate as the key strategy	20
Chapter II: Planning and construction history of the balcony	26
A. The balcony intended as a part of the imperial quarter	27
B. The balcony during the second world war	31
Chapter III: Usage, positioning and media portrayal of the balcony	34
A. The crumbling of the monarchy	34
B. Hitler's annexation speech	36
C. The balcony as a witness of attitudes in post-war Austria	38
D. Musealization: The House of Austrian History	49
Chapter IV: Curatorial and artistic conceptions for the balcony	55
A. What has been proposed?	55
B. Arguing for transparency: reducing the physical and symbolic barrier	59
C. Vision for the space: opening the balcony	63
D. Hopes of institutional change	66
Conclusion	68
Works cited	70

Introduction

At every crossroad of Viennese history, the city has grounded and strengthened itself through its artistic and architectural landscape. Walking through the city center, architecture holds Austria's memories—from the St. Stephan cathedral as a religious symbol, the Ringstraße boulevard showcasing a range of art historical styles and personalities, to the Hofburg as a representation of imperial power. Construction of the Hofburg began in the 13th century and over the epochs, the structure has expanded into various residences designed by a multitude of architects. In 1869, Gottfried Semper and Carl Hasenauer drafted plans for the last significant expansion of the Hofburg with hopes of creating an imperial forum. Though their full plans were never entirely completed, a southwest wing of the Hofburg was built, named the Neue Hofburg, or, in English, “new castle.” Today, the building houses the National Library, the Weltmuseum Wien, the Museum of Austrian History, the Historical Musical Instrument Collection, the Imperial Armory, and the Ephesos Museum. Beyond what the new Hofburg holds within its doors, it also interacts with its surroundings, particularly with Heldenplatz, a public square in front of the palace.

When standing on Heldenplatz, you can feel the role of architecture in expressing the authority of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Its wealthy and powerful features clearly played a part in defining Heldenplatz as an important public space of assembly and expression. Looking up beyond the large-scale equestrian statues and asymmetrical architecture of the public square, there's a balcony above the entrance of the new Hofburg. Although at first glance it appears rather small, it represents around 200 square meters of Vienna prime real estate—a central location with a view over important Viennese sights: Heldenplatz, Volksgarten, city hall and beyond. However, the space isn't up for use. The closest anyone can get is by visiting the House of Austrian History and walking up two flights of stairs to the plateau leading to the balcony

doors. Not only are they locked and protected by double doors, but a grid stretches along the whole balcony. Why is it that on a public place named “heroes square”, the main speaking platform has been taken away?

Until World War II, the balcony was used as a viewing space and speaking stage for large scale events on the square. On March 15, 1938, Hitler announced the annexation of Austria to Germany while standing on the balcony. This event deeply marked Heldenplatz and the balcony not only because of the immense crowds, which are estimated to have been around 250 000³ people, but due to the enthusiasm with which people attended the event. Since World War II, the balcony has been closed off to the public. The only person who has publicly spoken from the balcony since was Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel in 1992. When the Haus der Geschichte Österreich, the House of Austrian History, opened in 2018, it renamed the plateau, which leads to the balcony, to Alma Rosé Plateau in honor of the Austrian violinist who perished at Auschwitz. Since the opening, the plateau has been used as a temporary exhibition space, focusing on discoursing themes surrounding the Holocaust. The museum has also raised the question of what to do with the balcony. Should it be opened? Should it stay closed? What should be done with it? Nonetheless, the ability to do anything lies at the hands of the Burghauptmannschaft, a governmental authority responsible for the management and construction for historic buildings owned by the Republic of Austria.

Spaces such as the Heldenplatz balcony can be seen as sites of ‘perpetration at a distance’ because they are part of the apparatus of perpetration, in this case of Nazi Germany and its dangerous ideology, but not locations in which suffering was directly inflicted. Pierre Nora describes spaces like the Heldenplatz balcony as “lieux de mémoire—moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when

³ Peter Stachel, *Mythos Heldenplatz: Hauptplatz Und Schauplatz Der Republik* (Wien: Molden Verlag Wien in der Verlagsgruppe Styria, 2018), 45.

the sea of living memory has receded.⁴” Most of those who witnessed the moment when Hitler spoke are elderly or have passed away, allowing for a generational shift, and perhaps a different lens to see the balcony through. After the war ended in 1945, in the Moscow Declaration of 1943, “the Allies had deemed Austria the ‘first victim’ of Hitler’s aggression in a strategic move intended to stimulate Austrian resistance against the Third Reich.⁵” Austria was considered confused and defenseless, and after the war clung to the status of victimhood. It was only in the mid 80’s, during the Waldheim affair, which was a controversy regarding the military record and knowledge of Austrian war crimes committed during World War II of Kurt Waldheim, secretary of the United Nations and then president of Austria from 1986 to 1992, that Austria was finally confronted with its past. The affair became an international symbol of how Austria handled its past by electing someone with such a problematic history. This was proof of how prevalent antisemitism continued to be within society.

As Pierre Nora writes, “memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.⁶” Memories of Austria’s contemporary history ground themselves within the Heldenplatz and its balcony. However, in order to rework and reexamine these memories, especially those made in the time of the NS Regime, the balcony needs to be recontextualized. Though the balcony is closed, as if that part of history could be put under lock and key and ignored, it does not feel like closure. By locking the balcony doors and denying requests to do anything with the space, Austria’s past is not fully being acknowledged. It is much easier to close a door than to recontextualize it. Pierre Nora concludes his essay, *Between Memory and*

⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire,” *Representations* 26, no. 26 (1989): 7–24, 12.

⁵ Bunzl, Matti. “On the Politics and Semantics of Austrian Memory: Vienna’s Monument against War and Fascism.” *History and Memory* 7, no. 2 (1996): 7–40.

⁶ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 9.

History: Les Lieux de Mémoire by writing that “the lieu de mémoire is a double: a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of its possible significations.”⁷ This is the current problem that the balcony is facing: it is a loaded historical stage that has not been met with all its possible significations.

Due to the medialization of Hitler’s speech and presence on the balcony, it is this that has entered our collective memory, rather than seeing the space as a possibility. Although there are many publications that speak on the history of the Hofburg and the Heldenplatz, there has never been any publication focusing on the balcony, and more precisely, on the reception-history of the balcony. Furthermore, there have only been abstract discussions of what to do with the space. My work thus aims to explore the balcony, its potential usage and symbolism. Furthermore, it grounds itself on interventions in similar contested spaces that have taken place in an effort to recontextualize these difficult spaces. Many of the contested spaces I write about are also currently going through architectural and curatorial developments, which confirms the current prevalence of this topic. The correct architectural terminology for the balcony is actually “altan” or “söller”, which is used to describe a balcony-like extension that is supported from the ground; however, these terms aren’t used in everyday language and don’t translate to English: thus, I will be referring to the altan of the Neue Hofburg as the Heldenplatz balcony.

The study of the Heldenplatz balcony presents itself in two ways: on one hand, as an architectural and historical research task of the space, and on the other, it is about handling practices within contested spaces. According to the initial body of literature I consulted, it became essential for me to look beyond literature involving the balcony as an architectural and historical space, but to also focus on archival film footage, testimonies, and local, national, and world-wide news archives. In addition to these primary and secondary sources on the balcony and its

⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 24.

reception-history, I also studied bodies of literature on museums, memory-making, politics, and anti-Semitism. Moreover, I investigated which practices have been used to recontextualize cultural spaces, whether done within institutions or in public spaces in Austria and Germany. While there is a wealth of literature on these topics, there was little to be found on contested spaces such as the balcony. By combining these disparate bodies of literature in a new way, I aim to tackle nuanced questions about the balcony and what the future of the space holds. Guided by the question of how this balcony can be re- and decontextualized through museological means, this paper, in the first part, will showcase how spaces of perpetration have been dealt with, focusing on curatorial and artistic practices. Then, I will lay out the construction history of the balcony and its surroundings, providing context on Austrian history. In the third part, I will describe the usage, positioning, and media portrayal of the balcony. In my last part, I will envision what kind of space the balcony could become.

Chapter I: Strategies for recontextualizing spaces of perpetration

The Heldenplatz balcony finds itself floating in a difficult position, loaded with long years of political history. However, it isn't the only contested public space where discussions about its usage are being held. Many historic sites have been tainted by those who have spoken on them and transformed their meaning. Perhaps there is no physical mark left, but the memory remains, engrained within the architecture. Continuing from Pierre Nora's theory of the *lieux de mémoire*, these spaces also serve different purposes depending on who visits them. James Young writes that "the reasons for memory change with every generation, as well. While the survivors remember themselves and loved ones lost, their children build memorials to remember a world they never knew, an act of recovery whereby they locate themselves in a continuous past."⁸ Thereby, dealing with loaded spaces is not a fixed solution—ways of remembering and the needs of the community change with time. This chapter will outline the main predicaments such spaces face and various strategies that have been implemented to solve these issues and to recontextualize the spaces.

A. Recontextualization strategies in the context of Viennese Holocaust memory

To recontextualize means to place something into a different context than it is currently in. With the Heldenplatz balcony, this means taking it out of the context it has been subjected to, which is one of passive historical engagement and a distorted vision of responsibility. The space remains a symbol for Hitler's power and for the support he received by the Austrians. As Mary Anne Staniszewski writes, "what is omitted from the past reveals as much about a culture as what is recorded

⁸ James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 285.

as history and circulates as collective memory.”⁹ After the war, the Austrians, supported by the Moscow Declaration of 1943, understood themselves as the first victims of the Nazis. Collective memory of Austria clung to this status and stuffed away the memories of having been bystanders or even perpetrators. In 1988, on the commemorative year of the annexation, Holocaust education and investigation into crimes perpetrated during the war commenced. During this year, Austrian sculptor Alfred Hrdlicka erected the Memorial Against War and Fascism on the Albertinaplatz in Vienna. This was the first public memorial for the Holocaust in Vienna to be built. It consists of the Gate of Violence, the Street-Washing Jew, Orpheus enters Hades, and Stone of the Republic. The memorial sparked outrage and debate—particularly the sculpture titled Street-Washing Jew, which literally depicts a bronze figure washing the street. Despite disapproval from victims of the Holocaust, Hrdlicka went ahead with creating a figure which depicts a Jew, noticeable because of the kippah and orthodox dress code, robbed of dignity because he is forced to wash the street pavement. Barbed wire was also added to the sculpture to refrain passerby’s from sitting on it. The sculpture shows how Austrian memory culture was in a transitory state, not realizing that reproducing the humiliation and suffering was not something victims of the Holocaust wanted to be reminded of. This initiated talks for a memorial for the Jews, which was revealed to the public in 2000 and designed by Rachel Whiteread. Meanwhile, the Jewish Museum in Vienna had opened in 1990. More recently, in 2021, the Shoah Wall of Names Memorial was inaugurated, the first space in Austria where the victims of the Holocaust can be remembered by their names. In addition, other sites of memory have established themselves in Vienna, such as memorial plaques and stones of remembrance. These sites of memory lay the ground for architectural Holocaust memory in Vienna and remain important in challenging the self-image of

⁹ Mary Anne Staniszewski and Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), xxi.

victimhood. They serve as reminders of the suffering inflicted by the Nazis during the war and affirm that the Holocaust is a part of Austrian history. The balcony, mainly serving as a symbol for the masses of people who supported Hitler from below, was ignored from collective memory, and is slowly resurfacing now as the generation shifts.

The objective in recontextualization is not to erase the symbolism of a space, but to confront it through a contemporary lens. To do so, it requires an intervention. Such an intervention can be done in many ways—although this paper will be focusing on museological intervention. This means the ways in which museums can be utilized to recontextualize historically charged spaces. The spaces written about fit a very specific category: they are spaces that are a part of an apparatus of perpetration, but not locations in which suffering was directly or physically inflicted.¹⁰ In the context of the NS Regime, the Wannsee villa, Hitler’s Berlin bunker, the rally grounds in Nuremberg, Hitler’s birth house in Branau am Inn, and the Heldenplatz balcony serve as examples. For such spaces, the interventions do not fit into one category: the political, social, artistic, and curatorial are intrinsically connected. Rather than focusing on the bureaucratic, monetary, and political aspects at play when reimagining contested spaces, I will be focusing on the concepts for the space.

The curatorial practice has become increasingly political, historical, and social. As Aleida Assmann writes in *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, “the historian no longer has a monopoly on the reconstruction, representation, and interpretation of this past. Alongside the discipline of history, these tasks are now shared by many other cultural institutions and media avenues.¹¹” The same goes for roles within the museum. These spaces are multiperspectival¹²—they can educate, be a part of a collective experience, offer public recognition, and much more. Thus, the thinking in staging an intervention must be

¹⁰ Sharon Macdonald, “Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond,” Taylor & Francis (Taylor & Francis, November 14, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203888667>, 3.

¹¹ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 175.

¹² Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 198.

just as multiperspectival. For this purpose, museological strategies go beyond an institution, exhibitions, or objects. Rather, in this case, the museological task is a constant process of local and global reflection, learning, investigation, and discovery. Here the curatorial strategies are interdisciplinary and show how they have been used to recontextualize spaces of perpetration. However, this is not done by a singular actor, it is done by critical thinking and collaboration.

B. Dealing with the architectural remains

First, the question of conservation and maintenance arises. What should be done with problematic spaces? Should they be destroyed? Should they be maintained? If maintained, should they remain in their original state? Legally, these questions fall into the prerogative of heritage studies. These sites have become institutionalized through organizations such as UNESCO. In 1985, the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage in Europe was signed in Granada, Spain, by the Council of Europe and outlines what measures should be taken for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage.¹³ Beyond the guidelines of the convention, each country approaches their architectural assets in different manners regarding funding, restitution, sustainability, etc.¹⁴ Although there are official guidelines, such spaces have been confronted by vandalism and attempts of destruction. Furthermore, questions about what to do with the surroundings of these spaces arise—what about accessibility, tourism, or profit?

In the case of Hitler's bunker in Berlin, which is where he committed suicide, after the war, immediately attempts to destroy it were made. Today, only certain parts, which are inaccessible to the public,

¹³ Getty Conservation Institute, "Cultural Heritage Policy Documents," Abstract: Convention for the protection of the architectural heritage of Europe (1985), accessed May 18, 2022, https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/research_resources/charters/charte_r38.html.

¹⁴ Robert Pickard, "A Comparative Review of Policy for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8, no. 4 (2002): 349–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1352725022000037191e>.

remain. It was only in 2006 that a public plaque was added to acknowledge what had happened in this location, a late attempt of contextualization. This example is only one of “trauma tourism”, a term frequently used by scholar Laurie Beth Clark, who addresses how tourists travel to visit traumatic spaces. Tourists break their everyday rhythm to visit and learn, often painful, history. The most known example of such spaces are concentration camps; however, tourists also visit locations of perpetration. Laurie Beth Clark writes, “unlike objects, ruins do not do their work metonymically, that is, they do not stand in for the bodies of victims. Rather, they work affectively to invoke and evoke the environment, milieu or situation within which trauma was allowed to occur by deploying the visible residue of that trauma on the landscape.¹⁵” The balcony is not a ruin—it is still standing; however, without use or active caretaking, the original usage has been taken away. The emptiness of the balcony has become a symbol and evokes the residue of the trauma that Clark describes. The reason for which visitors are attracted to spaces of perpetration is usually for educational reasons, as seeing such spaces in person adds an additional dimension to understanding and empathizing.

A second dilemma is accessibility in the realm of who should be allowed to enter such spaces. Should they be freely open to everyone? For whom are they still standing? When thinking about who these spaces continue existing for, the response is generally because it is a part of history, and it should be remembered. Then, questions about ownership and rights come up. Here, the house in which Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn in Upper Austria, serves as an example. For decades now, there have been lengthy legal disputes regarding ownership. In 2016, the house was expropriated and taken into state ownership, while a commission debated what was to become of the building. The debate became public, but then came to a standstill when the previous owner filed a lawsuit

¹⁵ Laurie Beth Clark, “Ruined Landscapes and Residual Architecture: Affect and Palimpsest in Trauma Tourism,” *Performance Research* 20, no. 3 (2015): 83–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1055084>, 84.

2017.¹⁶ Many have called for a destruction of the building, however this goes against the heritage protection it was given. Furthermore, the worry in musealizing such a space would be that it becomes a tourist destination, giving more power to the space than wanted.

This worry leads to us to the next questions: what should be put in the spaces? What is the best way to begin the conversation? Holocaust and memory studies scholar James E. Young asks an essential question when it comes to dealing with memorials, “How to articulate a void without filling it in? How to formalize irreparable loss without seeming to repair it?”¹⁷ This theoretic question can be examined in the case of the “Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz”, which is at the same location as senior Nazi government officials and SS leaders discussed the “Final Solution” to the Jewish question, which was the Nazi plan for the extermination of all Jews. After the war, in 1964, the Jewish historian, Joseph Wulf, proposed the „Dokumentationszentrum zur Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus und seiner Folgeerscheinungen” a documentation center dedicated to researching national socialism and its aftermath.¹⁸ At the end of the 1980s, the decision to establish a memorial at the House of the Wannsee Conference was made, which opened on the 50th anniversary of the conference on January 20, 1992. The space has multiple components, an exhibition, the Joseph Wulf library, and education programs. They all have a pedagogical function. For visitors that come because of the talks surrounding the “Final solution”, in the exhibition space, are given context on the whole systematic mass murder of the Jews. Visitors may perceive this as a stark contrast to the beautiful villa and surrounding landscape, however it important to point out this very contrast between real events and current perceptions.¹⁹ This contrast

¹⁶ Laura Langeder, “Adolf Hitlers Geburtshaus,” accessed May 7, 2022, https://hdgoe.at/Hitler_Geburtshaus.

¹⁷ James Edward Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between*. Public History in Historical Perspective, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 2.

¹⁸ Elke Gryglewski, "Die Gedenk-und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz," *Urbane Erinnerungskulturen im Dialog: Berlin und Buenos Aires* (2009): 160-167,161.

¹⁹ Gryglewski, "Die Gedenk-und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz," 163.

does what Young asked, “how to formalize irreparable loss without seeming to repair it?”²⁰ The center has repositioned itself, moving away from the cult of personality that was once so present in the building. The void is palpable, and not filled, but articulated in a way in which visitors can learn and grow with the space. The institution also made sure to position itself in a way where they are constantly working to support the voices of Joseph Wulf and other victims of the Holocaust.

In Nuremberg, the Nazi Party rally grounds, Reichsparteitagsgelände, are former marching grounds and monumental fascist buildings, with the Grandstand being completed and used during the Nazi era. Museologist Sharon MacDonald carried out participant-observation fieldwork on the Rally Grounds, including during guided tours and inside the documentation center in order to consider how the difficult heritage in Nuremberg has been dealt with.²¹ At the time, the center did have an exhibition, tours, and research, but it was also accessible to anyone, meaning that many came to use it as a recreational space. Since the space is a large open site with green space, people in Nuremberg incorporated it into their daily routines. When MacDonald asked visitors what should be done with the site, “they emphasized that it should be retained and, frequently, that it should be retained as a memorial, or, more specifically, as Gedenkstätte – a memorial-educational complex – or a Mahnmal – a warning memorial. Almost all such visitors, at some point during our discussions, expressed the idea that remembering the horrors of the past was especially important in order to avoid repeating it.”²² This response shows the want to remember and foreshadows the changes that are currently happening. Presently, the space is going through a large development that comes after decades of discussions on whether to restore or reconstruct the area. At the end of the war, certain parts of the structure were destroyed, such as the swastika of the grandstand (by the US Army) and the colonnade due to

²⁰ Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 2.

²¹ Macdonald, “Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond,” 1.

²² Macdonald, “Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond,” 169.

safety issues.²³ It has been decided to stabilize the Zeppelin Field and Grandstand but not to restore or reconstruct it. Instead, a “walk-in, walk-on exhibit as a place for learning and for an encounter with political history, with a comprehensive range of exhibits and information²⁴” is planned. Thus, the space is only beginning to evolve. Nuremberg’s choice to wait such a long time before deciding what to do with the whole complex on one hand shows the complexity of the discussions, on the other, the patience in letting that debate play out.

The questions of choosing what to do with a space also strongly rely on ownership. The institution created at the House of the Wannsee Conference was made from mere architecture, while other institutions have had to recontextualize themselves from the inside. This is the case for the Haus der Kunst in Munich which opened in 1937 in affiliation with the National Socialist Party. Throughout the war, it represented Nazi art policy and exhibited stolen art works.²⁵ In recent years, the museum has been confronted with its founding history, a process taken on the museum’s directors and staff. Namely, Okwui Enwezor, who became director in 2011, continued the process of re-historization of the building with a critical approach. In his method, Enwezor continued to make the Nazi architecture visible but at the same time experimented with it. Nora Sternfeld describes his interventions as para-monumental, which she defines as “artistic and curatorial strategies for the reappropriation of monuments that do not deny their violent history but also do not bury it. Instead, they allow the entire powerful monumentality of historical relics and violent manifestations to be seen as a means to confront them and offset them at the same time.²⁶” Enwezor took the resources of the

²³ “Documentation Center Nazi Party Rally Grounds,” Documentation Center Nazi Party rally grounds, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://museums.nuernberg.de/documentation-center/>.

²⁴ “Development into a Space for Learning and Encounter,” The Zeppelin Field as a Space for Learning and Encounter, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://museums.nuernberg.de/rebuilding-documentation-center/zeppelin-field/introduction>.

²⁵ “Chronicle of ‘Haus Der Kunst,’” Haus der Kunst, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://hausderkunst.de/en/history/chronical>.

²⁶ Nora Sternfeld, “What Is Going On with the Para-Monument? A Review of Okwui Enwezor’s Politics of Remembrance at Munich’s Haus Der Kunst.” *Tell Me about Yesterday Tomorrow*, 2021, 214.

already standing institution, and instead of tearing it down or rebranding, dove inside its problematics with critical engagement, bringing these loopholes to the light of day.

C. Inviting artistic interventions

Enwezor, during his tenure as director of the Haus der Kunst München also invited artistic interventions to recontextualize the space. Namely, he made the curatorial decision to invite Mel Bochner to install “The Joys of Yiddish” as part of the 2013 exhibition “Mel Bochner: When the Color Changes.”²⁷ Interestingly, the Haus der Kunst decided to re-display the work in 2021, prompting a re-evaluation of what has changed since 2013 and how the significance of the work has evolved. The installation consists of putting colloquial Yiddish²⁸ words on the façade the museum, a building built by and for the Nazis in shades of yellow and blue, reminiscent of the armbands and badges Jews were forced so wear during the Holocaust. This work does more than intervene: it gives the architecture a new meaning and takes on a new position. Furthermore, by re-installing the work almost ten years later, it continues to affirm its relevance and belonging to the walls.

Another important architectural site that was altered by Hitler is the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, which was modified under Hitler’s orders in 1938 with the intention of having it embody Nazi ideals.²⁹ During the 1993 Biennale, for the first time, Hans Haacke confronted this history head on. First, in the entrance, he hung a life-size photograph of Hitler’s visit to the pavilion in 1934, putting into evidence that he had stood in the space. He also placed an oversized Deutschemark coin over the doorway in place of where the imperial eagle

²⁷ Haus der Kunst, “Re-Installation: Mel Bochner ‘the Joys of Yiddish,’” Haus der Kunst, October 2, 2021, <https://hausderkunst.de/en/blog/re-installation-mel-bochner-the-joys-of-yiddish>.

²⁸ Yiddish is a language historically spoken by Ashkenazi Jews, that integrates many languages including German and Hebrew.

²⁹ Julian Jason Haladyn and Miriam Jordan, “Disrupting Utopia: Hans Haacke's Germania or Digging up the History of the Venice Biennale,” Academia.edu, June 11, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/2322715/Disrupting_Utopia_Hans_Haacke_s_Germania_or_Diggin_g_Up_the_History_of_the_Venice_Biennale, 2.

had been hung. Then, he dug up the floor of the space, which visitors could only see once they had gotten past the photograph of Hitler. In a space that is supposed to represent Germany, Haacke disrupts the utopic representation of national identity and forces the visitor to examine a different truth. Such a space cannot be dismantled because it does have historic meaning, and as Haacke said, “you cannot do away with German history that way.”³⁰ Since Haacke’s intervention, many artists, chosen by the curators of the pavilion, have chosen to recontextualize it. Namely, in the 2022 Biennial, artist Maria Eichhorn had the foundations of the pavilion excavated and layers of the plaster on the wall removed to expose the joins between the earlier structure, the Bavarian Pavilion built in 1909, and the expansions conducted by the Nazis in 1938. Additionally, the outlines of the window openings and doors from 1909 were exposed, as well as explanatory wall text added to the exposed areas.³¹ However, Eichhorn does not stop there—a publication was printed and twice a week, during the Biennale, guided tours to historical places of resistance and remembrances in Venice are taking place, in collaboration with the Istituto veneziano per la storia della Resistenza e della società contemporanea.³² With this, Eichhorn not only makes a physical mark on the space and thus changes the meaning of the architecture, but she goes beyond the walls of the institution to reach new communities.

D. The debate as the key strategy

Lastly, an extremely important strategy is stimulating conversation: the discussion around the space is perhaps being more important than what is actually done with it. When facilitating artistic interventions or submitting proposals, the objective is to arouse debate

³⁰ Haladyn and Jordan, “Disrupting Utopia: Hans Haacke’s Germania or Digging up the History of the Venice Biennale,” 4.

³¹ “Exhibition / German Pavilion 2022,” Deutscher Pavillon, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://www.deutscher-pavillon.org/en/exhibition/>.

³² “Exhibition / German Pavilion 2022.”

and get a reaction. In response to questions about the Berlin Memorial where James E. Young was a part of the jury, and the many ongoing questions about it, he stated “the debate itself—perpetually unresolved amid ever- changing conditions—might now be enshrined. And then just to make sure they grasped my polemic, I offered the reassuring words, “Better a thousand years of Holocaust memorial competitions in Germany than a final solution to your Holocaust memorial question.^{33”}” In all the above stated examples, discussions around the space were what led to different ideas and strategies. These conversations around what to do with spaces of perpetration, often mediatized by politicians, tend to reveal the politics of the nation.

Ernst Hoheisel’s provocative interventions are an example of how they reveal the state of mind of the country. In 1997, on the day of remembrance of the victims of National Socialism, he projected the Auschwitz camp gates with the inscription “Arbeit Macht Frei” onto the Brandenburg Gate, which serve as a national symbol.³⁴ Here, he used an important German edifice to link it with another, one that does not lie in the German capital. The message reveals that one should not look at this monumental gate without remembering the other gates that the Germans built in the concentration camps. This intervention came at a time when Hoheisel proposed to blow up the Brandenburg Gate as his entry for the competition for the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. The remnants were to be grinded into dust and sprinkled on the former site, which would be covered by granite plates. Hoheisel knew that such an idea would never be sanctioned by the government, but that was his very point—he was going against the very idea of a finite monument and way of dealing with history.³⁵

³³ Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 7.

³⁴ “Tor Der Erinnerung: Zu Staub Zerrieben Und Verstreut,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/tor-der-erinnerung-zu-staub-zerrieben-und-verstreut/404564.html>.

³⁵ “Denkmal Für Die Ermordeten Juden Europas [Berlin 1995],” *Memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin 1995)* Horst Hoheisel -, accessed May 18, 2022, http://www.zermahlenegeschichte.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=32.

As many initiatives that are taken, the visitors to these spaces play a key role in defining them. Visitors decide what they take with them once they leave the physical spaces. Especially looking at those who survived the second World War, the generation is dying and the ways in which those individuals chose to remember are tangentially different than the ways in which their children and grandchildren want to remember. This, above all, demonstrates the importance of keeping the debate alive, rather than to make finite decisions of change, such as destruction. Decisions taken in whether to destroy, open, or musealize contested spaces are symbolic of the community and its past, rather than having anything to do with the physical architecture. The balcony is so important because of what happened on and below it. Had it not been for the fact that the balcony has remained closed and fenced off for this long, the space probably would not carry the same kind of burden.

Beyond these Holocaust memorial spaces in Vienna, other politically charged spaces in Vienna are going through similar processes of recontextualization. The Heldenplatz balcony is within walking distance of two other space that are currently contested. The first is only a few steps away— the Heldendenkmal, Heroes monument, which is a part of the Burgtor. The space, specifically the crypt of the Heldendenkmal has been used for state-military commemoration. As Heidemarie Uhl, Richard Hufschmied, and Dieter A. Binder elaborate in the book *Gedächtnisort der Republik Das Österreichische Heldendenkmal im Äußeren Burgtor der Wiener Hofburg*, published in 2021, how after 1945, historical and political conflicts of Austria manifested themselves in this space. The process of devoting a new way of remembering in that case began in the second decade of the 21st century— stemming from the fact that NS-mass murderer Josef Vallaster was featured in the death books of World War II.³⁶ This presence meant that ceremonies around the national holidays had to be rethought. The first “Fest der Freude”, celebration of

³⁶ Dieter A. Binder, Richard Hufschmied and Heidemarie Uhl, *Gedächtnisort der Republik*, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 423.

joy, took place on May 8, 2013, and nowadays is a yearly event. Thus, the 8th of May shifted to being defined as a day of liberation, of course still with remembrance for the victims of national socialism.

Since 2014 there have been concrete efforts to transform the space into an education site, which with the exhibition *41 Tage. Kriegsende 1945 in Österreich – Verdichtung der Gewalt*, 41 days. The End of the War in Austria in 1945 – A Condensation of Violence which ran from April to July 2015 on the Heldenplatz and inside of the crypt.³⁷ The second exhibition, *Letzte Orte vor der Deportation. Kleine Sperlgasse, Castellezgasse, Malzgasse*, Last Places before Deportation. Kleine Sperlgasse, Castellezgasse, Malzgasse, took place from November 2016 to June 2017 in the same location as the first, then also traveling to the district house of the Leopoldstadt district. These two exhibitions brought forward the tension between the commemoration of the Wehrmacht soldiers versus the ignorance of places of perpetration.³⁸ Since 2019, a new memorial in the hall of honor was created, a new plaque fixated, and a temporary exhibition in the crypt erected.³⁹ In connection, the website <https://www.denkmal-heer.at> shows a map of commemorative plaques, inscriptions, monuments, shrines, chapels, and other similar spaces which are located on military property. This according to the website, is done with the aim to create awareness and increase transparency in the culture of remembrance.⁴⁰ This does not mean the space has found a fixed solution: rather, Uhl, Hufschmied, and Binder end their book in hope that the State Foundation Monument, which is currently in the 3rd district in the Schweizergarten, or a similar monument is transferred to the Heldenplatz.

³⁷ Binder, Hufschmied and Uhl, *Gedächtnisort der Republik*, 434.

³⁸ Binder, Hufschmied and Uhl, 437.

³⁹ Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, “Ehrenhalle Mit Ehrenmal ÖBH,” 1010 Wien Äußeres Burgtor / Österreichisches Heldendenkmal Ehrenhalle mit Ehrenmal ÖBH | denkmal heer, accessed May 28, 2022, <https://www.denkmal-heer.at/denkmaeler/wien/1010-wien-aeusseres-burgtor-oesterreichisches-heldendenkmal-ehrenhalle-ehrenmal-oebh>.

⁴⁰ “Wissenswertes,” Wissenswertes | denkmal heer, accessed May 28, 2022, <https://www.denkmal-heer.at/wissenswertes>.

The second space is the Lueger Denkmal, a memorial statue in a square on the eastern side of the Ringstraße in the first district which was stood there since 1926. Karl Lueger was an anti-Semitic mayor in Vienna between 1897 and 1910. Hitler connected with and was a great supporter of Lueger's ideology. Since the Spring of 2008, the association "Arbeitskreis zur Umgestaltung des Lueger-Denkmal in ein Mahnmal gegen Antisemitismus und Rassismus," the working group for the transformation of the Lueger monument into a memorial against anti-Semitism and racism, which was initiated at the University of Applied Arts in the art and communicative practice class (Barbara Putz-Plecko) in the context of the course "Wider das Vergessen" led by Martin Kreen⁴¹ has led actions, open calls, and discussions on the space, also publishing a book in 2011. The open call invited anyone to submit proposals for re-designing the monument, which were discussed publicly. The winning proposal from artist Klemens Wihidal would have meant shifting the statue and the base to the right at a sheer 3.5 angle, disrupting the verticality of the monument and thus the meaning of Lueger and his power. However, the winning proposal was never erected. Nowadays, in 2022, discussion surrounding the square and sculpture continue to be at an all-time high. During the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, the monument received a lot of attention because after the word "shame" was first spray painted, then glued onto the statue, the letters were removed by right wing extremist activists.⁴² Since then, various organizations have been protesting for the graffiti to remain until the space is recontextualized. Now in 2022, a series of protest readings are taking place every Monday, and in the Fall 2022, the new invitation for the redesign is meant to go public.⁴³ Through these two other contested

⁴¹ Ruben Demus, Sabine Duschnig, and Arbeitskreis zur Umgestaltung des Lueger-Denkmal in ein Mahnmal gegen Antisemitismus und Rassismus, *Open call*, 1st ed., 2011, Impressum.

⁴² Andreas Nierhaus, "Das Lueger-Denkmal Von Josef Müllner," Link zur Startseite, January 31, 2022, <https://magazin.wienmuseum.at/das-lueger-denkmal-von-josef-muellner>.

⁴³ "Protestlesungen: Initiative Fordert Umbenennung Des Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Platzes," kurier.at (kurier.at, May 16, 2022), <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/protestlesungen-initiative-fordert-umbenennung-des-dr-karl-lueger-platzes/402006450>.

spaces, which rest at a walking distance from the balcony: the relevance of discussing these spaces in Vienna is clear. These three spaces are symbols of Austrian history and are interlaced: they all represent identity and memory of Vienna. One could say that the Heldentor is the space that has had the opportunity to be contextualized the most, the Lueger statue is in the middle of the process, and the balcony has not reached its full momentum.

Chapter II: Planning and construction history of the balcony

For the purpose of recontextualizing the balcony, we must first understand its history and environment. The balcony is a part of the unfinished imperial forum, a project envisioned by Emperor Franz Joseph I. which was never fully completed. When facing the Neue Burg, the balcony is at the clear center and above the only entrance into the building. The facades of the Neue Burg and the architectural decorations on the balcony contain allegories for the Habsburg monarchy and their main values (see Figure 1). This decision was announced in 1893 and was based on a concept by Albert Ilk and executed by the renowned sculptors such as Victor Tilgner, Rudolf Weyr, Carl Kundmann, Johannes Bank, and Edmund Hellmer.⁴⁴ The justification for allegorical sculptures was to show cultural life in Austria and to highlight Austria's achievement in the fields of art and science, as well as to highlight the principles of the state. The figures on the pediment are meant to support the ideal foundations of the state. Meanwhile, the standing sculptures are meant to be allegories.⁴⁵ When standing on the Heldenplatz, one can feel the affirmative character, on one hand through the strong architectural details and allegories on the facades, on the other through the surrounding structures, such as the two horseman statues which represent archduke Carl and prince Eugen.

⁴⁴ Werner Telesko, Richard Kurdiovsky, Andreas Nierhaus, and Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Die Wiener Hofburg Und Der Residenzbau in Mitteleuropa Im 19. Jahrhundert : Monarchische Repräsentation Zwischen Ideal Und Wirklichkeit*, (Wien: Böhlau, 2010), 415-416.

⁴⁵ Telesko, Kurdiovsky, Nierhaus, 416.



Figure 1: *Miriam Bankier, Neue Burg, 2022*

The whole building is made of Marzano stone, which in its original state was glistering white.⁴⁶ On the bottom floor below the balcony, between the rounded windows, there are life size statues that represent various historical epochs, from a Roman soldier all the way to a Viennese and Polish bourgeois.⁴⁷ Military power plays a large role, as it is also synonymous with imperial power. The balcony was not created for speeches or for acoustic emphasis, but rather for visibility—thus, public appearances.⁴⁸ The balcony is adorned with an allegory on each side, one of love and one of faith, which represent the divine virtues.⁴⁹ Above, four figures, from left to right, represent the civic virtues: loyalty, bravery, wisdom, and temperance.⁵⁰ Therefore, the balcony represents constitutional values, but also an adherence, with love and faith, to the monarchy.

A. The balcony intended as a part of the imperial quarter

The imperial quarters in Vienna began to enlarge themselves in the 1300's, developing throughout the centuries through different regimes, wars, and occupations. The imperial forum as it stands today

⁴⁶ Gerhard Muraier, "Inszenierung Von Geschichte Im öffentlichen Raum Am Beispiel Der Wiener Ringstraße," 2009, 109.

⁴⁷ Muraier, 109.

⁴⁸ Muraier, 115.

⁴⁹ Muraier, 115.

⁵⁰ Muraier, 116.

came from Emperor Franz Joseph I, who after long discussions about enlarging the city of Vienna took matters into his own hands and on December 20, 1857, issued a hand-written decree for projects to expand the city. These caused heated debates, with optimism and skepticism in delicate balance⁵¹. A large part of enlarging the city was also finding space for museums and other cultural institutions. After an intensive planning stage and several architectural contests, Franz Joseph gave approval for the construction of an “Imperial Forum,” designed by Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) in 1869, in which he relied on the planning bases of Carl Hasenauer (1833-1894).⁵² In these initial plans, Semper decided to move away from the idea of just building museums, rather concentrating on a comprehensive building idea in which the museums would be included in.⁵³

The huge extension project was only partially realized. The two museums, the Kunsthistorische Museum and Naturhistorische Museum, which face each other on Maria-Theresien-Platz, and the Neue Burg, between Heldenplatz and Burggarten were the completed aspects. There should have been a symmetrical counterpart to the Neue Burg on the other side. Furthermore, all the buildings should have been connected—through wings, and triumphal arches over the Ringstrasse, which would have connected the museums with the castle. Additionally, there should have been a Hofburg theater in the Volksgarten. This extension project was planned due to a lack of space for guests and the imperial family itself. Inside of the wing of the Neue Hofburg, the family would have lived and celebrated private events. There should have even been a private chapel facing Heldenplatz. Functionally, the balcony was created as an underpass, a roofed, open porch where one could get out of a carriage on dry ground. Similar architectural features can be found at the actor’s entrances of the Burgtheater and other important buildings. If

⁵¹ Alisa Douer and Herbert Haupt, *Wien, Heldenplatz: Mythen Und Massen 1848-1998* (Wien: Mandelbaum, 1998), 26.

⁵² Douer and Haupt, 26.

⁵³ Telesko, Kurdiovsky, Nierhaus, *Die Wiener Hofburg Und Der Residenzbau in Mitteleuropa Im 19. Jahrhundert*, 161.

Semper's original plans had been completed, this would have been a side entrance which would have led exclusively to the apartments of the emperor and empress. On the never completed opposite wing, the same entrance would have been for important foreign guests. Another point of contention were the stairs in the corps de logis—there were many disagreements and complications in building the stairs, which can still be felt when walking up the enormous staircases today; they arouse high expectations, however, they do not lead to impressive rooms beyond the large hall.⁵⁴

Construction was complicated because the construction of the Neue Burg did not start until 1881, led by Hasenauer and a building committee.⁵⁵ When Hasenauer died in 1894, the responsibilities for the construction went through the hands of various employees and the “five difficult years”, according to Alphons Lhotsky, began.⁵⁶ Originally, Heldenplatz, called the “Äußerer Burgplatz” was 60 818 square meters large.⁵⁷ However, with the construction that followed, it lost over 12 000 square meters. Although by the time of the forming of the First Republic construction had been ongoing for decades, the interior was incomplete on the inside until 1938. The difficulty in implementing these architectural changes is mainly due to poor construction management and complicated foundation work. The ideas at play, for example those for the main staircase of the Neue Burg were deeply elaborate, and difficult to realize. According to historian Alphons Lhotsky, the monetary means were available.⁵⁸ However, Vienna was going through significant political changes—now that the monarchy was slowly sinking, and then the first Republic was established, who would live in these spaces? Since 1903, the Fideikommiß Library, which in present day belongs to the National

⁵⁴ Telesko, Kurdiovsky, Nierhaus, 341.

⁵⁵ Telesko, Kurdiovsky, Nierhaus, 235.

⁵⁶ Telesko, Kurdiovsky, Nierhaus, 286.

⁵⁷ Alphons Lhotsky, and Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes Teil 1, Die Baugeschichte der Museen und der neuen Burg*, (Wien: Berger, 1941), 24.

⁵⁸ Lhotsky, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes*, V.

Library, and the portrait collection were housed in the so-called Corps de Logis. In 1908, the Estensian Library followed, in 1912 the Estensian Kunstkammer and the World Travel Collection of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In 1916, the collection of old musical instruments was temporarily exhibited there. Eleven years later, the Ethnographic Collection of the Museum of Natural History (Museum of Folklore) moved into the Corps de Logis. The rooms still available were occasionally used for special exhibitions or events.⁵⁹ In 1918, when the war was lost, the monarchy collapsed. The years between the first and the second world war were filled with economic hardship for most Austrians. During the years after the war, the decision to use the intended living quarters of the emperor and empress as museum and library purposes came into fruition. In 1928, the Museum for Ethnography opened in the main body of Neue Burg, and then in 1935, the weapons collection of the Kunsthistorische Museum moved into the second floor of the main building and into parts of the right wing.⁶⁰

In the years preceding the war, there was a Franz Joseph memorial that was meant to be built. In 1935, there was a first competition, written out from RAVAG and the Unterrichtsministerium for a memorial of Kaiser Franz Joseph. In 1936, a second competition was written out by the city of Vienna, and in 1937 there was a third competition, where the best works were shown at the Künstlerhaus.⁶¹ Notably, during the second competition, architect Rudolf Perthen and sculptor Michael Drobil developed an idea where there would be large stairs leading up to the balcony, where a large-scale memorial of Franz Joseph would stand. The sculpture could be viewed from all angles. In between the competitions, there were many discussions about the various proposals. It seemed that the “Österreichischer Künstlerbund” wanted the memorial to be a purification of Austrian art from kitsch and

⁵⁹ Lhotsky, VI.

⁶⁰ Maria Welzig and Anna Stuhlpfarrer, *Kulturquartiere in Ehemaligen Residenzen: Zwischen Imperialer Kulisse Und Urbaner Neubesetzung* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 26.

⁶¹ Welzig and Stuhlpfarrer, 26.

dilettantism,⁶² which led to many discussions and debates, reflective of an artistic conflict between a new era and traditional art in Vienna. The exhibition at the Künstlerhaus was open September 6th until October 17th, 1937. This is one artistic work, even though never fulfilled, but important to mention because it could have changed the significance of the space.

B. The balcony during the second World War

Even in the book *Die Baugeschichte der Museen und der Neuen Burg*, written by historian Alphons Lhotsky and published in 1941, which describes the construction history of the imperial forum, he writes “Von der Terrasse der Neuen Burg gegen den Heldenplatz verkündete der Führer am 15. März die Wiedervereinigung seiner österreichischen Heimat mit dem Deutschen Reiche; so ist dieser monumentale Bau für alle Zeit eines der ehrwürdigen Denkmäler der Geschichte unseres Volkes geworden.⁶³” This shows, that even during the war, the balcony had quickly absorbed that historical moment into its architectural history. During WWII, the NS regime wanted to implement many architectural changes on the Heldenplatz. To do this, they appointed Hanns Dustmann as the chief building officer for the redevelopment of Vienna.⁶⁴ In June 1938, architect Hans von Matsch submitted first drafts for the restructuring of the Heldenplatz into assembly and parade purposes, although no concrete plans were made until a sketch was made in 1941.⁶⁵ The plans were to pave the entire square so it could be used as a parade ground, moreover, the equestrian statues of Archduke Carl and Prince Eugene would have been presented on a horizontal axis. This was only a part of a large plan to transform the whole city area.⁶⁶

⁶² Künstlerhaus Archiv, Letter dated 14. Dezember 1936. “Reinigung der österreichischen Kunst von Kitsch und Dilettantismus.”

⁶³ Lhotsky, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes*, VI.

⁶⁴ Ingrid Holzschuh, Architekturzentrum Wien, *Wien. Die Perle des Reiches: Planen für Hitler* (Zürich Wien, 2015), 218.

⁶⁵ Holzschuh, 40.

⁶⁶ Douer and Haupt, *Wien, Heldenplatz: Mythen Und Massen*, 29-30.

The staircase and the halls of the Neue Burg were completed between 1938 and 1940 by the Burghauptmannschaft.⁶⁷ In 1938, the “Central Depot of Confiscated Art Objects” was set up in the Neue Burg, then the space was used to present large propaganda exhibitions, namely, “Der Sieg im Westen”, the victory in the West which opened on November 17, 1940, and Our Army which was shown in 1944. Towards the end of the war, some parts of the space were used as a military orthopedic hospital and the Interallied commission was headquartered there.⁶⁸

The Austrofacist and National Socialist regimes used the Hofburg as a means of legitimation and saw the former imperial residence as a connection to history. After the war ended, the ethnological museum was housed on the first floor with the court hunting and armory chambers. In 1945, the Museum of Austrian Culture (MÖK) was founded and displayed in these spaces until 1975. The collection of old musical instruments made their way back to the space in 1948 and the Ephesus collection in 1978. Since the 1960’s the space is also used by the Austrian National Library.

Following this immediate use after the second World War, the area was considered taboo, with negative connotations.⁶⁹ After the war, according to photographs,⁷⁰ the left half of the balcony was destroyed, but looking at photographs, by 1955, the balcony was restored to its original condition. More information about the static condition of the balcony, concerning accessibility and restoring remains under the purview of the Burghauptmannschaft of Austria. I was not able to obtain more information about current stability reports. The Burghauptmannschaft of Austria, abbreviated as BHÖ, manages around 65 historical buildings that are part of Austria’s cultural heritage, the Hofburg included. The tasks include ownership, real estate administration and construction

⁶⁷ Lhosky, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes*, VI.

⁶⁸ “Standort: Die Neue Burg,” hdgö - Haus der Geschichte Österreich, accessed May 29, 2022, https://hdgoe.at/standort_neue_burg.

⁶⁹ Welzig and Stuhlpfarrer, *Kulturquartiere in Ehemaligen Residenzen*, 37.

⁷⁰ Otto Croy, *Hofburg in Wien*, 1946, ÖNB Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung.

management of all federally owned properties in Austria that fall in the purview of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research, and Economy.⁷¹

⁷¹ Welzig and Stuhlpfarrer, *Kulturquartiere in Ehemaligen Residenzen*, 317.

Chapter III: Usage, positioning and media portrayal of the balcony

The Heldenplatz balcony has always been in-between two roles. On one hand, the space belongs to the Neue Burg, on the other, it overlooks Heldenplatz. Although physically attached to the rest of the palace complex, it has never really been set in relation to what goes on inside the building. However, on most depictions of Heldenplatz, which can be seen as one of Austria's most important public spaces of mass assembly, the balcony is also present. These depictions have produced a wealth of historical and political material, and thus have anchored themselves into Austrian and international memory. The importance of Heldenplatz can be attributed to its large size of around 200 x 200 meters⁷² and to its proximity to Austria's most important political institutions such as the parliament, the city hall, and the palace of justice. Additionally, it is also influenced by the cultural establishments around it – the Museums of Art History and of Natural History, the MuseumsQuartier, the House of Austrian History, the Burgtheater and the Austrian National Library. In his book *Mythos Heldenplatz*, Peter Stachel focuses on a historical and political overview of Heldenplatz. He describes Heldenplatz as a „„contested space“ (Stuart Hall) – ein heiß umkämpfter Ort: eine Bühne der politischen Repräsentationen und gleichzeitig Hot Spot der Protestkultur gegen politische Vorhaben oder Maßnahmen.⁷³“ Within this charged space, what role has the balcony played? And where does it fit in nowadays?

A. The crumbling of the monarchy

The first photographs of the balcony during large-scale gatherings were taken on September 15, 1912, at the 23rd International Eucharistic Congress. For this event, the balcony was used as an honorary lodge.

⁷² Welzig and Stuhlpfarrer, *Kulturquartiere in Ehemaligen Residenzen*, 286.

⁷³ Stachel, *Mythos Heldenplatz: Hauptplatz Und Schauplatz Der Republik*, 8.

During this celebration the rest of the Neue Burg was still under construction. Much of the interior was still in the raw construction phase and facades of the Festsaaltrakt, the festival hall wing, were not complete. While construction continued, more events were held on the Heldenplatz, such as Emperor Francis Joseph I's funerary procession on November 30, 1916, which marked the end of an era, as just two years later, at the end of the first world war, the empire crumbled.

In the 1920's, construction of the Neue Burg was closer to completion. On July 9, 1925, closing ceremonies for Katholikentag, Catholic's day, took place on the Heldenplatz, where the Vienna Archbishop Cardinal Piffl held a speech from the balcony. Then, on October 2, 1927, Paul von Hindenburg, a German field marshal, chief of the supreme army command during the first World War and elected president to the Weimar Republic in 1925, was celebrated on the Heldenplatz for his 80th birthday with a rally. The chairman of "Verbandes des deutschvölkischen Vereine Deutsch-Österreichs" welcomed attendees from the balcony.⁷⁴ On July 12, 1929 thousands of participants from all over the world came to Vienna for the 2nd International Youth Meeting of the Socialist Worker's Youth. The opening ceremonies took place with speeches from the balcony, where, notably, the chairman of the Worker's Youth, Felix Kanitz, spoke as well as the mayor of Vienna, Karl Seitz, where he asserted the importance of national solidarity for peace. Koos Vorrink, from Holland, spoke in the name of the international socialist youth.⁷⁵ Afterwards, the international socialist flag was raised on the balcony. A few years later, in 1933, the balcony was used again for the Allgemeine Deutsche Katholikentag. On August 8, 1934, one month after chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß's assassination during a National Socialist coup attempt, the funerary ceremony took place on Heldenplatz. The balcony was at the center of

⁷⁴ "Der Altan Der Neuen Burg," hdgö - Haus der Geschichte Österreich, accessed May 28, 2022, https://hdgoe.at/altan_geschichte.

⁷⁵ "Jugendtreffen 1929," dasrotewien.at, accessed May 28, 2022, <http://www.dasrotewien.at/seite/jugendtreffen-1929>.

the proceedings, with a large flag with the “Kruckenkreuz” hung from it. Dollfuß’s successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, spoke from the balcony for this occasion. A year later, on the one-year anniversary of Dollfuß’s death, Kurt Schuschnigg gave another speech from the balcony. On July 29, 1936, as a part of the torch relay of the Olympic flame from Greece, Heldenplatz was one of the stops. The ceremony, which included a tower with Olympic rings, a fire bowl and a speaker stand, took place on the Heldenplatz. However, government members and representatives of the diplomatic corps were seated on the balcony to watch. Thus, in the years preceding the war, the balcony served political and religious purposes, sometimes as a stage or as an honorary lodge with a sharp view of what was happening below.

B. Hitler’s annexation speech

On March 15, 1938, Hitler appeared on the balcony of the Neue Burg to officially announce the annexation of Austria to Germany. German troops had entered Austria three days before on March 12, encountering jubilation, rather than resistance. Schuschnigg, Austria’s chancellor, had resigned. The day had been prepared for by the Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ Party: schools and many stores had closed allowing the maximum amount of people to come listen to him speak. Hundreds of thousands of Austrians gathered in mass, with flags, uniforms, posters, and euphoria. The streets were loud with wild enthusiasm, people climbing on trees, statues, and fences to get a better glimpse of Hitler. Like other proceedings that had come through Heldenplatz, Hitler began his journey to Heldenplatz from Hotel Imperial, using the Ringstrasse, the heart of Vienna. Before Hitler spoke, he was introduced by Chancellor Seyß-Inquart. Then, Hitler gave his speech, and promptly left the space. Until then, the balcony stood as a symbol of the Habsburg monarchy, and by choosing this as his place to speak from, Hitler wanted to present himself as a continuation of this leadership. His loud voice, rigid demeanor and the extravagance of the

event marked how he desired to continue in similar leadership as the monarchy. Many Jews remember the day as a cataclysm, as does Frederic Morton, who was a Jewish child living in Vienna during the annexation. Reflecting on the day 50 years later, he writes,

“half a century ago a hundred-thousand-throated "Heil!" resounded on the Heldenplatz. The echo still troubles my ear. The anti-Semitic thrust of that roar came out of a monstrous reduction of the human soul. It is beyond my power to undo the monstrosity. But I can refuse to let it push me into repeating it in reverse. And I would be doing just that by reducing "Austrian" to a simple synonym of "anti-Jewish." The way to confront Nazi inhumanity in retrospect is to show that it failed to dehumanize the judgment of its survivors.⁷⁶”

The events of March 15, 1938, has colossal effects on Austria, and along with shifting history, the meaning of the balcony also changed. It was no longer primarily considered a symbol of the monarchy, but a symbol of power and might through totalitarian methods. The loud volume of those gathering there, the blind euphoria, and the stark voice of Hitler left a mark on the space. Although the day set off thousands of arrests for Jews, the balcony is not a place of perpetration, but it manifests a dangerous cult of personality. For those who were there and survived the war, perhaps it served as a reminder of their complicity. After Hitler’s speech on March 15, 1938, the Heldenplatz was routinely used by the German Wehrmacht for swearing-in ceremonies of recruits. The speeches were held directly on the square, but some individuals were able to watch from the Neue Burg. The anniversaries of the Anschluss in 1941 and 1942 were celebrated on the Heldenplatz. Both years, the Viennese Gauleiter Baldur von Schirach and Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels spoke to the crowds from the balcony. However, these crowds, compared to those from 1938, are much more organized and disciplined.

⁷⁶ Frederic Morton, “The Anschluss,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 11, 1988), <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/11/opinion/the-anschluss.html?searchResultPosition=23>.

C. The balcony as a witness of attitudes in post-war Austria

After the war was over and the damage to the balcony was repaired, the balcony and its uses weren't part of public debates. Until the 1980's, there was a gap in usage and discussions on and about the balcony. Nevertheless, during these years, it continued to serve as an important political backdrop, perhaps playing the role of an observer. On April 30, 1955, the ceremony where city command was handed off from Soviet Russian forces to the United States of America was held on the square, and spectators watched down from the balcony. A year later, on December 6, 1956, the square was chosen for the swearing in ceremony of new soldiers of the Austrian armed forces.⁷⁷ Instead of speaking from the balcony, the Federal Chancellor and other guests spoke from the steps below. The only individuals on the balcony were those holding the large Austrian flag that was draped down. The use of the area to hold military events is notable because it doesn't really show any reflection of the past—the images are eerily similar to those taken before the war.

In the 1960's, the balcony didn't appear to be used, and Heldenplatz was slowly becoming a popular place of gathering again. For example, on April 8, 1965, more than 25,000 people gathered at the funeral ceremony for retiree Ernst Kirchweyer, who was beaten to death by a neo-Nazi during a confrontation between antifascists and right-wing protesters.⁷⁸ The funeral procession passed through Heldenplatz. Another example is when Leopold Figl, former vice-chancellor of Austria died, his funerary procedure took place on May 6, 1965, and also passed through Heldenplatz. In contrast to events of mourning, celebratory events also took place, such as Karl Schranz's welcome ceremony back to Austria on February 8, 1971, after being excluded from the Olympic Winter Games in Sapporo. He was celebrated as a national hero by over 100,000 people on the Heldenplatz. People were euphoric and very patriotic, perhaps

⁷⁷ "Der Altan Der Neuen Burg," hdgö - Haus der Geschichte Österreich, accessed May 28, 2022, https://hdgoe.at/altan_geschichte.

⁷⁸ Douer and Haupt, *Wien, Heldenplatz: Mythen Und Massen*, 30-31.

showing a pride for their country they had not since the end of the last war. This euphoria and craze also served as a frightening reminder of the past. However, Karl Schranz waved down at his fans from a different balcony, one attached to the Austrian Federal Chancellery, situated on the Ballhausplatz, a square a few steps away from Heldenplatz.

It is also in the 1960's that artists and writers began to reflect on and criticize Heldenplatz, the balcony, and Austria's past. Until then, many Austrians saw themselves as the first victims of the Holocaust and used this false victimhood to avoid confronting what had actually occurred during the war. In 1962, Ernst Jandl, Austrian poet, wrote *wien: Heldenplatz* which was published in 1966.⁷⁹ In this poem, he describes the day of the Anschluss in 1938, drawing on his own memories to go into detail on the euphoric crowds and Hitler's appearance. This political lyric, through its bold descriptions, was one of the first pieces to process and challenge the lie of Austria being the first victim of the war. In 1965, Günter Brus took his art into the open with the "Wiener Spaziergang"; he painted himself in white paint and drew a line down the center of his body and then walked through the Vienna city center, beginning at Heldenplatz with the goal of reaching Stephansplatz.⁸⁰ This procedure mirrors that of the official funerary processions. He was apprehended by a policeman on his way to Stephansplatz. Brus' performance art piece can be classified as Vienna actionism. Although the work was only reworked and re-acclaimed in the 1980's, it played an important role in defining the freedom of art within Viennese society, a discussion that reached a peak in 1988 with Thomas Bernhard's play, *Heldenplatz*.

When Thomas Bernhard's play, *Heldenplatz*, came out in 1988, it generated outrage and debate throughout Vienna. This play, which the former director of the Viennese Burgtheater, Claus Peymann commissioned, was meant to be for the 50-year anniversary of the

⁷⁹ Ernst Jandl, "Wien: Heldenplatz," accessed May 28, 2022, <https://www.lyrikline.org/de/gedichte/wien-heldenplatz-1229>.

⁸⁰ "Günter Brus," Günter Brus - BRUSEUM: Sammlungsobjekte | Neue Galerie Graz, accessed May 29, 2022, <https://www.museum-joanneum.at/neue-galerie-graz/sammlung/bruseum/guenter-brus>.

Anschluss. The play consists of “long monologues by relatives who have gathered after the death of a Jewish professor who, having returned to Vienna after 50 years of self-imposed exile, was driven by despair to leap out his window.⁸¹” As Eva Kuttner writes, “Bernhard extracted fragments from the Heldenplatz archive and incorporated condensed memories in a narrative of displacement on one hand, and of complicity and conformity on the other.⁸²” Bernhard doesn’t mention the words ‘1938’ or ‘Hitler’ throughout the whole play. He doesn’t have to-- in the last scene, when the professor’s wife hears imaginary screams and “Heil Hitler” chants, the screaming voices are enough to remind the audience. With this play, Bernhard directly points to the complicity of Austria’s cultural and political institutions in promoting Nazi ideology, especially by bringing it into the art space, a field which has always been Austria’s pride.⁸³ Instead of accepting victimhood and erasure, Bernhard forces viewers to confront the past head-on. Discussions and demonstrations throughout Austria begun when snippets of the play were leaked before the premiere and carried on while the play was performed, with critique from diverse organizations. Nevertheless, the play was sold out every night. Waldheim, Austrian president at the time, called it “a crass slander of the Austrian people.⁸⁴” Austrian Holocaust survivor, Simon Wiesenthal, for example, was a critic of Bernhard’s play “for implying collective guilt, which goes against Jewish ethics.⁸⁵” It was a historically important culmination of the intersection of art and politics. Questions arose on if the state should subsidize art critical of itself, beginning a

⁸¹ Serge Schmemmann, “Vienna Journal; along with the Strudel, Demons That Don't Die,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 2, 1988), <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/02/world/vienna-journal-along-with-the-strudel-demons-that-don-t-die.html?searchResultPosition=4>.

⁸² Eva Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” *The German Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2007): 468–91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27676107>, 471.

⁸³ Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” 477.

⁸⁴ Schmemmann, “Vienna Journal; along with the Strudel, Demons That Don't Die.”

⁸⁵ Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” 485.

conversation post-war Austria needed to have, and setting the stage for discussions about the balcony.

Before Berhard's play premiered in November, another important artistic intervention took place on the façade of the Neue Burg. As part of the "Wiener Festwochen" of 1988, Krzysztof Wodiczko created two projections in Vienna, notably also in the year of the 50th anniversary of the annexation. Wodiczko is well known for his controversial and thought-provoking projections historic building facades. The first projection was on a Flak tower in the Arenberparc, an anti-aircraft gun blockhouse constructed by the Nazis, and the second on the façade of the Neue Burg (see Figure 2).⁸⁶ On the front wall of the building, Wodiczko projected an eagle's spread wings, which belonged to an eagle that is a part of the collection of the Vienna Natural History Museum. Instead of projecting the rest of the eagle's body in the center, thus the balcony, he chose to project the logo of Noricum, an Austrian arms producer. During the Iraq-Iran war, Noricum took advantage of Austria's neutral status and sold weapons, specifically long-distance missiles to both sides. This caused outrage throughout Austria, but also one again is an example to how Austria continued to hide behind the status of neutrality. Wodiczko's work is a prime example of artistic intervention in contested spaces, sadly, it was not publicized in any way and shown late at night (22:00), thus it failed to become a part of documented history. There are few media reports, photographs, or mention in any history books of this event.

⁸⁶ "Projections," Krzysztof Wodiczko, accessed May 29, 2022, <https://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections#/new-gallery-98/>.



*Figure 2: Krzysztof Wodiczko, Neue Hofburg, 1988,
<https://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections#/new-gallery-98>.*

In March 1978, Rudolf Stoiber shot a few scenes for his documentary, “Erinnerungen an Österreich”, which translates to “Memories of Austria”, from the balcony. During the documentary, he interviews eleven figures in culture, business, politics, and science who had to flee Austria around 1938. This movie marked one of the first encounters of Austrian memory culture concerning the Holocaust. Throughout the movie, the balcony is not noticeable. Although Stoiber’s choice to film from the balcony must have been intentional, the movie focuses more on how the 11 individuals feel about Austria in 1978. Interestingly, in 2008, a movie called “Der Mann auf dem Balkon”, “The Man on the Balcony” came out. This movie is centered around Rudolf Gelbard, a Jew who grew up in Vienna and spent the war at the concentration camp Theresienstadt. He revisits important childhood markers and ends the movie by speaking on the balcony. He reflects on an evening when he was invited to the new Hofburg by the former Austrian president Thomas Klestil and was looking out at the balcony. Even though it was pouring rain, he felt the need to go stand on it. In his movie, he says as he stood on the balcony, his thoughts regarding Hitler

were, “wir haben über dich gesiegt, wir haben dich überlebt, leider sehr wenige, aber wir haben überlebt,⁸⁷” we have triumphed over you, we survived you, unfortunately very few, but we have survived. Unlike in Schreiber’s documentary, which relies on individual reflections, Gelbard can use the 80-year anniversary to revisit the spaces and confront them in regard to the current political climate. Comparing the way in which the balcony is used in the two films exemplifies the evolution of the Austrian media in confronting the Holocaust and utilizing contaminated spaces such as the balcony.

In more recent media coverage of the balcony, the feature film “Der schönste Tag”, which premiered in 2021, shows the installation process of the new Austrian exhibition at Auschwitz Birkenau, paired with insights from contemporary witnesses on their personal memories of the Anschluss and wartime. In the opening scene of the movie, the audio of Hitler’s speech on the balcony is played, and scenes of the Heldenplatz are shown. Comparing this most recent movie to Gelbard or Stoiber’s works, from the ways that they use the balcony, as well as how they deal with the interview format, it is a testament to much Austrian memory making and memories have evolved. In 2018, artist Borjana Ventzislavova produced the film, “And the Sky Clears Up (Magic Resistance).” This film, which shows five women performing artistic-magical rituals at locations in Vienna, namely locations from the Nazi past, including the balcony. Commissioned in 2018 as a part of commemoration for the 1938 annexation, the woman dancing on the balcony is doing so in an act of decontamination.⁸⁸

As noted from the events that took place on the Heldenplatz and the balcony before World War II, the space was also used for religious ceremonies. The first large ceremony since the war took place on 1983, when pope John Paul II visited Austria, the first pope to do so after more

⁸⁷ Kurt Brazda, *Der Mann auf dem Balkon: Rudolf Gelbard*, (2008), ORF Archiv.

⁸⁸ Séamus Kealy, “And the Sky Clears up (Magic Resistance),” Borjana Ventzislavova., 2018, <http://borjana.net/and-the-sky-clears-up>.

than 200 years⁸⁹ for Catholics day. During his visit, the pope held many speeches and attended various functions, but the highlight was his speech on Heldenplatz which attracted crowds of about 100,000.⁹⁰ While speaking from Heldenplatz, it was made sure that the stage or setting did not bear resemblance to 1938. Instead, a grandstand was created below the balcony and a big screen was installed. His speech mentioned many ties to 1683, the year in which the Ottoman army was defeated at the gates of Vienna by the united forces of Christian Europe, however, the pope made sure to accentuate how it wasn't about the anniversary of winning a war, but rather about celebrating the current peace.⁹¹ Again, in 1998, during John II's third visit to Austria "more than 60,000 Roman Catholics attended a papal mass at Heldenplatz on June 21"⁹² exemplifying the weight religion continued to have in Austrian society.

On June 17, 1992, Elie Wiesel was the first, and to date, the last, to deliver a speech since WWII from the Heldenplatz balcony. The Nobel Peace Prize winner was invited to speak as a part of the "Konzert für Österreich," a concert organized by the youth of all Austrian political parties (except for the right-wing freedom party) against Xenophobia and Right-Wing extremism. Mr. Wiesel was among international and Austrian performers such as opera star Mara Zampieri, the US Band "Temptations" and Heinz Maracek. Peter Huemer as well as Daniel and Miryam Charim were among the individuals who convinced Wiesel to speak. June 17 also marked the one-year anniversary of the Haider statement about the "orderly employment policy in the third Reich."⁹³ Jörg Haider was voted out of office as governor of Carinthia by the SPÖ

⁸⁹ Douer and Haupt, *Wien, Heldenplatz: Mythen Und Massen*, 31.

⁹⁰ "Pope, in Vienna, Stresses Christian Heritage," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, September 11, 1983), <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/09/11/world/pope-in-vienna-stresses-christian-heritage.html>.

⁹¹ Silvia Dallinger, "EUROPAVESPER AM HELDENPLATZ (10. SEPTEMBER 1983)," *Europavesper am Heldenplatz*, accessed May 29, 2022, <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/tuerkengedaechtnis/home/feiern/300-jaehriges-jubilaeum-1983/europavesper-am-heldenplatz>.

⁹² Douer and Haupt, *Wien, Heldenplatz: Mythen Und Massen*, 31.

⁹³ Wolfgang Haserer, "Der Rechtspopulist Jörg Haider - Eine Analyse Seines Politischen Erfolges in Österreich," GRIN, accessed May 28, 2022, <https://www.grin.com/document/4668>.

and ÖVP in 1991 after his scandalous statement in the Carinthian state parliament. His party rose again in 2000, causing many protests, notably on Heldenplatz.

Elie Wiesel agreeing to speak from the balcony was a symbol that important political and historical shifts were beginning to take place in Austria. It showed that Austria was starting to reflect on its past, shifting beyond the Waldheim years, during which Elie Wiesel refused to enter Austria. Now that Waldheim was no longer president, he saw it as his duty to return and to speak to a younger generation, such as most of the attendees of the concert.⁹⁴ This young generation was not alive when Hitler spoke on the balcony, and thus this event marked their primary first-hand experience of witnessing a live speech from the balcony. For Mr. Wiesel, their presence signaled that the era of the forebears was over.⁹⁵

On the other hand, by speaking on the balcony, Elie Wiesel recontextualized and reclaimed a space from which he had been expelled. When Hitler spoke on the balcony, it was with intention to murder individuals like Wiesel, accordingly, Wiesel speaking on it was a symbolic moment. By speaking to a large crowd from the balcony, Wiesel and attendees reclaimed the public space for themselves and stood against xenophobia, right-wing extremism, and Nazi vilification. Reflecting back on his speech, Elie Wiesel said, “the balcony is nothing. It is a symbol, nothing more. The purification, the change cannot come from the balcony. It must come from below.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Wiesel’s speech on June 17, 1992, did not lead to a sustained reinterpretation of the space and is very weakly anchored to collective memory nowadays. It has blurred into what happened at Heldenplatz in the 80’s and 90’s.

⁹⁴“Die Pflicht zur politischen Sensibilität Friedensnobelpreisträger Elie Wiesel im Telefon-Interview mit dem STANDARD,” Der Standard (Der Standard, June 16,1992).

⁹⁵ “Austrians Rally against Nazi Past,” The New York Times (The New York Times, June 18, 1992), <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/18/world/austrians-rally-against-nazi-past.html>.

⁹⁶ Werner Perger, “„Nur Die Schuldigen Sind Schuldig,” Zeit online, 1992, <https://www.zeit.de/1992/27/nur-die-schuldigen-sind-schuldig>.

January 23, 1993, one of the biggest rallies against xenophobia and a reaction to a xenophobic FPÖ referendum introduced under Jörg Haider took place on Heldenplatz. It was organized by SOS Mitmensch, a non-governmental organization that brought up to 300,000 people to Heldenplatz.⁹⁷ Participants carried torches or candles in their hands and peacefully protested in a procession going through Vienna’s city center that ended at Heldenplatz. There, artist André Heller moderated multiple speeches by intellectuals, artists, and politicians. He noted that this was the biggest gathering on Heldenplatz to date,⁹⁸ taking away that record from Hitler’s speech in 1938 and setting a record, that stands until today, for the largest demonstration in Austrian history.⁹⁹ However, Heldenplatz and the Burgtor crypt had also been used for the commemoration on May 8th of those who were part of the Burschenschaft, Austrian fraternities, who had died during the war fighting for Austria. This showcased a preference of remembering those who supported Nazi values, rather than to bring attention to the victims or resistance fighters, or to generally just celebrate the end of the war. For the first time on May 8th, 2011, Ariel Muzicant, then president of the Jewish Community of Vienna, broke through the barrier of the Burschenschafter memorial ceremony by laying down a wreath for the victims of the Nazi regime, creating a kind of counter event to that of the Burschenschaft.¹⁰⁰

On May 5, 2003, the Heldenplatz became the site of a moving commemoration ceremony as part of the project, “Letter to the Stars.” A total of 550 classes from 400 different Austrian schools—comprising 15,000 students aged 12 to 19 --- researched the lives of Holocaust victims. They wrote 80,000 letters,¹⁰¹ which were tied to white balloons.

⁹⁷ Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” 478.

⁹⁸ Stachel, *Mythos Heldenplatz: Hauptplatz Und Schauplatz Der Republik*, 73.

⁹⁹ Kommunikation Grüne Wien, “Grüne Wien/Kunrath: 28 Jahre Lichtermeer - „Menschlichkeit Zuerst,” OTS.at, January 22, 2021, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20210122_OTS0036/gruene-wienkunrath-28-jahre-lichtermeer-menschlichkeit-zuerst.

¹⁰⁰ Binder, Hufschmied and Uhl, *Gedächtnisort der Republik*, 420.

¹⁰¹ Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” 478.

These 80,000 white balloons carried these letters into the sky from Heldenplatz. This project spoke highly to the commitment of Austrian teachers and the education system to Holocaust education. Furthermore, it exemplifies a shift from a spectator to an activist role. Children were able to put their own reflections and hopes for the future into the letters, allowing a generational gap to be connected. Moreover, “the living memorial exemplifies the plurality of voices and challenges within a memory discourse driven by the cultural establishment, or an equally established anti-establishment.”¹⁰² Holocaust survivors also spoke at the ceremony of Heldenplatz, creating a full-circle movement and giving them the opportunity to redefine the space in their own way. This initiative paved the way for many more remembrance projects and ceremonies, namely a remembrance ceremony for 70 years after the Anschluss, where 80 000 candles were lit in honor of the victims of the Holocaust.¹⁰³

During these years, started by the Concert for Austria in 1992, in which Heldenplatz played a more commemorative role and serving as counterdemonstrations to the overwhelming memories of March 15, 1938, demonstrations continued to take place, such as those on April 13, 2002, where people protested the new “Verbrechen der Wehrmacht” exhibition. These protests, lead mainly by right extremists and were like those that took place for the original exhibition which was focused on the war crimes of the Wehrmacht, between 1995 and 1999 throughout Germany and Austria. This demonstration is particularly relevant for this paper as it shows the ways in which museum spaces and politics collide. In 2005, for the 60-year anniversary of the end of the war, for the 50-year anniversary of the signing of the “Staatsvertrag”, and for the 10-year anniversary of joining the European Union, the project 25 Peaces used art to intervene in public spaces and to generate discussion and reflection

¹⁰² Kuttner, “Austria’s Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” 478.

¹⁰³ Die Presse, “70 Jahre Anschluss: 80.000 Kerzen Am Heldenplatz,” Die Presse (Die Presse, March 12, 2008), <https://www.diepresse.com/369510/70-jahre-anschluss-80000-kerzen-am-heldenplatz>.

on these past events. Finally, an artistic intervention! On the Heldenplatz, three interventions were installed. First, the equestrian statues of Prince Eugen and Archduke Karl were walled up, just as they were during the last months of the second world war. Second, the Heldenplatz became a vegetable garden with 60 plots.¹⁰⁴ This was also meant to show how Heldenplatz looked like and was used for during the war. Thirdly, the balcony took on a memorial function: a large-scale commemorative plaque to the inner niche of the balcony was added. In large letters, “Den Opfern des Nationalsozialismus” was written out. Unlike the first two interventions, which were recreating what had already happened, the intervention on the balcony served as a memorial space but also as a warning for the future. Initially, it was planned to put white crosses on the Heldenplatz, but this was criticized since it was said the white crosses would only symbolize the pain of Christians and not Jews.¹⁰⁵ Many of the projects taken on by 25 Peaces were met with criticism of the media, which perhaps reflected some of the purpose of these public artistic interventions—generating conversation about the past. In the media archives referring to these artistic projects much more discuss the shock of a vegetable garden in the city center, or the fact that cows were grazing on the lawns of the Belvedere Garden than they do the use of the balcony. However, it is symbolic that the balcony was once again transformed into a stage, with its backdrop conveying a clear message.

As this historical overview shows, the use of the space for political means has been taboo since 1945. However, when the plateau in front of the balcony doors was rented, the balcony could be used. For example, according to the Rudolf Gelbard’s memories, he was able to enter it during a private function. The records of who used it has not been public: however, there are a few photographs of celebrations ringing

¹⁰⁴ “25 Pieces’ Reihe Geht Weiter,” vienna.at, August 26, 2011, <https://www.vienna.at/25-pieces-reihe-geht-weiter/2574249>.

¹⁰⁵ “Format Über Das Gedankenjahr 2005: Nun Doch Keine Kreuze Am Heldenplatz,” trend.at, February 3, 2005, <https://www.trend.at/home/format-gedankenjahr-2005-nun-kreuze-heldenplatz-104266>.

in the year 2000 on the balcony in possession of the House of Austrian History.

D. Musealization: The House of Austrian History

Discussions for the House of Austrian History began long before the museum opened in the new Hofburg in 2018. The position of director was written out in November 2016, and in February 2017, Dr. Monika Sommer assumed her position. As of 2022, the museum holds the following mission statement,

“The House of Austrian History is the republic’s first museum of contemporary history. Presented in a modern and insightful way, the new museum invites visitors to the Hofburg to examine and discuss Austria’s history. Starting with the founding of the democratic republic in 1918, the exhibition focuses on social change and political fault lines. While the questions it asks are aimed at the past, they remain relevant to the present as well. Conceived as a discussion forum for Austria as a whole, the museum opens up new perspectives on the country’s past and present – with an eye to the future. It also offers a wide range of educational services and an innovative web platform.¹⁰⁶”

The permanent exhibition space is the core of the museum, but the museum goes far beyond it. First, it utilizes the lobby for temporary exhibitions. Second, the museum goes out into Heldenplatz. For example, from October 2021 to April 2022, an exhibition titled “The Vienna Model of Radicalization. Austria and the Shoah” was a free exhibition on Heldenplatz square. Then, it travelled to another area of Vienna, the 21st district, to be on view for a different audience. The largest temporary exhibition space, the plateau in front of the balcony doors, was renamed the Alma Rosé plateau by director Dr. Sommer to remember Alma Rosé, the Jewish musician and leader of the women’s

¹⁰⁶ “Das Museum,” hdgö - Haus der Geschichte Österreich, accessed May 28, 2022, <https://www.hdgoe.at/the-museum>.

orchestra of the concentration camp Auschwitz Birkenau, who perished there. Since the temporary exhibition space opened in 2018, it has been used to show exhibitions encompassing the themes of the Holocaust and anti-discrimination.

When the House of Austrian History opened its doors in 2018 it invited artist Susan Philipsz to create a sound installation to mark the Commemorative Year 2018 of Austria's annexation to the National Socialist German Reich. Director Monika Sommer worked together with Kasper König, curator and former director of the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Stella Rollig, artistic director of the Belvedere, and Thomas D. Trummer, director of the Kunsthau Bregenz to invite Philipsz to develop a site-specific work. Susan Philipsz was awarded the Turner Prize in 2010 and her most notable works, such as "Study for Strings" at the main railway station in Kassel, Germany as part of the 2012 Documenta art exhibition and "War Damaged Musical Instruments" at London's Tate Britain in 2015-2016 use sound to evoke emotions of loss and separation in public spaces.

In this installation, which she titled *The Voices*, Philipsz used four notes that resonate with the architecture of the Heldenplatz. The technique used to create the sounds is simple—she rubs her fingertips on the rims of water-filled glasses, as we might have done as kids. It is a familiar sound and feeling; nevertheless, there is a wide range of tones. The use of glass can allude to "Reichskristallnacht", the tragic November pogroms, and perhaps more generally to the violence and cruelty exerted towards Jews during the time when Hitler gave his speech. Furthermore, the sounds are "an allusion to the glass elements built into the microphones and radios of the time, and which were used to determine quality.¹⁰⁷" When Hitler spoke on the balcony, he positioned himself so that everyone could see and hear him. He utilized his roaring voice,

¹⁰⁷ Sommer, Monika, and Haus der Geschichte Österreich, *The voices : a temporary sound installation by Susan Philipsz on Vienna's Heldenplatz to mark the Commemorative Year 2018 : a project by the House of Austrian History*, (Wien: Haus der Geschichte Österreich, 2018), 49.

powerful intonation, and swinging movements to attempt to make himself heard. Susan Philipsz refuses to emulate these violent acoustics. The strength in the sounds she produces lies precisely in their contrast with the sounds Hitler made on the balcony.

However, deciding where the sounds would come from was difficult—first an idea was to put the speakers on the balcony, but Philipsz stated, “that felt wrong — I didn’t want this to be about Hitler, but about the voices of all the people who had gathered there over the decades.¹⁰⁸” So, the sounds are transmitted to speakers mounted at four points on Heldenplatz.¹⁰⁹ This, along with the title, *The Voices*, served as a tool to remind whoever heard the installation that responsibility comes from below the balcony and not only from who stands on it. Twice a day, for ten minutes, the sound installation could be heard from all angles of the Heldenplatz.

Philipsz work marked the HDGÖ’s first intervention going beyond the museum walls and setting a strong politically and historical mark. Philipsz’s work was played twice a day during 2018 and 2019, then it stopped and returned in 2021, where it now plays once a day at 17:15 inside of the building in the stairways. Although the role of the artwork undeniably changed once it was brought inside of the building, it perhaps brings attention to another point of tension. The visitors hear these sounds as they walk up to the Alma Rosé Plateau, where there is usually a temporary exhibition. The exhibition space is sandwiched in between two doors—one that looks to the Kunsthistorische Museum’s collection of old music instruments, and the other that leads directly to the balcony. Perhaps the listeners of Philipsz’s installation are no longer listening to the installation as bystanders as they were when they walked through Heldenplatz, but by walking up the stairs towards the balcony, as many other important historical political figures did, they can reflect on their

¹⁰⁸ Gerrit Wiesmann, “An Invisible Artwork Reminds Austria of Its Nazi Past,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 16, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/16/arts/the-voices-susan-philipsz-heldenplatz.html?searchResultPosition=7>.

¹⁰⁹ Sommer and Haus der Geschichte Österreich, *The voices*.

own roles and power. They are no longer looking up or around, but they are immersed in the space. Nevertheless, that feeling is brought to a quick halt once they stand in front of the locked doors of the balcony, where the barrier is even reenforced with a grid.

In addition to Philipsz's intervention the museum updated two stations on the Alma Rosé Plateau in December 2021 (see Figure 3). Before then, ever since the museum opened in 2018, there have been stations that addressed the balcony. They have evolved throughout the years¹¹⁰, and the most updated version is the following: the first station is situated left of the doors leading onto the balcony and is titled "The Balcony" – a construction site." Here, visitors are invited to read a brief overview of what events have transpired on the balcony and why the site is important. The visitor can then cast a vote to whether the balcony should be opened or remain closed. The overwhelming majority has voted yes to opening the balcony. The station is enhanced by touchscreens which lead to the website <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>. This website has multiple components: first, it leads to a slide show with a historical overview of balcony uses to information about Susan Philipsz's installation, and to other NS contested spaces in Austria. However, its primary use is to fuel discussions about the balcony and what should be done with it. Visitors can do this in multiple ways: they can sit down at the station and draw using materials provided by the museum, they can submit their drawings to the website, or they can also vote on already existing drawings. Opposite of this station, the other station faces the doors of the Collection of Historic Music Instruments and is titled "Museums have responsibilities." Here, three themes are confronted, "exhibitions as a justification of violence", "collecting through exploitation", and "responsibility means transparency." This is the first curatorial decision that confronts the problematic usage history of the building. Visitors can learn more using a touchscreen that links to

¹¹⁰ The first stations have been the since the opening, then they were updated in March 2019, and the most updated version is from December 2021.

<https://www.zdk-online.org/>, the online card index of the central depot for seized collections in Vienna. These are examples of an active and critical engagement with the history of the space, choosing to tie it in rather than to leave it behind.



Figure 3: Miriam Bankier, Balcony doors with information station, 2021

Among the few who have stepped foot on the balcony more recently is Nobel laureate for medicine 2000, Eric Kandel. His stepping on the balcony on November 7, 2019, was part of a trip to Austria for his 90th birthday. He grew up in Vienna but had to flee during the Holocaust. However, when Kandel was awarded the Nobel prize, Austria quickly reclaimed him as an Austrian Nobel. In response, Kandel said “I thought this was typically Viennese: very opportunistic, very disingenuous, somewhat hypocritical. When I got a letter from Austria's President Klestil asking, “How can we recognize you?” I proposed that I have a symposium on the response of Austria to National Socialism.”¹¹¹ His

¹¹¹ Robert Hilferty, “Nobel Prize Winner Kandel Speaks of Brain, Snails, Memory Pill,” Nobel Prize Winner Kandel Speaks of Brain, Snails, Memory Pill - Bloomberg, April 7, 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20151001193513/http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=a1wnSz3fs6vg&refer=culture-redirectoldpage>.

decision to want to step back onto the balcony so many years after he fled is a testament to the memorial importance of the balcony.

Since the covid-19 pandemic, Heldenplatz has become a usual Saturday gathering space for protesters against restrictions. The protesters use Heldenplatz as a main space, then move throughout the city center. When in November 2021 Austria announced a vaccine mandate, around 40,000 people protested,¹¹² reflecting how deep and divisive this decision was on Austrian society. More recently, in March 2022, the Heldenplatz has been used as a venue space for a benefit concert for the war in Ukraine. Throughout Vienna's cultural institutions, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, there have been banners and posters on the front facades speaking against the war. They can be seen on St. Stephen's cathedral, the Secession, the University of Applied Arts, the Burgtheater and many more. However, the facades of the Neue Burg and of the balcony remain bare, and the balcony continues to be a mere observer.

¹¹² Melissa Eddy, "Thousands in Austria Protest Virus Lockdown and Vaccine Mandate," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, November 20, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/world/europe/austria-lockdown-vaccine-mandate-covid.html?smid=url-share>.

Chapter IV: Curatorial and artistic conceptions for the balcony

As I began to imagine possibilities for the balcony, I became aware that there is no right resolution, but reflecting on the words of James E. Young,¹¹³ it is much more about the discussion it takes to get to an idea. Accordingly, my vision is not a fixed solution, rather a questioning and reframing of the discussions around the Heldenplatz balcony, which has stood stowed away for too long. Reflecting on the dense history of the balcony and its surroundings, the balcony has become testimonial evidence for Austria's mishandling of the past. At the same time, through the powerful artistic interventions, discussions, and protests that have taken place there recently, it also shows great potential growth and possibility.

A. What has been proposed?

Before elaborating a vision, I felt it was important to look at what has been proposed on the <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/> website, which shows hundreds of drawings for suggestions for the space. The drawings are creative, thought provoking and varied. Beyond those, the commentaries alongside the submissions are inquisitive and offer multifaceted perspectives. The most voted for idea as of April 2022, with over 1000 votes, is a sketch by Jo Zynda, titled “Ein Strom der nicht mehr aufzuhalten ist!”, a storm that cannot be contained (see Figure 4). Here, a waterfall emerges from the balcony onto the Heldenplatz. This idea is more of a symbol to show how dangerous it can be when a current grows too strong, rather than a long-term solution. Many of the other ideas are symbolic rather than functional, for example, Andi Zobernig suggested putting a slide from the balcony that leads into a ball pit on Heldenplatz.¹¹⁴ Such ideas, although realistically difficult to render, show

¹¹³ Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 7.

¹¹⁴ “‘Der Balkon’ Eine Baustelle,” Heldenplatz, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>.

attempts to leave the larger architectural structure intact, but to transform the original structure and use of the balcony, making it impossible to use the space way that Hitler did and to further his cult of personality. They follow a similar approach than Hoheisel did with his suggestions for the Brandenburg gate.



*Figure 4: Jo Zynda, Ein Strom der nicht mehr auszuhalten ist!?,
<https://heldenplatz.bdgoe.at/>*

Many ideas suggest that the space could be used commercially. This could mean that it would be rented out for private events, turned into a café or into a restaurant. On one hand, an idea like this would change the space from its intended use, moving it away from that history, on the other, this would mean erasing aspects of the history. For a place that has become such a symbol, allowing a private entity ownership and earnings seems morally incorrect. This was a debate at “Eagle’s Nest” in Obersalzberg, Germany, which is a part of a complex of residences built on a mountain. The secluded house was built for Hitler and used for social events. It has been turned into a tourist destination by building a restaurant in the building of “Eagle’s Nest”, and a five-star hotel in the

area.¹¹⁵ The choice to privatize the space for economic reasons is morally problematic and has gotten harsh criticism. The Documentation Center in Obersalzberg continually tries to keep the historical context of the place apparent through tours, exhibitions, and historical research. Allowing such a historical space in the heart of Austria to be transformed for monetary gain would recontextualize it, however, not towards a more transparent infrastructure.

In many suggestions visible on the website, the space also takes on a memorial function by having it be dedicated to representing the ideals that Hitler tried to erase. These suggestions include a balcony for human rights, for the youth, for peace, etc. Some attempt to do this by leaving the architecture of the balcony intact but adding elements to the space. For example, TP3 Architects suggests “einfach mal Gras über die Sache wachsen lassen!”, letting grass and other plants grow on the balcony, thus no longer making it accessible, and adding a new green space to the city center. Stefan Benedik, on the other hand, suggests a large mirror, so those looking up at the balcony can see their own reflection as if they were on the balcony (see Figure 5). With this, those below suddenly appear on the balcony—showing how much power those below can have and how quickly that power can change. Hyunje Joo Baukunst took back an idea that was suggested almost a century ago for the Franz Joseph memorial that was never built: stairs that lead up to the balcony. Instead of wood, glass should be used to emphasize transparency and let the sunlight change the color hues of the stairs. In this model, everyone gains access to the balcony, and thus also directly to the museum.

¹¹⁵ “Obersalzberg Heute,” Dokumentation Obersalzberg: Obersalzberg heute, May 16, 2022, <https://www.obersalzberg.de/dokumentation-obersalzberg/der-historische-ort/obersalzberg-heute>.



Figure 5: Stefan Benedik, photos by Cor2701 and Cheva, *Auch wer nicht oben steht, steht oben*, <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>

Instead of using an artistic intervention to reflect, other proposals suggest adding an architectural structure to make the space a gathering space for events and conversations. Some advocate for giving the victims of the war a space or opportunity to speak. BWM Architects, Johann Moser, suggests building a cloudy roofing atop stone to make it a space that can be actively used (see Figure 6). Others suggest parasols so it can be protected by sun or rain. By this active and democratic use, the space loses its power as an elite speaking stage, thus also those who have spoken on it lose this elitism.



Figure 6: BWM Architekten, Johann Moser, *ein Anstoß zur Diskussion*, <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>

Of course, some argue for the balcony to remain the way it currently is—untouched. Paul Mach, for example, in his submission to leave the balcony be, writes, “der Umgang mit der Österreichischen Geschichte wird sich nicht durch ändern, indem wir aus Wien ein Hitler-Disneyland machen. [...] lässt uns unseres schönes Wien nicht zerbauen. Konzentrieren wir uns auf das Positive. Die Monarchie stand für einen Multikulturalität, für Baukunst, die Republik für Demokratie.”¹¹⁶

However, an artistic installation would not mean the city of Vienna would become a Hitler-Disneyland, nor does it mean ruining “beautiful” historic Vienna. Furthermore, the monarchy did not stand for multiculturalism, it marginalized many groups. Choosing to recontextualize the balcony does not mean destroying architectural heritage, as shown with the previous interventions, it simply means that history is evolving.

Interesting, no proposals argue for the balcony to be demolished. Of course, some ideas argue for a complete change of the space: turning the balcony into a zoo, inserting a zip line, etc., but none say that the balcony should be torn down or removed. This shows that there is an agreement in terms of the importance and preservation of the space. The disagreement only comes with deciding how to go about the space, but even then, visitor Paul Mach is one of the rare individuals who argues for leaving the space bare. All proposals, have some sort of addition or reaction to the balcony and its history, even if it is just a banner sporting the word “peace.” This, for me, is a signal that Austrians are ready and open for interventions or change.

B. Arguing for transparency: reducing the physical and symbolic barrier

Foremost, the balcony should be presented in a more transparent way. It is currently fenced off and protected by two double doors. There are many other ways to ensure safety without barricading the space off.

¹¹⁶ “Der Balkon’ Eine Baustelle,” Heldenplatz, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>.

Moreover, having the space closed off emphasizes the segregation it has been subject to, and thus how it has been shuttered from conversation and community memory, rather than processed. In some newspaper articles, there are mentions that the structural analysis of the balcony is too weak to be able to support it being opened. As soon as I began to research the balcony, I hoped to get in touch with the Burghauptmannschaft. I sent my first email on January 2nd¹¹⁷ and only received a response after a third email¹¹⁸ from the public relations & media office mid-February. After I sent my questions, which were where I could find the construction and renovation documents for the balcony and what the current procedures and rules for accessing the balcony currently are,¹¹⁹ I received a response that I would have to contact the state archives for the archival material and that there was no possibility to access the balcony because it is not open to the public. While the state archives do hold material, which I was able to view, they do not have any documents from recent years. When I followed up clarifying that I had never intended to go on the balcony, but was just interested on the rules and regulations, I did not receive a response.¹²⁰ The communication and

¹¹⁷ 3. Januar 2022, “mein Name ist Miriam Bankier und ich bin Masterstudentin an der Angewandten. Ich schreibe meine Masterarbeit über die Geschichte und den Kontext des Altans der Neuen Burg. Ich wäre sehr daran interessiert, welche Archivalien und Dokumente Sie zur Verfügung haben. Ich wäre Ihnen auch sehr dankbar, wenn Sie mich mit jemandem in der Burghauptmannschaft in Verbindung setzen könnten, der über spezielle Kenntnisse zu diesem Thema verfügt. Vielen Dank im Voraus.”

¹¹⁸ 10. Februar 2022, “mein Name ist Miriam Bankier und im Rahmen meines Masterstudiums an der Angewandten schreibe ich meine Masterarbeit über den Altan der Neuen Burg. Ich habe schon probiert Sie zu kontaktieren, habe aber auf meine letzte Email keine Antwort erhalten. Durch meine Recherche sind mehrere Fragen aufgetaucht über einerseits die Baugeschichte und die Zugänglichkeit/ Nicht-Zugänglichkeit, und andererseits über die Denkmal Bedeutung des Balkons und dessen Vermittlungsmöglichkeiten. Ich war mir nicht sicher an wen ich mich am besten in ihrem Büro wenden sollte und ich hoffe, Sie können mich an die richtige Person oder die richtigen Ressourcen verweisen.”

¹¹⁹ 15. Februar 2022, “Ich wäre generell sehr daran interessiert, welche Dokumente Sie über die Altane haben, von der Bau- und Renovierungs Geschichte bis zur Nutzung. Ich wurde zum Beispiel hingewiesen, dass ich das Planmaterial im Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Minoritenplatz) im Bestand Planarchiv Burghauptmannschaft finden würde. Können Sie mir mitteilen, wie ich Zugang zu diesen Plänen erhalten kann? Außerdem würde mich interessieren, wie die derzeitigen Verfahren und Regeln für den Zugang zum Balkon aussehen (und wie sich diese geändert haben). Ich weiß, dass er für bestimmte Filme oder Personen (wie z.B. in den letzten Jahren Eric Kandel oder Susan Philipsz) zugänglich gemacht worden ist. Wie ist da das Procedere?”

¹²⁰ 23. April 2022, “Vielen Dank für die Rückmeldung. Ich verstehe, dass der Balkon nicht öffentlich zugänglich ist, daher meine Frage wie die derzeitigen Verfahren und Regeln für

research I conducted in the National Archives of Austria, the Vienna city and Provincial Archives, the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, the archives of the Wiener Festwochen, and many more were very productive. Although I had hoped for more dialogue and information with the Burghauptmannschaft, I remain hopeful that this will be possible in the future. While it may be very probable that the balcony is not stable enough to support being opened to the public, making it stable falls into the purview and mission of the Burghauptmannschaft. The service manager, Mag. Reinhold Sahl, in the afterword of *Kulturquartiere in ehemaligen Residenzen* a book on the Vienna Hofburg Museum Quartier in the context of international developments with many contributions, writes, “durch die Wahrung der Geschichte gestalten wir die Zukunft,” “by preserving history, we are shaping the future.¹²¹” In the case of leaving the balcony closed, what history is being preserved? Is it the history of leaving the space closed for limited individuals to exercise power over those below? Shaping the future does not only mean preserving the past, but also means allowing the architecture to develop.

Certain memorial spaces, such as the Berlin Memorial or the Zeppelin Fields, have grown to be a part of the contemporary cityscape. On one hand they remain spaces of remembrance, but they have grown into the everyday—a space for lunch, pictures, or children running around. This solution, though working for those instances, does not apply to the balcony since it has been closed for so long and is directly inaccessible from the outside. To visit the balcony, you must first enter the building, purchase a ticket, and go up the stairs or elevator. However, the green space of Heldenplatz has an everyday function, where, especially during good weather, the grass is full of people gathering or playing sports. People are constantly confronted with the balcony: whether it is while they relax on the field, explore the city, or are on their

den Zugang zum Balkon aussehen (und wie sich diese geändert haben). Dadurch dass man den Balkon bis zu den 2000er Jahren mieten konnte, wäre es hilfreich für meine Arbeit zu wissen was sich geändert hat.”

¹²¹Welzig and Stuhlpfarrer, *Kulturquartiere in Ehemaligen Residenzen*, 318.

work commute. Although the balcony is not directly connected to the square, a connection could be drawn to the everyday Viennese depending on what is on the balcony. Instead of a blank space, it could be an impulse for deeper thought or civic engagement.

By opening the space there is of course the danger that it becomes a pilgrimage destination for perpetrator admirers. Moreover, the objective of a recontextualization is to remove the space from the Nazi intentions. Taking the example of Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's Monument against Fascism from 1986, where visitors could etch their own names into the monument, and as more names were added, it was lowered into the ground. When swastikas were drawn onto the monument, it became clear that it is impossible to break the monument free from its fascist tendencies.¹²² "In a groundbreaking essay from 1979 Reinhart Koselleck called war memorials "identity formation for the survivors." They "say more about the time in which they were erected than about the past to which they refer." Thus, monuments provide insight into "hot memory" and therefore into the current "social frame of reference" by which every society reconstructs its past.¹²³" For example, Hrdlicka's memorial at Albertinaplatz reflects the "hot memory" at the time of its creation—one of complex postwar attitudes. Scholar Sharon MacDonald observed similar occurrences when studying the Zeppelin Building in Nuremberg, "certainly, some would stand where Hitler would have stood on the Zeppelin Building, and they might even give a Nazi salute, but this was typically accompanied by joking and parody."¹²⁴ Fascism and racism still exist today—to try to erase that this is the case would not be doing the space justice. That's why the space of the balcony does not deserve a finite solution, but rather a change to evolve with history.

¹²² Thomas Stubblefield, "Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear? The Counter-Monument in Revision," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 8, no. 2 (2011): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.5749/futuante.8.2.0001>.

¹²³ Demus, Duschnig, and Arbeitskreis zur Umgestaltung des Lueger-Denkmal in ein Mahnmahl gegen Antisemitismus und Rassismus, *Open call*, 47.

¹²⁴ Macdonald, "Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond," 182.

C. Vision for the space: opening the balcony

Beyond a more transparent approach, I believe that a recontextualization from an outside perspective is essential. As before stated, the balcony is such an important symbol because of the masses that stood below it. So, it is up to the institution to give a voice to those below the balcony: the people. This should be coupled with in house curatorial and educational strategies. There have been artistic interventions, first, Krzysztof Wodiczko in 1988, 25 Peaces in 2005, and then Susan Philipsz and Borjana Venzislavova in 2018. Besides Susan Philipsz's installation, the three others were done without an "in house" collaboration. Without backing by an institution, it is much more difficult to make the intervention etched into collective memory—there are not the same educational, archival, and monetary means. The House of Austrian History does not face the same challenges as its neighboring institutions at confronting its foundational history since it has only existed as an institution since 2018. However, they face a similar difficulty as, for example the House of the Wannsee Conference had, which was the task of inhabiting a difficult architecture, and having to grapple with its history. The House of Austrian History moved into a space with over a century of history which included many different ownerships and uses of the space. During this century, no entity ever investigated the history of use, leaving an enormous task for the museum. The archives with information concerning the space are scattered throughout institutions that have passed through. Furthermore, the museum is meant to represent the historical period from the mid 19th century until present day, all while being housed in a space built during the monarchy.

My vision is a project titled "Opening the balcony" and consists of three pillars: education, mediation, and intervention. "Opening the balcony" would officially be launched in 2023. By 2023, which would mark the 85-year anniversary of the annexation of Austria, the project would be made public, and by 2025, the 80-year anniversary of the end of the war, the first rendition of the project would be made public. The

mission of the project would be the recontextualization of the balcony by amplifying the voices of those that have stood below it and been marginalized by those who spoke from it before 1945. Themes would be like those the Alma Rosé Plateau bases its exhibitions on, which are the Holocaust and anti-racism, which could be contemporary reactions or reflections to the balcony and its history. Likewise, it should not be forgotten that many of those who stood below were also complicit in denying the Holocaust. The space does serve a memorial function—it remembers all the persecution that came from the balcony and its speakers, but it also stands for those complicit to the persecution. Furthermore, the space also stands as a symbol for the monarchy, which came with centuries of oppression. So, what better way to do that to open the space for those whose voices have been marginalized in Austria?

The first pillar, education, would consist of establishing a research position. In many of the other spaces of perpetration, establishing research centers has been an essential initiative. However, the House of Austrian History faces a different challenge: consolidating the research. Vienna has the national libraries, Viennese archives, university centers, the Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, and much more. Each of these places harbor information concerning the balcony, and in general, contested public spaces in Vienna. Consolidating and coordinating such research within the frame of the House of Austrian History, which has already dedicated itself to the creation of an online collection, digital exhibitions, educational resources, and an encyclopedia should be the objective. Supplementing this by collaboration with other archives would allow for more research and would be of great gain for the institution. This would permit a deeper look into the history of the space and its history, thus cross institutional collaboration and investments in education should be a priority. This research position would be closely linked to the rest of the staff at the House of Austrian History and to the outside institutions. The second pillar, mediation, would mean offering educational tours,

workshops, and further informational panels. Beyond the exhibition space of the museum, a way in which individuals could learn about the space without having to enter the institution should be developed. Some successful examples of this have been audio guides, interactive websites and outdoor panels.

The balcony, for it and its history be presented in a transparent way, would greatly benefit from an intervention, which is the third pillar of the project. This has already been shown through the ideas for the balcony on <https://heldenplatz.hdgoe.at/>. However, I do not see a finite solution or since change to the space, rather various interventions to first explore what best works for this space. A jury, would first be composed of individuals working in connected institutions such as the Burghauptmannschaft, the House of Austrian History, the National Library, etc. Additionally, outside experts in the field of public artistic and museological interventions, internationally and locally should be included. Thirdly, the public should also have an active role in choosing proposals. Rather than having the proposals given in a blind contest, all the proposals are visible and can be discussed, which the current website of the Heldenplatz balcony has already begun to do. Even though complete agreement may be an impossible feat, adding to the transparency to the process would allow the project to grow and develop. The intervention should not be finite, it should not be standing longer than for two years, then another one should be chosen. I imagine the proposals to look like could look like an artistic intervention, such as the suggestions made by Jo Zynda, Andi Zobernig, or Stefan Benedik. It could be a constantly developing intervention or standing still for the time frame. However, it could also be much more about open discussions—utilizing the space for educational or activist events. Furthermore, the research position would have the archival task of keeping records of the discussion, proposal, and process, allowing for future growth by reflection. “Opening the balcony” would allow not only the museum to grow and reflect on the history it exhibits, but the whole architecture of the Hofburg and Heldenplatz to evolve. A collaboration with the individuals or the organizations that

propose interventions would also bring new perspectives into the museum, perhaps allowing the collection and the exhibitions to grow with content.

D. Hopes of institutional change

In terms of funding, close collaboration with the monument conservation offices, the Burghauptmannschaft and other government institutions would be needed. This project should be funded by the Austrian state and city of Vienna, as such spaces should fall under their purview and priority, and additionally by the institutions involved in the project. This mission cannot be brought to fruition without cross institutional collaboration. The House of Austrian History is a young institution, continuing to build and solidify itself within the museum community. Furthermore, it depends on approval of the state and the Burghauptmannschaft because of funding and use of the space. When will the balcony, and thus the space below and surrounding it be a place of the people? When will the balcony be made visible again? The burden of such a task cannot be given to a singular institution such as the House of Austrian History, it must be supported by cross institutional collaborations.

In other contested spaces in Vienna, for example, by looking at the Lueger monument and the Heldendenkmal, what has been key in instrumentalizing the movement is cross institutional collaboration. When the first exhibitions in the crypt and in front of the Burgtor took place between 2015 and 2017 the Austrian armed forces made a public commitment to support a future-oriented Austrian culture of remembrance.¹²⁵ They, along with the Burghauptmannschaft and the Ministry of Deference aided in the exhibition: from transport all the way to participating. The Lueger memorial debate gained traction through the project initiated at the Angewandte, but the winning proposal didn't occur because of lacking support by the state. Now, over a decade later,

¹²⁵ Binder, Hufschmied and Uhl, *Gedächtnisort der Republik*, 437.

the city of Vienna is planning another invitation for a redesign in the Fall of 2022.¹²⁶ This, connected with the pressure of programming, done collaboratively with the JöH, Jewish Austrian University Students, the artist group Schandwache, and the initiative PLATZ DA! has brought together various communities and created solid pressure for change. The recontextualizations of other spaces helps the cause of the balcony because it shows the relevance and provides great examples in ways to organize. The House of Austrian history in its exhibitions and events brings together diverse communities, which if connected and united, could help assure that the space is contextualized by use and intervention in the space: educationally, curatorially, and artistically.

¹²⁶ “Protestlesungen: Initiative Fordert Umbenennung Des Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Platzes,” kurier.at (kurier.at, May 16, 2022), <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/protestlesungen-initiative-fordert-umbenennung-des-dr-karl-lueger-platzes/402006450>.

Conclusion

It is undisputable that the balcony and its surroundings—Heldenplatz, the Neue Burg, and the Heldentor are a central place of remembrance in Austria. The balcony has been loaded with history from all facets of society: political, social, and religious. It has tied in many generations since 1913: from the Lost generation, meaning those who attended Catholic's day and chancellor Dollfuß's funerary procession to generation Z, who spoke at "Letters to the Stars" and heard Susan Philipsz's installation. Organizations have crossed paths: artists, religious groups, activists, school groups, and many more. These intersections are what have loaded the place with meaning, but they are also what open the range of possibilities for the space.

By leaving the balcony closed, it leaves its rich history vulnerable to erasure which would have detrimental effects on Austria's collective memory. As this paper shows through other architectural spaces whose meaning has changed through events that took place there, such spaces are essential in collective memory making. Furthermore, most of the contested spaces discussed in this paper have turned into or are currently turning into spaces of learning and discourse. The Heldenplatz balcony is the same—the space belongs to the people. The people that would be standing below it deserve their voice to be heard from above. This is where the vision and project "Opening the balcony" comes into play--recontextualization is not done with a fixed solution or a static memorial, but rather in a discursive way. The essential three pillars, education, which means possibilities for research, mediation focused on all generations and diverse communities, and intervention, which means an artistic addition to the space. The other central element is democratic collaboration between not only the institutions residing within the space and those managing it—but with the greater community of people who stand below the balcony.

The balcony has become part of my daily routine—I observe it by foot or through the tram windows on my way to and from work. With all

kinds of weather, I always look on, expecting that maybe someone would be standing on it. However, it is a figment of my imagination, since I, having been born in 1998, could have never seen anyone on it. I imagine, and vividly see all the suggestions that have been made so far—from a ball pit to a reflective mirror in my imagination on the balcony. And as the tram pulls me from my imagination and along my route around the Ring, my only hope is discussion continue to crystallize into a physical discussion about the space, which I'm confident would lead to a stronger relationship with Austrian memory making.

This research exploration into the balcony as well as into other historically contested spaces proved that there are many layers to uncover, and this was just the beginning. Sharon Macdonald, for example, in her study of Nuremberg was able to follow current debates and conduct interviews, something that would be extremely beneficial to do for the balcony as well. Now that the first layer of reception history and contextualization has been done, it would be time to hear more from the heads of the institutions involved in the balcony and who are positioned around it. Likewise, by conducting interviews with passersby and visitors to the museum, a more exact framework in terms of needs of the community could be established. Lastly, the scope of contested spaces goes far beyond Austria and Germany—around the globe governments and museums are dealing with contested architecture, and by placing the balcony in a greater international context, much more about its full discursive potential could be learned.

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