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Citing the Architecture of the Holocaust as a Method of Critique in Contemporary Artistic Practices: Zbigniew Libera, Zoran Dimovski, and the Use of Scale Models

Abstract: This paper presents how visual contemporary art can form intertextual relations to the architecture of the Holocaust. For that purpose, two works are used as examples and analyzed in more detail: *Lego. Concentration Camp* by Zbigniew Libera (1996) and *Diamond Dust* by Zoran Dimovski (2021). This paper shows how these artists *cite* architecture of the Holocaust by scale-modelling and additional elements that give their works complex semantic layers. This paper also includes discussion about invisibility and visibility of concentration and extermination camps, as well as the segment that explains the difference between the use of architectural scale models by the Third Reich propaganda and by contemporary artists. This paper concludes how, when *cited* in works of contemporary art, architecture becomes a complex sign shifted from one discourse into another and from one historic period to the present, a phenomenon embraced by artists to criticize the socio-political context of its creation, but also to criticize the alarming phenomena of today's era.

Keywords: architecture of the Holocaust; Auschwitz-Birkenau; contemporary art; scale model; citing; intertextuality.

Architecture of the Holocaust has had very complex history, and different effects and significance to those who designed it, to those who were imprisoned within it, and to newer generations who learn about the Holocaust from a temporal distance. Built and operated in secrecy, such architecture was often liquidated for the purpose of covering up atrocities committed within it, but there are remains which helped the forensic reconstruction of mass crimes. Such sites are also considered shrines and are of great importance for commemoration of victims. For that reason, the remains of the architecture of Auschwitz–Birkenau, the largest concentration and extermination camp in WWII, became protected site in 1947 and gained the status of a UNESCO world heritage site in 1979. Together with found and preserved documents and items that belonged to the victims, the architecture of Auschwitz–Birkenau became the memorial and monument to the victims of the Holocaust.

This paper presents how visual, contemporary, Eastern-European artists Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959) and Zoran Dimovski (b. 1966) approach such semantically

complex sites, having in mind their purpose, their victims and the important place they have in cultural memory. Despite utilizing different media throughout their artistic careers, Libera's poetics in the 1990s and Dimovski's in the 2020s share several similarities. Both artists use universal meanings that go beyond Polish or Serbian/Yugoslav cultural imaginaries and beyond post-Socialist and post-Communist transitions; both artists are combining historic and contemporary references to present the world we live in. They are both critical towards indoctrination and the ideological and political management of individual and collective bodies and consciousness. Libera's work deals with topics of death, senility, illness, oppressiveness, social marginality, consumerism, memory, and historical trauma, while Dimovski's recent works refer to "the context of contemporary capitalism, in which there is a shift from biopolitics to necropolitics, that is, from the process of administering life to the production of surplus value from the exploitation of death."¹

Apart from that, both artists created works by implementing the method of *citing* formal and semantic aspects of concentration and extermination camps. Libera created *Lego. Concentration Camp* (1996) combining LEGO blocks, architectural scale modelling and graphic design, while Zoran Dimovski created *Diamond Dust* (2021) combining graphite dust, paper, and architectural scale modelling. Both artists depict the most characteristic examples of the concentration and extermination camps as objects to *cite* – the barracks and the crematoria, and they both use models as method of *citing* architecture. For that reason, in order to understand the main questions of the research – what are they *citing* (barracks and crematoria) and how are they *citing* them (by use of models) – this research also followed several related questions. In particular: 1) What are the main architectural characteristics of concentration and extermination camps? 2) Apart from references to the barracks and crematoria, what other elements did artists use to create the new 'texts' – the artworks? 3) What is relation of these artworks to memory of the victims? 4) What are the wider interpretations of these artworks? In order to answer them, we applied combined methodology based on content analysis, interpretation, and discussion.

Theoretic Framework: Detecting Intertextual Aspects of the Selected Artworks

In order to notice *quotes* within visual works of contemporary art, those works must be seen as *texts*, and their creation as a form of *productivity* – intertextuality – during which language is redistributed (deconstructed-constructed).² Works of contemporary art are, therefore, *texts* characterized by intertextual relationships to other *texts*, either aesthetic or not. They can *cite* other works of art from the same discipline (e.g., visual arts and visual arts), or from different disciplines (e.g., visual arts and

¹ Stevam Vuković, "Svetovi smrti i svet umetnosti [The Worlds of Death and the World of Art]" (Beograd: Kulturni centar Beograda, 2019), 10.

² Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text" (1966–67), in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36.

dance), or *texts* that are not artistic (e.g., train schedules, documents) in which case we have *trans-semiotic intertextuality*. Architecture, thus, can also become a quote within works of contemporary art, as it “carries meanings with its form, location, visibility, elements, materials, syntax, function, ‘programme.’”³ A quote in contemporary art then is “not only a *visual element*, as it used to be in the eclectic postmodern art, instead, *citing* becomes *semantic* and *interpretational*.”⁴ In this respect, we approach the two selected works by Zbigniew Libera and Zoran Dimovski.

Lego. Concentration Camp (Figure 1) by Zbigniew Libera is an installation comprising seven boxes. Each box contains LEGO blocks needed to assemble a segment of a concentration camp and each box features an image of how that part should look. If assembled, they would create the entire complex of the concentration camp with barracks, guard station, entry gate, walls, fences, crematoria, sorting facilities, and sanatorium, as well as guards, inmates, piled up bodies, and skeletons. All the parts Libera took from existing LEGO sets – the skeletons were taken from pirate series, doctors and sanatoria from hospital series, while camp guards are police officers figures. Libera then combined these elements with the form and ontology of an architectural scale model of concentration camp, made photographs and put them on boxes in which the elements are to be packed.

Libera created the *Lego. Concentration Camp* installation as part of the *Corrective Appliances* series that are a critique of consumerist culture and manipulation of consciousness. The works in the series include toy-like and doll-like objects similar to existing mass products, produced in limited editions, but purposefully creating an illusion that they are commodities in mass production and global distribution. As a result, the *Lego. Concentration Camp* created much controversy since it was uncertain to many that an artwork is not a mass-produced children’s toy, nor that Libera was not proposing that is should be. The work is now part of the collections of The Jewish Museum in New York, the House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

In *Diamond Dust*, Zoran Dimovski combines the shape of the concentration camp barracks with paper completely covered in thick layer of graphite dust, in which he wraps the barrack-like boxes/models (Figure 2). The resulting objects are specific packages/gifts that leave graphite dust on hands of those who touch them, a simulation of ashes. The work represents continuation of Dimovski’s explorations in large-scale drawings that he presented in his solo exhibition *The Gift* in the Cultural Centre of Belgrade in 2019. Drawings under the unifying name *The Gift* contained a reference to the deadly Zyklon B gas used in extermination camps, as well as other references to the means of destruction, in order to present how “even bare life, mere biological existence, is no longer treated as something inalienable, which should not be questioned, but as a mere temporary gift, something obtained only by the grace of

³ Sonja Jankov, “Citiranje arhitekture jugoslovenskog modernizma kao stvaralački i interpretativni metod u savremenim umetničkim praksama [Citing architecture of Yugoslav modernism as creative and interpretative method in contemporary art practices]” (PhD diss., University of Arts in Belgrade, 2021), 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

the ruling oligarchy.”⁵ *The Gift* exhibition created a “feeling of an almost impossible responsibility for all those whom the system oppresses symbolically, and sometimes even physically, and that no longer for ideological reasons, but mostly for purely economic reasons.”⁶

In the works *Lego. Concentration Camp* and *Diamond Dust* both Libera and Dimovski use models of the two most characteristic architectural elements of extermination camps – the barracks and the crematoria. While Libera creates models of both elements to photograph them, Dimovski creates models of only barracks, but references crematoria through simulation of ashes by the use of graphite dust. The models they create are interpreted here as *quotes*, e.g., segments of older, *cited texts*, in this case – the architecture of the Holocaust. In both these works, powerful messages are created by relation between three elements, as in any other example of intertextuality: 1) the meaning of the *cited text* (in this case the complex narrative of the Holocaust and its architecture), 2) the quote – a depicted fragment from the *cited text* (in this case the barracks and crematoria), and 3) new elements which become a new context of the quote (in this case the LEGO elements, the paper covered in graphite dust), resulting together in the new *text* – the work of contemporary art. A quote in this process appears as a medium that connects the meaning of the *cited text* with the meanings of the newly created, *citing text*.

Combining quotes with new elements, artists create meaning that “as such is never fixed once and for all, but is something that *happens* in the way events, texts, and other cultural products are appropriated (over and over again, always with a difference).”⁷ Artworks, understood as *texts* in intertextual relation to older *texts*, become close to memorial media, which, according to memory studies scholars Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, “borrow from, incorporate, absorb, critique and refashion earlier memorial media.”⁸ The architecture of the Holocaust, understood as memorial from today’s perspective, thus effects the artworks that *cite* it so that they gain memorial function, among the other functions artists give them. Viewed in the wider context of intertextual studies, the artworks become acts of memory, since “[a]ll texts participate, repeat, and constitute acts of memory; all are products of their distancing and surpassing of precursor texts.”⁹

To analyze the *citing texts* of Libera and Dimovski, it is important to turn to ‘older texts’ they are *citing* – to specifics of the architecture of Holocaust, in particular the barracks and the crematoria, which in form of models become quotes within the artworks. It is also important to distinguish the artistic use of architectural models

⁵ Vuković, “Svetovi smrti i svet umetnosti,” 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ann Rigney, “The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing,” in *Media and Cultural Memory*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 348.

⁸ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, “Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics,” in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 5.

⁹ Renate Lachmann, “Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature,” in *Media and Cultural Memory*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 305.

from the way propaganda used them, in order to show how *Lego. Concentration Camp* and *Diamond Dust* are critical towards totalitarian terror.

Libera's and Dimovski's Reference to (In)Visibility of the Architecture of Extermination Camps

As part of the implementation of the “Final Solution”, the final stage of the Holocaust, six extermination camps were purposefully created on Polish soil. These included Lublin-Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau¹⁰ which functioned simultaneously as concentration and extermination camps and thus differed in organization from extermination camps. Used primarily for forced labor, their main architectural element were barracks, made of wood or bricks.

In Auschwitz, the wooden stable-type barracks were originally designed for 52 horses, but each of them would house 500–700 prisoners who literally could sleep only on their side, since there was no space for any other position.¹¹ Some barracks served as washing facilities (in the women's camp), as quarantines, prisons, torture chambers, and storage areas for gassed victims' possessions. There were also barracks of the *Familienlager* (family camp) BIb, “a ‘showpiece’ built at Birkenau in September 1943 for the purpose of a visit by the International Committee of the Red Cross to refute accusations of the mass murder of the Jews,” which didn't take place, since the Red Cross cancelled the visit, fully satisfied by their findings at the Theresienstadt.¹²

The barracks were the system that deprived the inmates of their identity and dignity, transforming them and systematically dehumanizing them. Survivor Barbara Stimler shared her memory of arriving to Auschwitz-Birkenau and seeing for the first time the wooden barracks with electric wires around them: “from one of the barracks a girl came out; she had a very short dress, no hair, no shoes. I thought that it was a mental institution. I didn't realize that in about two hours I would look exactly the same.”¹³

While in the camp, the inmates were forced to carry out construction works in order to expand it. When Auschwitz-Birkenau opened in 1940, it contained only 20 brick buildings, 14 of which had a single story and by the end of the year, prisoners added the second story. Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945 contained over 1,400 structures

¹⁰ The barracks in the area, which later became part of the camp, existed since 1916 and were used to accommodate Polish seasonal workers, refugees, as a field warehouse and as military barracks. The camp was handed over to the SS on April 8, 1940, while on June 14, 1940 the first transport of Polish prisoners comprising 728 people from Tarnow arrived, which is viewed as the day on which the Auschwitz concentration camp was established. It was further expanded based on construction plan from August 15, 1942. See: Marc Buggeln, “Auschwitz,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, November 25, 2011, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/auschwitz.html>, acc. on August 21, 2023.

¹¹ United States Holocaust memorial museum, entry “Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp barracks,” <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn75911>, acc. on June 14, 2022.

¹² Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79.

¹³ Lyn Smith, *Remembering: Voices of The Holocaust: A New History in the Words of the Men and Women Who Survived* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 177.

in total of 47 sub-camps,¹⁴ all built by the prisoners. Women in the camps performed many physically demanding tasks, but the “construction work consistently features as a sign of their extreme physical oppression, even if it did provide them with the possibility of surviving a little longer.”¹⁵ While on construction works, the women:

couldn't even see the building as a whole, let alone as a space that was either a part of an institutional policy or any kind of architectural or ideological symbol. The women describe the buildings they worked on as well as those they lived in as fragments made up of rooms, as specifically highlighted features (e.g., chimneys), or merely as sites: a kitchen, a toilet, a gate.¹⁶

The women, as other inmates, saw the architecture of the Holocaust through the labor of building it, and tasks such as “digging, lifting, carrying, hauling, and site clearing [...], with an emphasis on brick, stone, and cement.”¹⁷ Separated in different zones, the inmates could never see the entirety of the camp's complex, nor could the staff, since certain activities were carried out only by the *Sonderkommandos*.¹⁸ The camp in its entirety was comprehended by the architects, engineers and offices overseeing the progress of the expansions. It is comprehended again after extensive post-war research and reconstructions.

Due to poor hygiene, lack of heating and running water, many inmates died by “natural death,” as a result of epidemics and infections. Many more were victims of deliberate starvation, exploitation by hard labor, torture, beatings, shootings, and poisoning by Zyklon B hydrogen cyanide gas. In large camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, mass graves proved to be an inefficient means of disposing of the large numbers of those killed. For that reason, the *Zentralbauleitung* (Central Construction Authority) and other experts developed and built a system of crematoria, which they saw as “the most *efficient architecture* possible for the ‘Final Solution.’”¹⁹ It “provided a total incineration capacity of 4,756 corpses per day”²⁰, while “[a]bout 2,500 corpses could be cremated in 24 hours in each of crematoria II and III.”²¹ It was the largest *death*

¹⁴ Paul B. Jaskot, *Architecture of the Holocaust* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture, November 4, 2015), 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Sonderkommandos* were prisoners in extermination camps who were forced to aid with the disposal of bodies of gas chamber victims, under the threat of their own deaths. Since they directly witnessed the magnitude of mass killings in the camps, they were systematically killed. Some of them survived and helped later forensic reconstruction of committed atrocities.

¹⁹ Buggeln, “Auschwitz,” emphasis added.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Franciszek Piper, “Gas Chambers and Crematoria,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, eds. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 171.

factory ever designed, constructed, and used in one place. Because of that, apart from being the biggest concentration camp, Auschwitz was also the biggest extermination camp, resulting in 1,100,000 deaths.

The ways in which Libera and Dimovski *cite* the barracks and refer to crematoria show that they are not only citing the shape of the barracks, but they also refer to the way in which they were built. All LEGO elements needed to assemble the camp in Libera's work *Lego. Concentration Camp* come in seven boxes. In this way, a latent feature of the architecture of the Holocaust is emphasized: the camps were built in separate segments and in stages, so no one could see their entirety. The separation in boxes also references different zonings in the camps, while the presence of crematoria in the work entitled *Concentration Camp* indicates what history had shown – that concentration camps were also used for extermination.

The fact that the camps were built by inmates brings a new light to the interpretation of *Lego. Concentration Camp*. Even though the exhibited artwork is not meant to be assembled by the audience, the LEGO blocks add a performative aspect to it, engaging viewers to imagine themselves assembling or re-assembling the set. So far, this was interpreted in relation to committing the crime, instead of bringing the viewers closer to the victims. According to Ewa Janisz, Libera's work shows "how easy it is to become an accomplice"²², since the moment the player becomes the victimizer in the innocent play is almost unnoticeable. *Lego. Concentration Camp*, according to her, shows what Zygmunt Bauman considered the most threatening information taken from the Holocaust – that it could also happen to us, but that "we could also do that". It initiates discussion on the topics of innocence of all the rest, including ourselves, once the problem of the guilt of the Holocaust perpetrators has been settled by and large.²³ However, the process of building the set from fragments and in fragments would also bring us closer to the victims forced to build the camp, were the artwork imagined to be interactive.

In *Diamond Dust*, Dimovski fuses two almost opposing elements – the barrack and the crematoria – into one package-like object wrapped in paper covered in graphite dust. The barracks were characteristic for concentration camps and forced labor camps. Extermination camps didn't need them for housing since the executions by gas took place in moving vans or in "shower chambers" which the inmates would enter straight from the trains. Connecting the shape of the barrack with simulation of ashes (the graphite dust), Dimovski points out the painful fact that many camps that were officially concentration and forced labor camps were also extermination camps.

The use of graphite dust makes additional reference to the atrocities of the Holocaust. It represents ash which is "absence made present, the trace, the remain without a remainder. It draws its very being, as absence, from destruction. It is that which

²² Ewa Janisz, "Atrocity and Aesthetics. The Politics of Remembering and Representing the Holocaust in Polish Contemporary Art: Zbigniew Libera's 'Lego Concentration Camp'" *History of Communism in Europe* 6 (2015): 132.

²³ *Ibid.*, 123.

is not.”²⁴ As such, it is meant to leave the trace on the hands of anyone who would take the wrapped model of the barrack, even though the work is not imagined to be touched. Graphite is also reference to diamonds, which have similar crystal structure, and, furthermore, to bodies, since a body of a deceased, being carbon-based, can be turned into a diamond. Graphite thus makes a full associative circle from bodies, ash, diamonds, to a *trace* which it would leave on bodies of those who would handle these packages. Dimovski in this way symbolically connects the victims with the new generations, which can be seen, as in case of Libera’s work, as a method of inducing empathy.

Relation of Architectural Scale Models to the Holocaust: Propaganda vs Artistic Practices of Libera and Dimovski

In the architectural process, scale models are used at different stages for different purposes. During the design process, they help with the development of ideas, enabling presentation of “various concepts of the invisible.”²⁵ Prior to realization of the project, they help persuading investors to support the realization of a project. They can be also scale replicas of unbuilt, existing, or demolished buildings and complexes, in which case they reference architectural history or the present.

Thea Brejzek and Lawrence Wallen notice that scale models always anticipate a reality beyond, and due to their performativity (ability to create new reality), architectural scale models are “particularly productive in the service of political, social, and cultural commentary, persuasion, and critique.”²⁶ For that reason, the propaganda politics of the Third Reich fully embraced and perfected the model’s capacity to project a new social and political order. The Third Reich “designed a distinct scenography of state”²⁷, constructing numerous full-scale models of facades which served to test materiality, dimensions, and proportions, but also to emphasize the grandeur of the state in relation to an individual, deliberately blurring the reality and illusion, present, past and future.²⁸

Additionally, in an effort to emphasize the relation of governmental power to the creation of new social and political order, Hitler took numerous photographs with scale models of megastructural architectural and urban projects. These included the scale model of the reconstruction of Berlin, the model of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, the model of the German Pavilion for the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937, the model that presented reconstruction of his hometown Linz in Austria, and the model

²⁴ Lisa Saltzman, “Lost in Translation: Clement Greenberg, Anselm Kiefer, and the Subject of History,” in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (London: The Athlone Press, 2001), 84.

²⁵ Albert C. Smith, *Architectural Model as Machine: A New View of Models from Antiquity to the Present Day*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, Architectural Press, 2004), xxi.

²⁶ Thea Brejzek and Lawrence Wallen, *The Model as Performance Staging Space in Theatre and Architecture*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2018), 107.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114–115.

of the Volkswagen factory.²⁹ However, the architecture of the Holocaust, although also a specific megastructural project which could not be implemented without the consent and support of the government, could not be presented by scale models, as the models make ideas visible to public, while the extermination camps were kept strictly secret. So what is then the connection between the architecture of the Holocaust and scale models?

According to Richard Kötter and Lewis Preston, the “Final Solution” was, as seen by its creators and implementers, a prerequisite for development plan, not only architectural and urbanistic, but also agricultural and industrial.³⁰ The extermination and forced-labor camps should not be seen then separately from the small and large-scale models of venues which testified to the modernization of Germany. By creating scale models of barracks and crematoria, Libera and Dimovski bring the architecture of the Holocaust in the domain of visible models of megastructural projects, thus using the scale models as cultural commentary and critique. Their works thus contribute to memorialization of victims because they make visible what was otherwise publicly invisible in scale models.

The architecture of the Holocaust, through scale models, becomes a *quote* in works of contemporary art, while the models become signs, carriers of complex narratives about the elaborate system invented for the purpose of exterminating people labeled as ‘Others.’ Scale models in the works of Libera and Dimovski directly reference past, but it is important to keep in mind that scale models are also used in architectural practice for presenting something that might become future. If seen in this way, the works of Libera and Dimovski gain semantic layers that go beyond the Holocaust, referring to wider systems of totalitarian terrors. In Libera’s work, the Holocaust “is part of history and the present, hence there is a possibility of it being repeated—performed again.”³¹ Within his practice that is “critical examination of one’s own culture”,³² *Lego. Concentration Camp* is “a commentary on the condition of civilisation, where atrocity is still experienced on a mass scale, and is not only a thing of the past.”³³ This wider reference to contemporaneity, future, culture, and civilization, Libera achieves by combining the forms of the models with the discourse of an assembling LEGO set.

In the context of concentration and extermination camps, the LEGO logo, which translates “well playing” and the brand’s slogan “you can build anything” inevitably raise a question: Why, when given possibility to build anything (from LEGO),

²⁹ Dejan Mitov, “The use of Architectural Scale Models in Populist Representation of Megastructural Projects,” in *Situating Populist Politics: Arts & Media Nexus*, eds. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Mirjana Nikolić (Belgrade: Clio and Faculty of Dramatic Arts – Institute for Theatre, Film, Radio, and Television, 2019), 219.

³⁰ Richard Kötter and Lewis Preston, “The Planning and Architecture of Deportation, Imprisonment and Death – Reflections on the Ethical Implications of the Holocaust for Built and Natural Environment Disciplines,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 8, 11 (November 2018): 1–14.

³¹ Janisz, “Atrocity and Aesthetics,” 129.

³² Piotr Szenajch, “Zbigniew Libera Archive,” *COURAGE Registry*, <http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry/?uri=http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n124188>, acc. July 27, 2023.

³³ *Ibid.*

one (society) would build concentration camps? For Stephen Feinstein, the idea of the concentration camp available as a toy questions from where did the Holocaust emerge. *Lego. Concentration Camp*, according to Feinstein, may have more answers about the Holocaust and contemporary genocide than most traditional art forms. It problematizes the manipulation of human consciousness, since it shows that LEGO blocks can be used for building anything, instead of building what is shown on the packages. For Feinstein, that is the main purpose of the work – to make us realize that we do not have to assemble the concentration camp just because the package contains its image – we can assemble anything else. For that reason, it is a *corrective appliance*, “designed to create an awareness.”³⁴

The correlation of LEGO blocks to the model of concentration camp is, furthermore, a critique of consumerist culture in general, “wherein literally everything can be sold, including atrocity.”³⁵ Not only it can be sold, but it happens without being noticed by the wider population, without it raising a voice and screaming against it. According to Liliane Weissberg, “[t]he Holocaust aesthetics no longer centers on the scream, but on its absence”³⁶, and the absence of the scream is precisely what Libera criticizes. Not only the absence of executed victims, but also the absence of horrification by the fact that atrocities are commodified and sold.

Combining the models of barracks with the form of packages, Dimovski is also problematizing the idea that anything can be delivered, even gifted, which points to the alarming and terrifying possibility that factories of death can be exchanged and used again if we are not constantly vigilant and aware. He presents this by wrapping the barrack-shaped packets in paper completely covered in graphite. It is a specific *total drawing*, a total graphite surface which can cover/represent everything – from material objects like scale models whose shape it takes, to intangible phenomena such as violence, torture, unethical actions, morally unacceptable behavior, deception, and everything else that was going on within those barracks.³⁷ By using drawing to symbolize that, Dimovski draws into surface acts that were meant to remain hidden, as well as their consequences.

Dimovski’s *Diamond Dust* thus symbolically indicates that it is not possible to erase the Holocaust, and atrocity in general, from history without a trace – genocides cannot go unnoticed, without leaving someone’s hands dirty. Dimovski’s work therefore refers to cultural memory of the Holocaust, but it also points towards the wider problem of various societies not wanting to confront with their infamous histories, or

³⁴ Stephen C. Feinstein, “Zbigniew Libera’s *Lego Concentration Camp*: Iconoclasm in Conceptual Art About the Shoah,” *Other Voices* 2, 1 (February 2000), <http://www.othervoices.org/2.1/feinstein/auschwitz.php>, acc. June 28, 2023.

³⁵ Janisz, “Atrocity and Aesthetics,” 132.

³⁶ Liliane Weissberg, “In Plain Sight,” in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (London: The Athlone Press, 2001), 26.

³⁷ Sonja Jankov, “Architecture as a method of self-location in contemporaneity,” in *(De)Construction of Space: Architecture by Other Means*, eds. Sonja Jankov and Ivana Markez Filipović (Pančevo: Cultural Centre of Pančevo, 2021), 45.

even, realities. Such societies are transporting responsibility like packages, even gifts, to other societies and newer generations. However, since it is not packed in a nice wrapping paper that can hide the content, no one wants to take it and handle it.

Conclusion

In works the *Lego. Concentration Camp* (1996) and *Diamond Dust* (2021), Zbigniew Libera and Zoran Dimovski use very simple methods to present complex topics – scale models made to represent the architecture of the Holocaust, and additional elements, such as LEGO constructions or wrapping paper covered in graphite dust. Even though there are almost thirty years between these two works, they share many similarities. They are both characterized by the artists' use of *citation* as creative method; they are both ergonomic and suggestive of the idea that the artefacts can be assembled, taken, carried, and given, although they are only meant to be exhibited; they are both connecting the totalitarian regime from the past to the present and engaging viewers in critical relation to these topics. Both artists also reflect on the wider phenomena of totalitarian terror, problematizing topics of amnesia, insufficient concern, and insufficiently shared responsibility for being passive, holding back, not resisting.

While *citing* the architecture of the Holocaust, artists approach it as a complex sign and shift it from one discourse into another and from one historic period to the present. By doing that, the artists *cite* not only the formal characteristics of the architecture of the Holocaust, but also criticize the ideological, political, historical, logistical, and other backgrounds of its construction. Architecture, in turn, becomes a trans-historical, inter-discursive phenomenon that is part of the critique of the socio-political context of its creation, but also of the critique of the alarming phenomena of today's era.



Figure 1. Zbigniew Libera, *Lego. Concentration Camp*, 1996 (detail). Boxes designed by the artist. The artwork has not been endorsed by LEGO, Copenhagen, Denmark. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland.

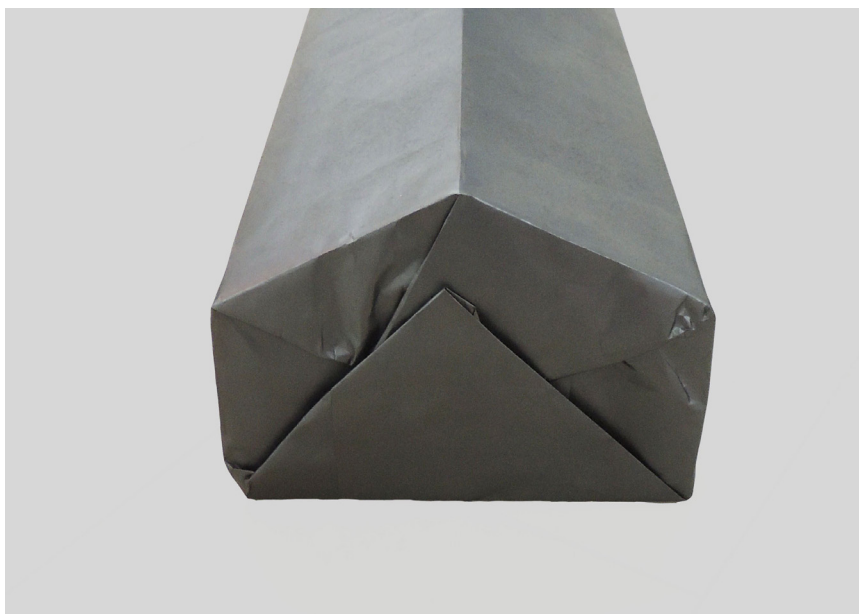


Figure 2. Zoran Dimovski, *Diamond Dust* (detail), 2021. Boxes wrapped in paper covered in graphite dust. Dimensions variable. Photograph by Sonja Jankov. Courtesy of Gallery of Contemporary Art, Pančevo, Serbia.

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