

rebuilt two years later in Hamburg. Reminiscent of the controversy surrounding Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in New York, the sculpture sparked a passionate debate in Germany. Local citizens objected to its aesthetics, chauffeurs complained about the limited roadway, and philosophers and art historians planned a seminar. According to historian James Young, LeWitt himself had agreed to remake the *Black Form* as "a bleak reminder . . . that without Jewish children in town, the monument would mark the end of generations."⁵ LeWitt's work, in its ability to engage the public, recalls not just the Serra but in some respects Hans Haacke's installation in Graz, Austria, which was fire bombed by neo-Nazis in 1988. Haacke's subversive piece was part of the exhibition *Bezugspunkte 38/88* (Points of Reference), which highlighted sixteen loci of Nazi activity. These works raise the well-known issues of site and reception as politically effective tools for the artist and point to one powerful avenue for making the past speak today.

Torres responds to the aftermath of World War II with powerful installations that employ new technology and mixed materials to mediate meaning. Born in 1948 in Barcelona, Torres's Republican grandfather was imprisoned for ten years in Franco's jails. *Plus Ultra* was one of Torres's most ambitious projects and involved his discovery in Berlin of ruins of the Spanish embassy during the Third Reich. The embassy had been bombed in 1943, but Torres found the Spanish consulate functioning in a restored area of the same structure. His title derives from words inscribed in the emblem of imperial Spain.

Smith is a veteran of one of America's most troubling military actions, the Vietnam War. Born in Portland, Oregon, in 1950, Smith joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1968. *Battle Maze* is the work of a "prisoner of war," as Smith has called himself—one who can never fully recover from his war experiences. The spectator's immediate response to *Battle Maze* is one of wary excitement when facing random "explosions" in this room-size battlefield.

Balassanian's astonishing installations are among the sculptural production of a few artists who confront the oppression and imprisonment of women. An Armenian born in

protheses, taking as their theme the effect of political events on human lives. Balassanian notes: "Wars, revolutions, and ethnic conflicts not only bring about destruction and tear apart relationships, they also create confinement and abort creative potentials."

Balassanian's *Fuse Boxes* are comprised of commercially produced metal boxes, all locked, with no key in sight. These are bolted to a wall at evenly spaced intervals, but unlike the minimalist objects to which they are distantly related, the *Fuse Boxes* are charged with an inner force: from within the lighted, confining interiors peer the eyes of a woman, which seem to follow the movements of the spectator. Balassanian found inspiration in the incident of a woman writer, a university professor who was imprisoned in Iran: "I used the metaphor of a container of electricity as a prison for entrapped energies and gagged expression. The persistent gaze, watching the spectator in every step, is meant to convey the presence of a creative woman who may be condemned to silence but who remains vigilant." The lighted *Fuse Boxes* with electric cords dangling ominously from their locked interiors function formally and serve as reminders that electric shock is frequently employed to torture political prisoners.

Through her art Balassanian also recalls the oppression and slaughter of her native people, the Armenians, one million of whom were murdered by Turkish soldiers in 1915. Ethnic conflicts and persistent rape and torture of women continue in Bosnia and other places, giving her sculpture enduring relevance.

Notes

- We wish to thank Marek Bartelik, a student at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and critic of contemporary Polish art, for locating the Hasior material, and James Young for a photograph and information on LeWitt. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from written statements supplied to us by the artists.
1. Some were exhibited at the Cantor Art Gallery, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Mass. See Ellen Lawrence, *Peter Gripppe: Monument to Hiroshima*, exh. cat. (Worcester, Mass.: Cantor Art Gallery, 1986).
 2. Wladyslaw Hasior, "Pytania i tesknoty" (Questions and Yearnings), *Polska 5* (May 1974); translated by Marek Bartelik.
 3. Gregory G. Knight, "Gerda Meyer Bernstein: Block 11," in *Gerda Meyer Bernstein*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Beacon Street Gallery, 1993).
 4. Gerda Meyer Bernstein, "Artist Statement," in *Gerda Meyer Bernstein*.
 5. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 18; for controversy over the work, see

1942, she left permanently after the 1979 revolution; the 1979 revolution

in the United States in 1980, she has made political that time. Her collages and sculptural installations shrouded figures, floodlights, mirrors, wires, and

MONA HADLER and JOAN MARTER are co-guest editors of this issue of Art Journal.

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