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Feeling through the screen: Memory sites, affective intensities and digital materialities

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Introduction

Partially because of the intense focus on commemorative activity during the 2014-18 First World War centenary period, recent work on memory sites has begun to attend to the powerful affects that can circulate in such places and help bind historical narrative to individual visitor experience (Sumartojo, 2016; Drozdowski, De Nardi & Waterton, 2016; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson, 2017). These approaches rely on a longstanding recognition of the importance of the more-than-representational aspects of memory sites that also appears in heritage and museum studies, notably in relation to space, scale and sensory perception (Waterton, 2014). Such an analysis understands memory and heritage sites by way of the 'perceiving subject' entangled in the sway and pull of their surrounding environments, and conditioned by their own subjectivity (Anderson, 2009). Indeed, this relationality is at the heart of approaches that treat memory and commemorative sites as complex 'specific types of relational configurations' (Anderson, 2014) in which historical discourse, personal and shared memory, and sensory experience intersect with specifically designed spatial environments, undergirded with pedagogical aims linked to state-sponsored narratives (Bevernage & Wouters, 2018).

In this article we build on this by bringing the focus onto the use and effects of digital screens, ask what can be gained by pairing more-than-representational approaches to heritage and memory sites with recent investigations of digital materialities. We argue that, because of the multiplicity and nature of affects that they make possible, digital screens can help constitute the embodied experience of state-sponsored memory sites in ways that move far beyond the presentation of archival material,

the function for which they are often intended. Accordingly, in this article we offer an approach to official memory sites that attends to the particular affective intensities that can be brought into being by and through visitors' individual relations with digital screens, an increasingly common aspect of how history and memory are encountered such places. Indeed Hoskins (2007, p. 452) identifies 'the necessity of paying attention to texture as well as text when the material is not putty in the hands of human interpreters but a bearer of messages, not a passive container of social ideas and ideals or a transparent communicator, but an active mediator of social relations'. As a part of the 'texture' of memory sites, we will show how understandings of the content displayed on digital screens can mingle with screens' material and digital affordances to constitute a range of ways of 'feeling' this texture, in affective, material and sensory terms.

In the site we discuss below, digital screens helped constitute more-than-representational and embodied engagements with both the narrative content and the material environment of an official memory site. We will argue that this opened up ways of engaging with the past that exceeded the screens' representational capacities, making for surprising and sometimes unpredictable affective encounters. To demonstrate this, we draw on accounts from three interviews with visitors to a French state-sponsored memory site, the Camp des Milles, a memorial and museum where individual testimony intersects with local history in an atmospheric built environment. As we will show, the site is characterised by particular sensory aspects and personal and historical narratives presented in part through digital screens - which together prompted complex ways of imagining and feeling the past for our research participants. By interrogating the experience of visitors to the Camp des Milles, we will investigate the role of digital screens in helping to conjure emplaced affective intensities and how these came to be entangled with personal memory, engagement with historical narrative and representation, and sensory experience and perception. We will discuss how digital screens can thicken the experience of such sites by framing them as bodily and intimate - but also how encounters with such technologies can disappoint, disrupt or puncture the atmospheres of such sites, and draw out feelings of frustration or annoyance that might pull against the official

aims of such places. In doing so, we attend to one aspect of how 'digital media shape our everyday experiences and political horizons of love, boredom, fear, anxiety, compassion, hate, hope' (Kuntsman, 2012, p. 4).

More-than-representational approaches to official heritage and memory sites

Crouch (2015, p. 178) has characterised heritage as a journey, experienced as entanglements through time that are manifested in the ongoing and unfolding present: 'Memory is not simply 'placed' in time in a linear 'ordering' of being but tumbles among the memories of others, or exists in a net with others, open to being regrasped anew in other moments. Here, memory is relational in terms of events that occur before and after it, looping back to serve subsequent reinterpretations and woven together in emergent spatial and temporal experiences. It also exists in a larger milieu of shared ways of framing the past. This complex, multitemporal and dynamic perspective opens up ways of addressing multiple perspectives on official memory, notably subaltern ones. For example, it underpins Crang and Tolia-Kelly's (2010) influential work on affect and heritage that argues that places of official heritage have very different affective resonances for different people, with race a particular blind spot in postcolonial renderings of British sites.

Here the visitor's understanding and experiences at memory sites are determined subjectively, a point that moves away from more conventional understandings of official public history as the transmission of information about the past. This subject-oriented approach is also present in accounts of historical commemoration that show how the experience of it is framed with what people might already know or feel. Such foreknowledge could include awareness of commonly circulating narratives, previous visits to regular ceremonies or exposure through national media or education curricula. This chimes with other work in cultural geography that identifies the role of anticipation in comprising how an event feels (Edensor, 2012; Sumartojo, 2015).

Similarly important in understanding how people make sense of state-sponsored history is the *stuff* of official memory sites: their materials, objects, spaces and sensory affordances. Indeed, Freeman et al (2016, p. 3) point out that:

we rarely remember through ideas only, but rather through our encounters with things, and through embodiments and dis embodiments collected in material traces and objects...In order to think through our pasts, as they are entangled with our presents, we must examine the intersections of sensation, experience, and meaning that arise through our interactions with material forms.

Scholarly focus on the materiality of memory is well-established; ¹ and in terms of museums, examples include Hoskins (2007, p. 437) exploration of US immigration heritage, in which he makes a claim to an the 'object-centred approach to the politics of memory'. An important point here is that while personal memories might be evoked through things such as like clothes, postcards or photographs, when such objects are deployed to promulgate versions of collective or national histories, they can take on the power to define these histories in ways that privilege or diminish whole groups of people, as Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010) remind us. Such objects tell us part of the story, but our encounters with them are inevitably subjective and carry the influence our own perceptions and memories – and as we will show, the mediation of 'material forms' through digital screens implies additional affective affordances.

It follows that sensory encounters with and in such places have also been the focus of sustained attention, with recent work foregrounding the fleshy experience of official memory sites, and the way our bodies compel us to mix banal but persistent sensory concerns with the discursive aspects of such places: '[our bodies'] sensory cues provoke remembrance; they install pauses and digressions in our normative thought processes; and they transport us, however momentarily, to different times and different places' (Drozdowski et al 2016, p. 447; see also Muzaini 2015; Sturken, 2016; Waterton & Dittmer, 2014). This work explores how the sound, smell, look,

taste and feel of memory sites are central to how we make sense of and understand them. Accordingly, our sensory engagement can shape our stance and reaction to discursive content, and here Sather-Wagstaff (2017, p. 18) asks us to 'make polysense' of memory, an approach centred on 'the dynamic relationship between the senses, feeling, emotion, cognition and memory as continually in process'. In this sense, our means of co-constituting official memory sites as we engage with them moves beyond our discursive understandings to include knowing them through how they feel to us, in sensory and affective terms.

Accordingly, Åhr (2005, p.285) points to the immersive experience of Eisenman's *Holocaust-Manmahl* in Berlin as the model for a 'monument that is an experience unto itself' which cannot be reduced to its symbolism, but is designed as 'a proxy for the trauma of living in a concentration camp: to induce disorientation and claustrophobia'. Similarly, Waterton (2014, p. 824) has identified the importance of the 'situational affective contexts of heritage', focusing on the '*spaces of heritage...that garner the affective and emotive values that shape the possibilities for our bodily movements and capacities.*' Attending to the more than representational aspects of state-sponsored memory sites requires methods that follow Crang and Tolia-Kelly's (2010, p. 2316) orientation towards 'heritage sites as occasions for doing and feeling, of connecting different sensations, representations, and thoughts'.

Ethnographic approaches to memory sites have taken up this challenge, and many geographers begin their explorations of memory sites from their own experiences of them. A recent example is an account of the commemorative events associated with the ten year anniversary of the London bombings in 2015, tackled by way of dispersed, team auto-ethnographic writing. This work includes an explanation of how one researcher paced around Kings Cross station before the commemorative ceremony in an attempt to quell her nerves and come to know the material, affective and social 'feel' of the location through the movement and measure of her body. This way of knowing-through-being-in located the authors squarely in the atmospheres that coalesced at public events during the anniversary, in a 'subjective

and nervous' approach that sought 'to be sensitive to the mixture of emotions and feelings encircling on the day and open about [their] own affective relations to the event' (Closs Stephens et al 2017, p. xx) . This opens the door to ways of thinking about heritage that look beyond the object or text itself to take in its experiential contexts.¹ Indeed, Waterton (2014: 828) remarks that taking up a more-than-representational stance allows us to conceptualise heritage as a combination of 'elsewhere and else-when' that draws in previous experiences to make sense of encounters with memory sites:

This means that a visitor's capacity to be affected by heritage is qualified by the experiences inevitably and already encoded in their person, as well as their responses to its already circulating representations. These, in turn, will trigger a range of kinaesthetic senses and flows that act as entry points for the retrieval or (re)emergence of memories in a cycle of affective contagion.

This sedimentation of previous experience, as our examples show, is evident in how our research participants understood their encounters with memory sites. We build on this, however, via a sensory ethnographic methodology that attempted to grapple with new ways of thinking about how heritage and official memory are experienced by way of digital screens. Such an approach focuses on how people perceive, make sense of and understand their experiences sensorially and seeks to probe further than what people might simply describe. In this study, this was chiefly done by discussing our research participants' experiences by way of visual materials they themselves chose to produce (Pink, 2015). The use of video and photography allowed us to 'share and access elements of everyday experience that would not be accessible through traditional verbal interviews or participant observation, that

¹ See also E. Waterton and J. Dittmer, 'The museum as assemblage: bringing forth affect at the Australian War Memorial', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29 (2014), pp. 829-30; J. Turner and K. Peters, 'Unlocking carceral atmospheres: designing visual/material encounters at the prison museum', *Visual Communication* 14 (2015), pp. 309-330.

account only for what is said and is visible' (Pink & Sumartojo, 2018, p. 7). This allowed us to attend, together with our research participants, to the connections amongst memory, affect, and the spatial and material world, including digital screens and their unique forms of digital materiality, which we discuss next.

Digital screens and memory sites

The small screen has been a longstanding area of study, from the highly personalised ways of using and understanding mobile phones (Horst, 2016) to the cultures of watching or producing television (Lewis et al, 2016)) to the distancing affect of computer displays in military activity (Kuntsman, 2012). This extends to work on screens in museums as integrated parts of displays that both present objects in new ways and also act as objects in their own right. Indeed, the use of such technologies in museums and memory sites is a well-established practice, constantly opening up new forms of representation, engagement and encounter with historical content (Smith, 2013; Ciolfi & Banno, 2007).

Whereas the design intent to provide new ways for visitors to encounter and think about displayed material is well known, it is less common to examine how visitors perceive and understand these encounters. An exception is Witcomb's (2007, p. 36) account of museum design in which 'objects including multimedia installations, are able to engage emotions and in the process produce a different kind of knowledge – one that embodies in a very material way, shared experiences, empathy and memory'. In a critique of the treatment of multimedia displays as simply tools for interpretation, she argues that they should instead be recognised as 'installations or objects in their own right rather than as an interpretive layer that is added to the display of objects from the collection'. This addresses the now common use of new digital technologies in museums and heritage sites to enhance the affective impact of their content through light, sound and interactive displays. Of particular relevance to our arguments here, she pinpoints how multimedia installations might 'act as releasers of memory...through their power to affect us by "touching" us or "moving" us' (Witcomb, 2007, p. 37).

In this sense, multimedia and screen-based museum installations bear their own 'thingy' affordances (Brown 2001). Indeed, to understand what work they might be doing, we must consider what sorts of 'things' digital screens might be – if as things they 'are constituted by human relationships with objects and are therefore imbued with memory' (Freeman et al, 2016, p. 4) – and how these are included in contemporary memorial and museum design. This can be informed by ways of thinking about screens as digital technologies that require conceptualizing in new ways, as Rose (2016, p. 341) details:

What is visible on any one screen is a combination...of hardware (the screen, its casing, its other physical components), the software code that makes things visible (the image file but also, for example, the app through which that image is being seen and the operating system of the device), and how it is being looked at by its user/s.

Such accounts accord with recent work on digital materialities that offers ways of thinking about how people experience the digital as part of everything else happening in their lives, a complex and contingent relationality amongst multiple, changing elements (Pink et al 2016; Pink et al 2015; Hjorth et al , 2017). Rather than seeking to somehow separate out or privilege the digital as a focus of inquiry, such an approach instead attends to the messiness, unpredictability and relationality of a whole range of digital technologies in people's experiences. This means accounting for the sensory and perceptual alongside the representational, narrative, algorithmic or code-based aspects of the digital, and interrogating how they work together to shape the ongoing experience of the world. It also means asking what the digital enables, what new ways of thinking about the world and of engaging with and being in it might be pulled into existence or made possible. Here, the co-constitution of the digital and the material are made evident by looking at how people experience them. This focus on experience resists treating any digital encounter as a finished thing without ongoing resonance in people's lives, as Pink, Ardèvol and Lanzeni (2016, p.10) explain:

Rather than starting with an a priori definition about what is digital and what is material, we prefer to understand digital materiality as a process, and as emergent, not as an end product or finished object. In doing so we break down the boundaries that are assumed when questions are asked about what is digital and what is not.

Berry (2014, p. 22) makes a similar point when he argues that 'the historical distinction between the digital and the non-digital [has become] increasingly blurred, to the extent that to talk about the digital presupposes an experiential disjuncture that makes less and less sense'. However, in terms of researching screens' digital materiality, the location of our encounters with them is crucial - Ash (2015) terms the timespace of this engagement the 'interface envelope', one in which human and non-human agencies entangle and bring new forms of experience into being. Similarly, as Rose (2016, p. 341) explains:

Not only is the agency of digital hardware and software at work at interfaces, but so too is the agency of the people using it, which is shaped by the soft/hardware of the interface but can also interpret it actively.

It follows that digital screens' affective affordances are no less powerful in comprising our experiences of them than their technological ones. In terms of memory sites, their capacity to enable personal engagement with narrative, testimonies, or images can have the effect of creating a sense of proximity to other places and times, albeit a heavily mediated one. Indeed, the display screens at memory sites exemplify the entanglement of the digital with the material, affective, sensory and discursive. Furthermore, the way visitors encounter these is carefully curated and designed. This is a form of official packaging and representing the past that imagines its usefulness for future engagements with it, at the same time as it affords experiences in the present (Fairclough 2012, p. xv).

Accordingly, in the rest of this article, we attempt to think through the encounter with the digital screen and unpick what specific experiences and intensities they might make possible at a state-sponsored memory site. We will show how the affective charge of being in a place where our participants knew violence had happened included mediations of aspects of the site's history and materiality through digital screens. However, the accounts show the complexity of this interface, which gave rise to a variety of visitors' understandings and feelings of both the narrative content of the displays and the spatial and material experience of the site itself. Accordingly, the passages below demonstrate three different ways that screens helped manifest powerful ways of encountering the Camp des Milles.

The Camp des Milles

Situated about 9km from Aix-en-Provence, Camp des Milles is a former Second World War internment and deportation camp, one of the few such sites in France that has been made into a public memorial-cum-museum and the only one to have survived in its original condition. It was opened in September 2012. The camp was a tile factory until 1939 and then was used as a factory again from 1947. The banality of the site, and its reuse after the war for its original industrial purpose, is presented there as part of a message that an 'ordinary' place can be the site of 'extraordinary' events, in this case the planned mass murder of civilians.

[Insert Figure 1]

Figure 1: An early section of the displays at Camp des Milles, showing a field of columns with screens positioned at eye level, with explanatory text and accompanying audio available by headphone. Photo: Shanti Sumartojo.

In the Camp's displays, its history is presented in three stages, beginning with the internment of foreigners resident at the outbreak of the war (1939-1940); its transformation into a transit and internment camp for 'undesirables' in the Vichy 'free zone', including local Jewish families, being processed for emigration from

France (1940-1942); and finally, in the months before the German occupation, its use by the Vichy régime as a deportation camp for Jewish families (1942), with railway connections to Auschwitz via Drancy, near Paris. Throughout, it is clear that the Vichy French administration was responsible for establishing and running the camp.

Visitor engagement is organised as a progressive trail through the building, starting with a short film explaining the history of the site, including the filmed testimonies of camp survivors. Visitors then move through a very text-rich historical section with displays on the Second World War, its national and local history, contemporaneous propaganda material and details of life in the camp and some of its inmates. Some of this text is presented on tall columns, which means the visitor moves through it as if through a field of stelae, or of standing bodies (see Figure 1). This section is where most of the digital content is presented, mostly on screens, some of which offer interactive features so that visitors can choose content or additional detail. There is also audio material available to listen to via headphones on the columns or through portable audio-guides.

The second section takes visitors through the building itself, on a signposted itinerary through four floors of apparently derelict (but still carefully designed) former factory areas with occasional explanation of their uses, such as who was housed where and what life there was like for internees. This includes the large kilns which were turned off during the period of the camp's existence, and where internees slept and socialised. In this section, the site is effectively presented 'as it was', with the implicit invitation to consider how it was experienced by internees, even though the material remains actually reflect its intervening use as a tile factory. Visitors' sensory experiences help link them to previous occupants, for example, though cold temperatures, 'clair-obscur' lighting, the smell and texture of dust, the roughness of the stone, brick and wood building materials, and the overall industrial aesthetic of the building and its fittings (see also Sumartojo & Graves 2018).

[Insert Figure 2]

Figure 2: A section of the building used to house internees with some explanatory text of 'life on the second floor'. Photo: Shanti Sumartojo.

The final section is presented as the culmination of the previous two stages, and is explicit in its pedagogical aim to invite visitors to consider the banality of evil, the ever-present possibility of genocide and the personal responsibility to resist it, 'each in our own manner'. A video work, presented on three large concave screens that slightly wrap around the viewer in a small, purpose-built viewing room, gives the impression of immersing the visitor in the action depicted, such as crowd scenes of a Nazi rally. It explains how genocide can become possible and even normalised, and links the Shoah to genocides in Armenia and Rwanda. It explicitly asks visitors to reflect on the history of the site in terms of their own personal responsibilities in the face of racism, anti-Semitism, the prejudice that underpins them and the injustice that they beget. The accompanying information booklet (Camp des Milles, n.d.) makes the pedagogical aims of the site, and the way the progressive movement of visitors through the site is meant to reinforce it, very clear:

Up to this point, the visitor has been confronted with the past and its emotional burden. With this next section, memory-reverence becomes memory-reference: the visitor is invited to move beyond the distance that separates us from the past to undertake a multidisciplinary reflection on the present and the future based on historical experience.

This is the context through which all our research participants (and ourselves) moved. The study included ten participants, all of whom were asked to take 10-15 photographs during their visit of their encounters with digital technologies, or of the aspects that most struck them. By leaving their task open in this way, we allowed them to decide for themselves what the most notable digital technologies were, and indeed the places they felt were important that may not have obviously included the digital. In this way, the digital was treated as a part of everything else they may

encountered, although they were asked to attend to it specifically if and when they could. As discussed above, this ethnographic approach of entering our research participants' worlds by way of material they made themselves is a valuable method for more-than-representational approaches to geographical research (see Sumartojo 2019). Our participants were free to engage with the site as they wished, without the presence of a guide, and none of them chose to use audio-tours. The authors also attended this visit. Over the next week, each participant was video interviewed with their photos, and were asked to explain what they photographed and why, how they were feeling when they took the photo, what sort of digital encounter was involved, if any, and what the experience of that encounter was (Pink et al 2015). The study received university human ethics approval, and the participants consented to having their images used as part of published or presented research findings.

The advantage of this technique was that participants were able to reflect on the entire experience of the visit through a series of photos, as well as the moment of the visit depicted in each photograph. This created a rich conversation with the researcher that could range across the participants' personal ways of understanding the site, and where themes could emerge that could be revisited throughout the interview if appropriate. Having accompanied the group on the visit, the researcher who conducted the interviews had her own experiences of the site to draw on in this exchange, and had been with some of the participants when they took their photos; this allowed a form of empathy to emerge in the research setting that meant she could imagine the spaces described by way of her own experiences. Accordingly, in the next section, we draw on three accounts from this set of interviews that explain particular encounters with digital screens. Throughout we link this material to the arguments developed so far about the value of recognising the how digital materialities have become significant in how many official memory sites are experienced, understood and made sense of.

Distancing screens

Mylena provides the first account. In her discussion with Shanti, she explained her photograph of a trace left on an interior wall of the camp by one of the internees, its image incorporated into the film that had begun the visit:

It's a picture of a heart, with an arrow in it and then you have the words [*la liberté, la vie, la paix*] written in it...[it's a carving] on the wall of the camp...just the words at first were very striking, I mean this is what we aim for in life. Everyone wants to have freedom, everyone wants to have life and peace in their lives, and these people didn't have that. And actually to carve the thing, you're struggling to do it, its hard, its not like just a painting where it goes smoothly. A carving you actually really want to, you know...I can imagine these people kind of fighting for this and this is a kind of way to show it...

Even the image of the heart set up for Mylena a sort of embodied empathy with the person she imagined carving it, struggling to etch the words into the stone wall of the camp. As we talked, she demonstrated the effort she imagined had been required to make the heart, a bodily echo of a previous exertion that appeared to provide an immediate connection to the site's past. However, although the carving was still present on one of the walls, she explained that she had not actually seen it there during her visit, only viewing it on the screen. The screen introduced a sort of dissonance to her feelings about the heart: despite her quite powerful description of how the carving brought her closer to the imagined experience of its creator, at the same time its depiction on the screen worked to distance her from this feeling:

I would have preferred to see it on the actual wall, because you get more the sense of reality when you see it 'true'. When its displayed on the screen of course you see it... but there's a sense of connectivity when you actually see the thing and you're next to it rather than just watching it on the screen...[How does it feel to look at it on the screen?] Its less touching, you feel more distant...for some reason it has more impact to me to see it for real than on the screen.

[insert Figures 3a and 3b]

Figure 3: a) Mylena mimics the physical strain of carving that she imagined was required to produce the heart pictured on the screen in her photo b).

Here, the displayed film allowed her to see a powerful element of the site that clearly resonated with her and invoked a bodily echo of the feeling of carving (Figure 3), following notions that multi-media displays can work to bring visitors and content closer (Witcomb, 2007). However, instead, she explained that the screen introduced a sort of barrier between her and the carving, a distance related to the fact that she knew it was on the site somewhere, but had not managed to see it *in situ*. Her encounter with it was mediated by the film, its digital depiction ameliorating its affective impact, even though she found the heart image 'striking'. This reflection emerged, furthermore, as an explanation of how the material, the digital, the affective and the embodied were all part of the same experience of her viewing the film.

The carving was itself a form of testimony to the experience of former camp residents, its somewhat plaintive message reinforced by both the imagined effort necessary to engrave it, her empathy for them based in part on her own bodily experiences in the site, and, as a visitor, the knowledge of the potential fate that awaited its author. This resonates with Waterton's treatment of Lorimer (Waterton, 2014, p. 829) that 'affect is not confined to the individual body or people at all: it is transmitted, moves, circulates and flows outside and between bodies, incorporating a range of things, places and technologies'. While a sense of this shimmered through the screen, in this case, the affective intensities were both intimate *and* distancing: Mylena felt the digital interface was a poor substitute for seeing it 'true', making the heart carving somehow less touching, and discouraging a sense of connection to the previous experiences of others in the site.

Rose discusses the friction of digital interfaces, when an interface with the digital does not work as expected, glitches, is lost or corrupted (Rose, 2016). This can work to draw attention to the presence or mediation of digital technologies, and engender frustration or even distress when something does not work as it should. However, in this instance, the 'problem' with the screen was not one of malfunction, but rather a type of *affective* friction as Mylena found it distanced her from the material environment of the memory site and its emotionally resonant displays. The screen pulled against the emotional tug of the heart carving, complicating the museological view that such technologies might make objects or sites more accessible to visitors.

Touching screens

In contrast with Mylena's explanation of a distancing effect, Ben's encounter with a digital display worked to pull him closer to the material, in his case literally by a haptic process of touch. The screen that he described was located in a room with wall mounted displays and a small plinth with a digital screen embedded in it (Figure 4).

but when I saw 'touch screen' I figured that something like that would happen...it said the names are from the people who have been deported, but it doesn't say something is going to show, is going to pop up. I'm pretty sure that when I saw touch screen, I was like yeah, something's gonna happen, so I just gave it a try, and you can scroll up and down as well.

He explained how, as he approached a digital display, he noticed the finger icon and the words 'touch screen'. This engaged both Ben's curiosity and his haptic senses, even though he didn't know what would happen when he pressed the screen's surface:

That's a touch screen, that's people's names on it, and you could just press their name and a window would pop up with their name, their age,

the place they were from...the interesting thing about it is that the names are listed in alphabetical order so you would see sometimes 6, 7 or 8 names in a row and that was whole families in the camp and sent to Germany afterwards. You could see people being born in the late 1880s or 90s and people being born in the 1920s and you would figure out their age, it was kind of powerful.

In describing his photograph of the screen, he explained how his encounter with it recalled previous experiences of physical memorials: 'It reminds me of these plates you see on memorials of the wars...except that [at Camp des Milles] you could literally touch them with the finger rather than read the names.' Ben explained how he understood the display's materiality in terms of previous encounters with older forms of memorialization that he had seen. He described an experience when he had encountered a memorial during a visit to the US, and was intrigued that the dead from all US wars were included, by extension granting each conflict, and each death, an equivalent status. However, on this occasion his curiosity was frustrated by the lack of any information about the named individuals, which diminished the affective tug of the memorial structure and left him uninformed about what it was meant to represent. In recounting this experience, he explained that he had quickly lost interest and moved away from the memorial.

In the context of this previous experience, for Ben a list of names at a memorial was a form of representation which then gave rise to a curiosity to know more about the individual victims. His interaction with the digital screen display went beyond merely reading text, instead invoking a comparison with lists of names carved onto memorials he had previously seen that were non-responsive to touch. At Camp des Milles, however, the process of exploring how the display functioned drew him closer to the identities of the victims and set up empathetic relationships as he imagined the different ages of the family members and their possible relationships to one another. Witcomb (2007, p. 41) describes a similar process of 'a physical reaction to an object [that] involves an emotional response that leads to a greater degree of understanding'. In Ben's case, the screen worked to knit together

knowledge about particular individuals to a better understanding of the history of Camp des Milles through the experiences of its victims.

Even beyond this, however, was the particular embodied encounter Ben had with the digital display and the unexpected affects that arose as he discovered the individual information that he could access. These emerged from both the content, but also Ben's gestural engagement with them, recalling Kunstman's (2012) notion of the 'cybertouch' that dissolves the boundary between the body, the content depicted on the screen and its affective properties as a form of digital materiality.

[Insert figures 4a and 4b]

Figure 4: a) Ben gestures as if he were tapping a touch screen to explain his encounter with a display of names and b) his image of the screen that prompted his explanation.

Ben's hand as he tapped the screen was therefore 'touching' in two, entangled ways: affective *and* haptic, with both aspects brought together in a digital interface and working together to engender curiosity and empathy as he lingered at the display. Furthermore, this relied on an implicit comparison with previous experiences of more conventional forms of name memorials without any interactivity. His previous experience with listed names on a memorial brought a poignancy to the encounter with a digital screen, 'the experiences inevitably and already encoded in [his] person' triggering his memory and prompting a powerful experience (Waterton, 2014, p. 828). In other words, Ben already had a way to think about this form of memorialisation that was then reconfigured and extended digitally, and that resulted in a new bodily and affective encounter of a memory site.

Moving screens

Our final example is drawn from an interview with Gilles, who was particularly attracted to a series of video testimonies from survivors of the camps, and who

found the experience of watching them very moving. In part, this was due to how he discovered the screens and was able to watch the videos in relative solitude, and he recounted how he accidentally discovered one screen as he was taking a photograph of another feature, its placement in a hidden corner giving him 'a feeling that I had a special [relationship] to that man [on the screen]. It was not everybody that could see it. I had to get lost, in a way, in the memorial in order to have access to this story'. The screen's out-of-the-way location worked to encourage a deeply personal encounter that also allowed him time to absorb and reflect on the displayed content.

The testimonies that Gilles described watching were highly personal and he found himself at moments able to almost place himself in the scene. For example, he recounted the part of one film that moved him the most, describing in detail the story that it told:

It's a blessing, 'God blesses you and protects you, may God spread his grace on you and give you peace'. He was saying it in Hebrew, that's why it's subtitled. He was a Frenchman, he spoke French except here. This is one of the biggest emotions I had on that day...he's a survivor of the camps, he was 13 or 14 when he was in the camps with his parents. And there was a lady he says that came and that was allowed to take children to save them...he was not obliged to go...he said he was a bit of a rebel, at 13, and I wanted to stay with my parents so I said no I don't want to, so the lady didn't insist and the parents didn't insist...when they called my name I started to climb in the bus and my dad grabbed me, from behind, he put me down, he turned me in front of him and he said 'now my son, you're not coming with us' and he blessed him...so, this [subtitled text on the screen] is the whole blessing in Hebrew. And the conclusion was that he never saw his father again.

What he said of the story I could visualise it, I could see the bus, I could see him wearing shorts as a young man [although this was not visually depicted on the screen]. And I remember then, he just stopped, he said

this was the last time I saw my father and the last time anyone had blessed me in such a way. And he stopped, put his hands down and he stopped, and the camera continued to film, didn't move, phew! The rest is silence...really, really powerful

[insert Figures 5a and 5b]

Figure 5: a) Gilles hands echo the 'blessing' gesture of the screen-based testimonial that he photographed at b).

At the root of Gilles' moving experience of this film was a direct engagement with the content in which he went as far as to identify with the speaker in the film as he translated his words into English during the interview with Shanti. He seemed to have been drawn into the story, almost as if he had witnessed the events himself:

He's looking down...the video as you said was at [eye-level], so when he talked to us there was an eye contact sort of ...he was looking at the camera directly. But then here he is representing his father who is looking down on the son who is 13 and so this is why he is looking down, but I'm sure I could feel unconsciously that I was the little boy and he was blessing me.

Witcomb (2007, p. 42) describes a similar effect in her analysis of a 'testimonial' display at the Melbourne Museum in which 'The experience offered to the viewer is both physical and emotional'. The displays that Gilles described included first-hand narratives spoken by those who experienced them, and video that created a sense of eye-contact between the speakers and visitors. The digital screen made possible not only an emplaced affective response, but enabled Gilles to relate directly to the survivor's poignant account of his boyhood experience, his relationship with his father and his close call with death. Gilles of course was aware that a careful process of video production and design lay behind behind the display, with the speaker looking into the camera, and the purposeful decision to continue filming when even

when the speaker stopped telling the story. Despite this, the location of the screen, the content of the story, the direct and engaging mode of storytelling and Gilles' ability to so clearly picture the scene described combined in a powerful affective encounter.

This interrelationality between place, narrative, video screen and Gilles' own memory and imagination reinforces the emphasis on the contingency that Waterton (2014, p. 830) identifies at the heart of our engagements with heritage. As with Mylena, in the background of Gilles' account is the fact that as visitors they encountered the digital screens in the place where the testimonial – in these two cases a carving and a spoken narrative – happened or were still located. Knowing that the events that were represented on the screens occurred very close to where they took the photographs, thickened and intensified the encounter with the historical material, and this was reflected in how they described their responses and the intensities of them.

Conclusions

The role of affect in heritage sites has been linked to pedagogy and, as an extension of this, the politics of the past that it may make possible. Here Witcomb (2013, p. 255) asks: 'How can history museums play a role in developing a form of historical consciousness that encourages not only a critical engagement with history but also a sense that the traces the past has left on the present, matter?' In her example, affect plays a strong role 'to provoke unsettlement' in visitors, to make them question their own relationship with the past and perhaps rethink 'who they think they are' (Witcomb, 2013, p. 256). While her analysis is not explicitly site-specific, it allows us to consider how digital screens might play an important role in engaging with the past.

Accordingly, this article has sought to trace some of the affective intensities that can be brought into being through the entanglement of the digital screen, the material and sensory settings of a particular state-sponsored memory site, and the personal

contingencies of three individual visitors' experiences there. We have shown how these elements together prompt complex ways of understanding, sensing, imagining and feeling the past, and some of the ways that digital screens play a role in the emergence of these experiences. As such, we have engaged specifically with the material aspects of screens, the affective experiences they open up, and their capacities to connect us to the pasts of others. In this we follow Crouch, who argues that 'our personal and collective heritage components are worked, and maybe worked out, through our relationality with the material world, each other and so on: those parts of our individual and shared histories of which we may be aware, for example, flirting with space, with feelings foregrounded' (2015, p. 188). Moreover, we have used the accounts above as a way into a larger exploration of how a more-than-representational approach to a memory site, in this case focused on screens for viewing and touching, might help us think about the affective flows and intensities of such places in terms of their digital materialities. Each encounter we describe generated its own unique feelings: the distancing effect of an image rather than the 'true' carving, the poignancy of discovering family relationships amongst victims, and the powerful sadness and empathy prompted by filmed first-hand testimony. These encounters brought the research participants closer to the site, its history, its victims and survivors and its local significance, and the digital was an important element designed to purposefully reinforce the experience of 'being there'.

This troubles the possibility of 'contain[ing] the future by anticipating its needs' by way of the archive (Fairclough, 2012, p. xv). As Waterton (2014, p. 830) argues, our 'engagements with heritage' are highly contingent upon our histories and memories, as well as many other material and immaterial aspects of sites such as Camp des Milles. Accordingly, the focus on digital screens in this article has been an attempt to start to understand how such technologies may co-constitute the affecting mix of factors which shape the unpredictable and contingent 'feel' of memory sites for visitors. As we have shown, these move far beyond the mere presentation of archival content or even digital screens as display objects in their own right. Instead, they must be understood as working in many different ways to be implicit in the powerful experiences that many people have in such places.

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¹ See for example the special issue of *Memory Studies* 9 (1), 2016.