Viral Commemoration

Towards a Typology of COVID-19 Memorials

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On May 5, 2023, over three years after the World Health Organization (WHO) officially characterized the global COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared an end to COVID-19 as a public health emergency. However, he emphasized that this declaration did not signify that the disease was no longer a global threat. As of early May 2023, the cumulative cases worldwide stood at more than 750 million, with nearly seven million deaths worldwide and one million deaths in the United States alone.[1]

In light of its devastating impact, COVID-19 is poised to be the most extensively commemorated health crisis in human history. This viral commemoration fever is already evident in the multitude of memorials being created, markers being installed, and gardens being dedicated. Unlike previous memorial cultures, the commemoration of COVID-19 is deeply influenced by globalized and interconnected media technologies, which have played a crucial role in shaping the collective memory and perception of the pandemic's effects. The pervasive reach of digital media has allowed for a real-time, shared global experience, making the pandemic's impact more universally acknowledged and memorialized. It is reasonable to contend that COVID-19 will likely be second in scale only to the commemorative momentum generated by World War II. Furthermore, while COVID-19 constituted a global pandemic, its impact varied significantly around the world, adding layers of complexity to its commemoration across different cultures and communities. The pandemic has also exacerbated digital inequalities and the vulnerabilities faced by those without access to the internet, mobile phones, and tablets (Beaunoyer et al. 2020; Pitsillides and Wallace 2022, 61; Wang and Tang 2020).

Many COVID-19 memorial projects seek to give a sense of the scale of loss as well as draw attention to the individual victim or to the heroic frontline workers. They use what have become household items of memorial design, such as names, walls, stones, trees, eternal flames, and water; however, they often appropriate these

1 The numbers were tabulated by the WHO's Coronavirus Dashboard, which has collated key statistics since early in the pandemic, https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367.

elements in surprising and innovative ways. This chapter aims to take stock of the aesthetic forms, subjects, and locations of COVID-19 memorials worldwide. A large sample of proposed and completed memorials illustrates what I have elsewhere called "a trajectory of commemoration" (Gessner 2015). Such a trajectory is set into motion after crises that cause traumatic experiences, which has most notably happened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In the trajectory of commemoration, the first memorials to appear are personal expressions of grief arranged in collective shrines (category 1). Second, these impromptu memorials give way to documentary memorials in the form of temporary installations or exhibitions that collocate earlier memorials or shrines, sometimes carrying explicit political messages (category 2). Third, architectural and public art proposals stipulated by a variety of individuals, groups, or larger constituencies culminate in the construction of permanent memorials or carefully planned temporary installations (category 3). Because some time has passed since the event that the memorials commemorate, they are often more metaphorical and abstract than memorial shrines or documentary memorials. They are often regarded—or at least planned—as an endpoint or place of closure.

Although COVID-19 memorials commemorate a public health matter rather than a violent event, the trajectory of commemoration mirrors patterns seen in other forms of memorialization. As outlined above, memorials often evolve from collective shrines to installations collocating earlier shrines, and finally to permanent memorials. However, in the case of COVID-19, this process has occurred in a simultaneous rather than successive manner. This shift can be attributed to two main factors: First, when memorials began appearing, the pandemic was ongoing, and the tally of deaths continued to rise with no foreseeable end, creating both an immediate and ongoing need for commemoration. Second, global interconnectedness and the pervasive influence of social and other media have transformed how we experience and memorialize events. The real-time dissemination of information and shared global experiences have accelerated commemorative processes, creating a felt urgency and simultaneity that distinguishes COVID-19 memorials from those of previous eras.

Affect and the Creation of Memorials

Memorials are commonly perceived as spaces for contemplation and healing, often established in the aftermath of catastrophic events. These sites are contextualized by feelings of grief and loss, as well as the realization of one's vulnerability and longing for stability and unity. Serving a dual purpose, they recognize and preserve memories while remembering and often honoring individuals. In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in memorial creation and commemorative practices.

This trend, called "memorial mania" by Erika Doss, signifies a heightened public engagement with historical and memory-related issues (2010, 2, 9–10).

Memorials can be interpreted as "archives of memory" (Cvetkovich 2003, 7); repositories that function as visual and material conduits for emotional experiences, reflecting the sentiments of the people and groups responsible for their inception. Thus, it is valuable to examine the affective contexts, encompassing emotional, cultural, and societal dimensions, in which COVID-19 memorials are conceived, constructed, and experienced.

To restore or maintain a sense of order and unity, a significant number of COVID-19 memorials incorporate narratives centered on innocent victims, courageous frontline workers, and acts of individual heroism. Inevitably, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., created by Maya Lin, comes to mind, whose initial purpose formulated by the group of veterans who proposed it was to 'heal a nation.' The black granite memorial deviates from the norm by inviting individuals to descend instead of directing their gaze upwards. Lin's design, notable for its expansive physical presence and intimate tactile qualities of the more than 58,000 names of service members of the US armed forces who died in Vietnam etched into the stone, leaves an indelible mark. Popularized by Lin's wall, names of victims have become the essential ingredient for modern memorialization. Making pencil rubbings of the names of the victims etched on the wall both connects visitors to the dead soldiers and produces a memento, which, as Susan Stewart (1994) suggests, authenticates the experience.

The Spanish Flu Memory Gap

American historical memory has been preserved or sanitized through memorials and museum exhibitions; however, some events and experiences have fallen into oblivion. One such void or blank space stands out: the 1918 influenza pandemic that killed at least 50 million people worldwide (with about 675,000 deaths occurring in the United States). The pandemic has seen close to nil public memorials or commemorative markers, neither to those who perished nor to those who literally fought the battle against the disease. The latter, mostly doctors and nurses, would have been natural recipients of public gratification and heroization through memorials in any comparably fatal catastrophe. The same is true for the fictional response, as literary scholar Elizabeth Outka asserts when she remarks that the influenza pandemic "has been hidden since its arrival, drowned out by its overwhelming scope, by the broader ways outbreaks of disease are often muted, and by the way the human-inflicted violence of the time consumed cultural and literal attention" (2019, 2). Alexandra Alter (2022), a *New York Times* contributor, confirms that there is scarce notable literature directly inspired by the 1918 flu pandemic. Writers sidestepped the topic or made

only subtle references to it. This might be attributed to the pandemic's timing at the end of World War I, and the fact that the impact of an invisible virus lacked the elements of gripping war stories.

However, COVID-19 stirred a renewed interest in the 1918 flu pandemic, prompting individuals and governments to explore the historical context, parallels, and lessons that could be drawn from the earlier pandemic. Some media outlets started looking for flu memorials when COVID-19 hit (e.g., Segal 2020). Of the few examples that exist, many were only unveiled around the centenary of the pandemic and are located in cemeteries. For example, a small stone bench was installed at Hope Cemetery in Barre, Vermont, in 2018.[2] A city in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany, erected its first 'pandemic memorial' in 2019 on a cemetery in Wiesloch by re-installing the gravestone of Anna Ritzhaupt, born Zirkel, seventy years after its removal. A plaque, which was added to the site in April 2020, now turns the gravesite into a memorial that commemorates the dead of the 1918 flu as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. It reads, "People are missing… … They are missing from our memories and from our lives" ("Pandemie-Denkmal" [2019] 2020).[3] The most noteworthy memorial in terms of size and location stands at Pukeahu (Mt. Cook) in central Wellington, New Zealand's capital. Designed by Neil Pardington and installed in 2019, the 1918 Influenza Pandemic Memorial Plaque features a graphic representation of the scale of the pandemic's impact across New Zealand's regions from north to south, making visible that the pandemic struck the military camps hard, and that the Māori death rate was seven times higher than for non-Māori ("Pukeahu Park Guide" 2023).

Why did the 1918 flu fade from cultural memory so quickly? One reason commonly given is the profound experience of the Great War, World War I. Another reason could be the fact that one would have needed to admit failure, of having fallen victim to a disease one was not able to control or defeat.[4] Furthermore, the general forgetfulness about the flu pandemic may also be attributed to the absence of major epidemics in the collective memories of most Western European and North American societies since the introduction of the polio vaccine in 1955/1961.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a different, much more memory-conscious approach: archives and museums started collecting artifacts when the first repercussions of the outbreak were being felt. The need to remember has become a mod-

2 Brian Zecchinelli, whose grandfather died of the flu in the fall of 1918, installed the bench (see Segal 2020).

3 All translations of materials in languages other than English are by the chapter's author.

4 World War I ended on November 11, 1918, with the victory of the Allies over Germany. Without an equivalent of today's communication systems and global media infrastructure and with most countries except for Spain censoring their media, the 1918 flu (or Spanish flu because there was no media censorship in Spain) was a threat that was experienced locally and not shared globally—at least not at the time.

ern necessity, a mandate. Behind it, one might assume political motivation and a wish for a coherent authoritative narrative, closure, and healing. However, before closure and healing could even be thought of, collective COVID-19 memorial shrines began to appear.

Category 1: Collective Shrines and Online Memorials as (Digital) Spaces of Mourning

Collective memorial shrines typically emerge as the initial response following a tragic deathly event. A case in point is the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks when such memorials appeared throughout New York City. They often take the form of seemingly impromptu gatherings where individuals, moved by grief and a sense of solidarity, bring flowers, candles, photographs, handwritten messages, and other personal items to designated locations. I call the gatherings and emergence of shrines *seemingly* spontaneous because I believe there is a deep-felt need behind them that cannot be attributed to spontaneity alone. Mourning, which was once a private practice restricted to private spaces (Doss 2010, 93), has become a publicly shared practice at collective shrines. The memorials reflect the community's need to collectively express their sorrow, pay respects, and commemorate the lives lost. C. Allen Haney, Christina Leimer, and Juliann Lowery (1997) point to the shrine's function as a political act because of their effectiveness in calling for respect but also for attention after tragic death.

The situation was notably different, especially during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the implementation of social distancing measures, enforced quarantines, and lockdowns. In a few instances, memorials to previous pandemics were appropriated as collective shrines to commemorate COVID-19 victims. As early as March 2020, the Vienna Plague Column (also known as Trinity Column; *Wiener Pestsäule*) became a site of pilgrimage for people in the city to light candles and ask for blessings ("Schütze uns vor dem Coronavirus" 2020). In similar fashion, people began flocking to the 1918 Flu Memorial in the old Raia cemetery outside of Goa, India, in July 2020. While the cemetery was a place to bury and commemorate the dead, people began to pray for the survival of loved ones at the Flu Memorial. The sudden renewed interest in the stone monolith, whose top had collapsed due to lack of care and was scheduled to be demolished, led to the restoration of the memorial by October 2020 (de Souza 2020). However, these two physical memorial shrines in real places were the exception.

For most people, the inaccessibility of ritual practices of mourning, such as attending funeral services, "left a deep rift, [which] technology [was] expected to fill," as Stacey Pitsillides and Jayne Wallace point out (2022, 61). Commemorative activities shifted to print and online platforms, in particular. Some of the earliest personal

mementos of the global pandemic appeared in the form of obituaries in news outlets. On May 24, 2020, the *New York Times* printed names and biographical details of COVID-19 victims, calling attention to the death toll approaching 100,000 in the United States at that time. The list of names on the front page continued on three pages inside the newspaper's main news section. Moreover, an interactive visualization of the victims' names, ages, hometowns, and short taglines about their lives are still accessible online (Barry et al. 2020) and draw attention to racial, local, and class disparities of the pandemic due to health inequities.[5] The *New York Times*'s list of names is a tribute to each individual who has been lost, but it is also a collective memorial in the sense of a publicly shared practice after a tragic event—and a powerful public media statement about a massive health and inequity crisis (Okonkwo et al. 2021).

An even earlier instance of a collective memorial that, despite its digital nature, closely resembles the memorial shrines that arise in the aftermath of tragedies, is the Sina Weibo2 account of Dr. Li Wenliang, the Wuhan doctor who gained recognition as the COVID-19 whistleblower. When Li died on February 7, 2020, his microblogging site "became a virtual space for shared commemoration, conversation and critique […] and a place for netizens to continue bonds that strike a balance between grief, political commentary and everyday encounters like referencing the Dr's love of fried chicken" (Pitsillides and Wallace 2022, 63). In fact, with COVID-19, both feelings of grief and outrage over political decisions have been motivating factors for commemorative practices from the beginning.

Another example from China revolves around the utilization of the code-sharing platform GitHub to establish a repository that archives personal stories detailing the Chinese experience during COVID-19, particularly the lesser-covered early stages in Wuhan (Liu [2020] 2023). Although it was not initially conceived as a memorial, it swiftly evolved into a collective grassroots tribute. Pitsillides and Wallace explain that this archive "weave[s] together stories, which include encounters with the dead, to provide momentary snippets of what it was like to be at the centre of where the pandemic began" (2022, 64).

Pitsillides and Wallace rightfully point out that "the nature of online memorials has shifted over time from simple image and text-based guest books […] to increasingly creative practices that have given rise to new perspectives on memory and legacy" (2022, 61). COVID-19 commemorative online memorials adopt these practices in their digital walls and shrines. Of these, most go back to efforts by groups and

5 However, listing the names of those killed through racist violence from Native genocide to slavery to the killings of countless people under police custody would literally and metaphorically blow up the newspaper pages. These events and individual experiences are indeed more seldomly subject of public naming and commemoration, not because they have fallen into oblivion but because no public consensus has been reached.

entities that existed before COVID-19, such as local and community groups, news outlets, religious organizations, employers, city governments, and healthcare and social workers.

For example, *The City*, a nonprofit news outlet in New York City, launched an online memorial a few months into the pandemic. Many cities created digital memorial walls.[6] The Manhattan Transit Authority, together with the families of the employees lost to COVID-19, came up with both a digital version and a public display of a memorial. Family members shared photographs and selected the background color for the posters, which were displayed in subway stations across Manhattan and are also still accessible online ("Remembering the Colleagues We Lost" n.d.).

Examples of religious communities who have created online memorials include the Muslim-run Zakat Foundation of America's COVID-19 Memorial Wall ("COVID-19 Memorial Wall" n.d.), and the "Remember Me" project created by Dean David Ison of London's St Paul's Cathedral (Illustration III.1). Created on May 22, 2020, the latter has grown to more than 11,500 tributes commemorating COVID-19 victims with photographs and text messages that can still be accessed online ("Remember Me" 2024) and via four digital kiosks in the Middlesex Chapel of St Paul's Cathedral. The online memorial is complemented by a physical memorial in the form of a new inner porch in St Paul's north transept (see category 3).

Healthcare and social workers have also created online memorials. In Russia, a group of healthcare workers set up a website that highlights the death toll among this group by linking to individual obituaries in local newspapers or Facebook groups (*Список памяти* n.d.). In India, frontline workers initiated the National COVID-19 Memorial. The online memorial of the Covid Care Network, a non-governmental organization led by a team of doctors in the city of Kolkata, commemorates Indians who have lost their lives to COVID-19. The mission statement reads, "Covid took them away mercilessly and struggling with science, as we did, could not bid them farewell. This National Covid Memorial is a space for the thousands of Indians whom we lost to Covid fury. It has stories engraved in words that shed tears. The unsung tunes of our tribute to the Covid Martyrs are kept here in this National Covid Memorial" ("About Covid Memorial" 2023). Despite being initiated by doctors and health workers and maintained by journalists, the virtual memorial not only addresses those groups but also allows family members and friends of the victims to pay their tributes.

6 Many US cities and communities set up localized online memorial walls for their citizens in a similar fashion as these two: St. Louis (https://www.stlouiscovidmemorial.com/) and Chicago (https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/memorial-wall.html).

Illustration III.1: "Remember Me" Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, London

Photos by Ingrid Gessner, August 14, 2024.

These virtual spaces of mourning democratize the memorialization process and may shed light on new emerging rituals surrounding death. Many digital memorials offer participatory features akin to collective shrines, but their longevity and access policies remain uncertain. Furthermore, the intersection of public and private spaces is a central concern in the realm of online experiences, where individuals can maintain both private lives and entertain open, public personas simultaneously. Digital memorial walls add complexity to personal expressions of mourning because these expressions can reach a broad audience and potentially impact how the tragic event is perceived, as well as the structures that surround it. Additionally, control within this space is both more immediate and more discreet compared to collective shrines in the physical world. Administrators can quietly remove a personal message or openly prohibit specific forms of interaction. These are issues that challenge

the democratizing potential of these spaces but which may also facilitate a healing process for those in mourning.

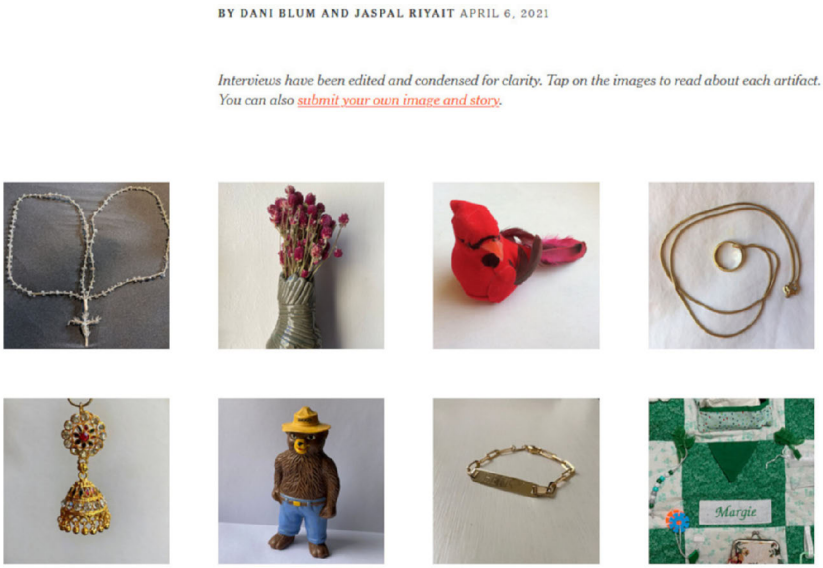
Category 2: Documentary Memorials, the Scale of Loss, and Political Commentary

In the trajectory of commemoration, documentary memorials in the form of temporary installations or exhibitions that collocate earlier memorials are second to emerge. They follow collective memorials, as (re)organized meta-shrines or as original creations and convey essential facts or information. This does not preclude that they often appear at the same time or only shortly after the collective memorial shrines and online memorial walls. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a wall near St. Vincent's Hospital in Lower Manhattan that was plastered with missing-person flyers became known as the "Wall of Hope and Remembrance." When the flyers near the hospital had to be taken down, they were integrated into a documentary tableau that was secured under plexiglass. Like art projects, such as the 5,000 photographs by 3,000 professional and amateur photographers collected for the exhibition of *Here Is New York*, the wall at St. Vincent's represents a documentary effort to mark and remember the loss (Gessner 2015). These types of memorials are often, but not exclusively, initiated by individuals, who are often artists.

In March 2021, one year into the pandemic, the *New York Times* asked its readers to submit photographs of objects that reminded them of the loved ones they had lost not only to COVID-19 but to all manner of causes. At that time, one in three Americans knew someone who had died because of the coronavirus. Jaspal Riyait, the section editor, explained, "I've spent the last year looking for images to reflect the devastation of the pandemic and the grief it has wrought. […] I wanted to find a way to humanize the death toll and re-establish the visibility of those who had died" (2021). The interactive website, designed by Umi Syam and titled "What Loss Looks Like," features photographs and personal stories (Blum and Riyait 2021). Items range from a gold bracelet that belonged to a father and now never leaves his daughter's wrist because she is desperate for any connection to his memory (see Illustration III.2, second row from the top, third item from the left) to a cast iron skillet that, in 1947, was given as a wedding present to the now-dead parents of a man who sees it as a "symbol of something that, in its own way, endures." Framed in this way, the often mundane items become objects that occupy space and tell a story.[7]

7 "What Loss Looks Like" follows a practice that has long been established in traditional museums, which showcase artifacts to allow viewers to make a connection to the past. This tradition is reflected in a *New York Times* photo essay of objects collected from the World Trade Center and surrounding area on 9/11 (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/11/nyr

Illustration III.2: Photographs of objects remembering lost ones depicted on the New York Times website



Screenshot from Dani Blum and Jaspal Riyait, "What Loss Looks Like," *New York Times*, April 6, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/well/covid-death-grief-loss.html.

Efforts to create documentary memorials began before 2021. In May 2020, the Museum of the City of New York was interested in how the entire city was viewing this moment of collective historical experience (Illustration III.3). They invited everyone to share photos–taken from an appropriately socially-distanced perspective–documenting personal experiences and to post them on Instagram using the hashtag #CovidStoriesNYC and tagging @museumofcityny ("#CovidStoriesNYC" 2020).[8] In breaking down the boundary between professional and amateur, the

egion/911-artifacts.html), and exhibits, such as Elisabeth Smolarz's Encyclopedia of Things 2014–19 (https://www.smolarz.com/), Kija Lucas's Museum of Sentimental Taxonomy (https://www.themst.org/), Jody Servon and Lorene Delany-Ullman's Saved: Objects of the Dead (https://jodyservon.com/projects/saved), as well as books like Bill Shapiro and Naomi Wax's *What We Keep* (https://www.whatwekeep.org/).

8 Another similar example is the Coronavirus Journaling Project of the National Women's History Museum in Alexandria, Virginia. Initiated in the spring of 2020, the project invited women and girls to submit journals, letters, and photos of their daily lives (https://www.womenshistory.org/news/national-womens-history-museum-debuts-women-writing-history-coronavirus-journaling-project).

show democratized the medium of photography. In doing so, the project deliberately referenced *Here is New York*. Both archives are based on the principle of total inclusion.

Illustration III.3: The announcement of the open call via social media to share photographs of socially-distanced New York City by the Museum of the City of New York

Screenshot from "#CovidStoriesNYC," *Museum of the City of New York*, April 1, 2020, https://www.mcny.org/covidstoriesnyc.

Many memorial projects that fall into this second category seek to give a sense to the scale of loss. In September 2020, the organizers of the Covid Memorial Project planted 20,000 US flags on the National Mall. Each flag represented ten lives lost to the virus (Montgomery 2020). As early as May 2020, artist Shane Reilly started planting orange, pink, white, and red flags in his front yard in Austin, one for each Texan resident lost. The number of flags soon exceeded the available space, and Reilly started taking down his memorial and lobbying for a permanent memorial in Austin a year into the pandemic (Ragas 2021; Wright 2020). Such documentary memorial initiatives by individuals are no rare exceptions. Dimid Hayes erected a memorial

shrine outside his house on Lomita Street in Santa Fe with which he documented the virus's human toll. On a walnut farm in Ballard, California, Anne Guynn attached one colored paper heart for each deceased California citizen to cords she had tied to the trees. While the garlands with the dangling hearts first reminded her of weeping willows, the meaning of the installation changed over time: "The wind has blown a lot of the hearts off, so they're scattered throughout the orchard, and I'll find little colored hearts everywhere." In fact, for years to come, hearts might get caught in the harvesting machine and serve as a reminder of lives lost in the COVID-19 pandemic (Block 2020).

Hearts and heart-shaped plants are one of the most ubiquitous traditional means to mourn and commemorate the dead, and they are featured in countless memorials. For example, gold hearts on display in Edina, Minnesota, represent each COVID-19 death in the city (Brooks 2022). Equally counting on the power of hearts, the memorial "Loved Ones Not Numbers" was put up in late August 2020 outside the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta. The wall of broken hearts represented the more than 5,300 victims who had died from the virus across the state since March 2020. Family members of each of the victims were invited to come to claim one of the hearts and write a message to their loved ones ("Loved Ones, Not Numbers!" 2022). According to a PBS report, the installation "was also, in part, meant to be a strong message to Governor Brian Kemp to enforce a mask mandate," which he had refused (Barajas 2021).[9] By visualizing the magnitude of the loss, the broken hearts indeed carried a political message and a call to action.

The Rose River Traveling Memorial is the brainchild of artist Marcos Lutyens, who created a tribute to victims of the pandemic in the form of red felt roses (*Rose River Memorial* 2021). The memorial project, which began in California and included online rose-making sessions, was showcased in Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Boyle Heights, Garden Grove, Hollywood, Ojai, Culver City (all California), Maui (Hawaii), Harlingen (Texas), Nashville (Tennessee), and Topeka (Kansas). The installation was displayed on 'COVID–19 Victims and Survivors Memorial Day' (March 7, 2022) in Washington, D.C.[10]

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9 Mask mandates were initially implemented as crucial public health measures to mitigate the virus's spread. However, these mandates underwent a noteworthy transformation, evolving from straightforward public health directives rooted in scientific recommendations to becoming emblematic of broader political and ideological divisions. The debates surrounding their efficacy and perceived impact on personal freedoms turned mask-wearing into a symbol of collective responsibility for some and a contentious issue linked to individual liberties for others. This evolution also involved a notable aspect where some politicians refused to enforce these mandates, further contributing to the politicization of this public health measure.

10 US Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) introduced a resolution to memorialize those lost to the COVID-19 and recognize the

By documenting the immense number of lives lost, memorials of this second category can be understood as more than commemorative markers and expressions of grief. Through their capacity to graphically demonstrate the scale of loss, these installations also function as political statements of anger and rage against governmental inaction or late action.

In October 2020, 20,000 empty chairs faced the White House in Washington, D.C., the official residence and workplace of the U.S. President, Donald Trump at the time. One chair stood for ten Americans who had died from Covid-19 (O'Kane 2020). Empty chairs were also at the center of a memorial installation in Pierre, South Dakota, in November 2020 (Barajas 2021). Tribal nations were hit hard by the pandemic (Brodt and Empey 2021; Wang 2021), and since Lakotas pray to the Four Directions, organizers of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and Oglala Sioux Tribe arranged the chairs so that they faced the four cardinal directions.

Similarly, artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg planted a white flag for each life lost to COVID-19 on the grounds of the Washington Armory–267,000 flags altogether. While signposting the sheer extent of loss, the white flags also allowed room for personal messages and names, thereby giving a unique identity to each individual lost (Cameron 2021). Firstenberg provocatively named her installation "In America: How Could this Happen…" and repeated it a year later with the memorial installation "In America: Remember." By then, the number of dead had more than doubled, and hundreds of thousands of white flags on the National Mall, in Washington, D.C., honored the more than 670,000 people in the United States who had died from COVID-19 (Hartigan 2021a). Like the year before, visitors were invited to personalize flags in memory of someone they had lost. For those who could not visit in person, a specifically created website allowed them to dedicate a flag until the deadline of September 30, 2021. These dedicated flags were then displayed in physical form on the National Mall. The website also offered an interactive feature for selecting and viewing individual flags. A composite photograph by *National Geographic* photographer Stephen Wilkes captures the passage of day to night at the "In America: Remember" memorial installation, covering vast stretches of the National Mall (Hartigan 2021b). "The acres of precise, unassuming flags evoked the dignified grief of military cemeteries in Normandy and Arlington. Anything displayed on the National Mall is, of course, political," writes Danielle Ofri in *The Lancet* (2022).

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suffering of COVID-19 survivors in August 2021. The resolution would designate the first Monday in March as 'COVID-19 Victims and Survivors Memorial Day' (https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-markey-heinrich-introduce-resolution-memorializing-those-lost-to-and-suffering-from-covid19). It was not passed and in March 2023, Senators Warren and Markey reintroduced the resolution (https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senators-markey-and-warren-reintroduce-resolution-memorializing-those-lost-to-covid19).

Around Christmas 2020, 212 paper lanterns lined the streets of a neighborhood in Fayetteville, Arkansas (Barajas 2021). Mimicking the means of expression used, namely lights and candles, two commemorative rituals performed under the auspices of the federal government appropriated the grassroots effort carried out in Arkansas. On the eve of his inauguration in January 2021, Joe Biden hosted a commemorative event at the Lincoln Memorial. Four hundred lights were arranged along the Reflecting Pool, representing what were then 400,000 US lives lost to COVID-19 (Wise 2021). One month later, on February 22, 2021, President Biden, his wife, Jill Biden, along with Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Douglas Emhoff, bowed their heads in a moment of silence as a military band played "Amazing Grace" during a ceremony that–in the words of Press Secretary Jen Psaki–"mark[ed] the solemn milestone of 500,000 American lives lost to COVID-19" ("Press Briefing" 2021; Sanger and Stolberg 2021). When the music stopped, the president made the sign of the cross and turned to walk back inside. The ceremony took place on the bottom of candle-lit stairs leading up to the Truman Balcony, the same balcony on which President Trump, when he returned home from the hospital after having been treated for COVID-19, removed his mask, and walked inside–even as he was most likely still infectious.

In late May 2020, video artist Robin Bell projected the words 'Covid Memorial' onto the brick wall of a Subway sandwich shop in Washington, D.C. (Block 2020). Below the title scrolled a slideshow of faces of COVID-19 victims, along with messages their loved ones had posted on social media. On August 31, 2020, relatives of COVID victims gathered for funeral processions that drove past 900 enlarged photos of their loved ones lined up along the streets of Belle Isle Park, Detroit (Bosman et al. 2020). At that time, COVID had claimed the lives of about 1,500 Detroiters. Families were later given the square photos, 4 feet by 4 feet in size, used in the commemoration. While Bell's installation is another example of a documentary metashrine repurposing earlier collective commemoration on social media, the motorcade showcased the enormity of individual loss by combining it with the ritual action of a funeral procession.

Many of the ephemeral or limited-term memorials described in this section are reminiscent of the AIDS Memorial Quilt (Illustration III.4). While the quilt, with its tens of thousands of individual panels, may have a more enduring material quality than paper flags or lanterns, it only comes to life when the panels are put together and displayed together for a limited duration of time.

The AIDS Memorial quilt was conceived in 1985 by Cleve Jones, a gay rights activist, as a way to commemorate the lives of those lost to AIDS. It was first displayed in 1987 in Washington, D.C., covering the National Mall with thousands of individual panels. More than thirty-five years later, the quilt has grown to more than 1.2 million square feet and contains over 50,000 panels, serving as a powerful symbol of remembrance, activism, and solidarity in the fight against HIV/AIDS. By display-

ing names together with personal mementos, it is "a collective work of art fashioned from individual expressions of grief" that ideally lends itself to be adapted (Harris 2022).

Illustration III.4: AIDS Memorial Quilt in front of the Washington Monument

Photo taken on November 27, 1985. From National Institutes of Health, http://aidshistory.nih.gov/tip_of_the_iceberg/quilt.html. Photo is in the public domain.

Inspired by the stories she had heard about the AIDS Memorial Quilt, thirteen-year-old Madeleine Fugate began to work on a Covid Memorial Quilt in 2020. It was first displayed at the California Science Center, Los Angeles, and at the Armory Art Center, West Palm Beach, Florida, later that year. The Covid Memorial Quilt is still growing and being assembled by volunteers around Fugate and her Textiles and Costume Design teacher Wendy Wells. Its exhibition schedule as well as instructions on how to contribute to the quilt can be viewed on the project's website (*Covid Memorial Quilt* 2023).

The Covid 19 Memorial Blanket Project similarly constitutes a collective work of art. This particular knitting project was started by three women from Ontario, Canada, in 2020 (The *Covid 19 Memorial Project* 2022). As a symbol, a blanket brings comfort to those who lost loved ones and it can also represent the "physical heaviness" of grief (Draaisma 2020).

In the United States, the idea of a COVID-19 Pandemic Memorial Quilt reached the 117th United States Congress. A bill (H.R. 3019) was introduced to the House of Representatives on May 7, 2021. If passed, such a memorial would no longer fit the description of a memorial conceived by individuals or a group; it would fall into the third category of planned and often officially commissioned permanent memorials, tasking "the Smithsonian Institution and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to jointly carry out" this project.

Category 3: Planned Permanent Memorials

Planned permanent memorials fall into the third category in the trajectory of commemoration. I understand permanence not in the sense of everlasting or eternal because the changing needs of societies will decide the memorials' fates over time; instead, I define a planned permanent memorial as one made of sufficiently sturdy material to guarantee some physical endurance. Most often, permanent memorials are initiated by publicly elected entities or issue groups. These types of memorials usually only materialize after some time has passed. However, when it comes to COVID-19, the almost immediate wish to remember and also to find closure triggered several memorial proposals and led to the quick completion of quite a few permanent memorials early on in the pandemic.

A circular piece of black steel with a flame in the middle was unveiled on May 15, 2020, in Madrid (Illustration III.5). The form of the memorial is rather traditional and a small plaque in front of it reads, "Your flame will never go out in our hearts" ("Monument in Memory of the Victims of the Covid 19 Pandemic" 2023). A second COVID-19 memorial was dedicated in October 2020 in one of Madrid's major public squares, the Puerta del Sol (Illustration III.5). The simple white marble stone plaque is attached to the Royal House of the Post Office located on the south side of the square; the inscription reads, "The people of Madrid in remembrance of the victims of Covid-19 and especially those who died in solitude." The historical building houses the office of the head of the regional government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. Besides the COVID-19 plaque only two other commemorative pieces have previously been attached to the building's façade: one is devoted to the 'heroes populares' who rose up against the Napoleonic invasion of Spain on May 2, 1808, and the other one is a memorial of the victims of the March 11, 2004, terrorist attacks. It speaks to the severity with which Madrileños experienced the first COVID year

that the regional government decided to install the memorial (Mollinedo-Gajate et al. 2021).

Illustration III.5: Monument to the Victims of the Coronavirus (left) and COVID-19 Memorial Plaque, Puerta del Sol Square, Madrid (right)

Photo of the Monument to the Victims of the Coronavirus by Thomas Holbach. From *Wikimedia*, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Covid19_monumento.jpg; photo of the COVID-19 Memorial Plaque by Ingrid Gessner, April 5, 2022.

The reason Spain was among the first, if not the first, country to dedicate two permanent memorials might be because in the early months of the pandemic, in the spring of 2020, Spain experienced a significant surge in cases and fatalities. Only one year later, in July 2021, a third memorial was dedicated at the Paseo Maritimo de Juan Aparicio in Torrevieja, bearing the inscription "Torrevieja to the victims of Covid-19. You left in solitude, but you will remain forever in our memory." Created by artist Pepe Miralles, the iron sculpture depicts two people embracing in Keith Haring style on top of a stone base. According to Miralles, he was inspired by "all the hugs we have not been able to give during the pandemic" ("Torrevieja Unveils Sculpture," 2021).

Brazil's Infinity Memorial in Rio de Janeiro, dedicated on September 20, 2020, uses a well-known memorial language and symbolism with 4,000 names etched in durable material.[11] Situated in the Penitencia cemetery, where many of Rio de Janeiro's COVID-19 victims are buried, the 39-meter (128-foot) long ribbon of undulating steel pays tribute to those who died from the virus and provides families and friends with a marker for their losses in one of the worst affected cities in Brazil (Silva

11 According to an AP report, Rio de Janeiro state had reported more than 17,600 deaths and more than 250,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the time of the memorial's dedication in September 2020, second only to Sao Paulo state in Brazil ("Brazil" 2020).

and Ribeiro-Alves 2021). The Brazilian architect Crisa Santos designed the memorial, conceiving the idea of a serpentine steel band after visiting several cemeteries.

Illustration III.6: London Blossom Garden in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London

Photo by Ingrid Gessner, August 18, 2024.

In its serenity, the COVID-19 Memorial in the Baker Street Jewish Cemeteries in Boston mirrors the one in Madrid. Two benches and a memorial stone were placed in a circular grassy area, surrounded by paths: one bench honors the caretakers of COVID-19 patients, the other, the 'last responders,' in Jewish faith, the holy workers tasked with caring for the dead and burying them. Dedicated in an online ceremony on July 9, 2020, Tammuz 17, a day of public mourning on the Jewish calendar, the pre-recorded event drew a large viewership. What seems notable is that during the nineteenth century, the grounds of the 42 Jewish cemeteries in use since the 1920s were once home to Brook Farm, a utopian experiment in communal living.

On February 21, 2021, the Codogno pandemic memorial was unveiled. The date coincided with the one-year anniversary of the first reported local transmission of COVID-19 in Europe and the supposed designation of a 'patient zero' in Italy. Italy was an early hotspot and epicenter of COVID-19 in Europe, and the pandemic caught the country off-guard. The Codogno memorial features a sculpture with three steel columns. Inscribed on a platform below the columns are the Italian words for resilience, community, and restart (*resilienza*, *comunità*, and *ripartenza*). Like the Madrid memorial, this is not a sweeping memorial to the historical mo-

ment but a simple place to mourn the dead. Similarly, a hill of stones memorial in nearby Casalpusterlengo, Italy, commemorates townspeople who have died from COVID-19 with personalized pebbles.

In Italy and many other places, parks, woods, and forests of memory have been created since 2020. In the summer of 2020, the Italian architect Angelo Renna suggested planting 35,000 cypress trees in Milan's historic San Siro stadium to turn it into a public memorial to commemorate the COVID-19 victims, calling it San Siro 2.0 – Monumento per la vita. While Renna's proposal has not yet been realized, a similar project in Bergamo, only an hour away from Milan, officially opened on March 18, 2023. The Bosco della Memoria (Wood of Memory), a living memorial of eight hundred tree seedlings, situated in the greater Parco della Trucca, is an official endeavor by the Italian government to commemorate the more than 100,000 Italian COVID-19 victims. As early as March 2021, the Italian Senate unanimously approved a bill designating March 18 as a national day in remembrance of the victims of COVID-19 ("Italy Mourns Its Covid Dead with Remembrance Day on 18 March" 2021; "Vittime del Covid" 2023).

Other memorial designs include the London Blossom Garden in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, which opened on May 24, 2021 (Illustration III.6). Another example of a landscaped COVID-19 memorial project is a formerly EPA-designated Superfund priority being converted into a public park in Jersey City, New Jersey.[12] A pergola-like structure with the names of the city's COVID-19 victims will give relatives and friends of the dead a place to mourn. The memorial portion of the park will include a grove of 503 trees planted in a newly created Skyway Park in honor of residents who died of the coronavirus.[13] Many more cities and communities, particularly in the United Kingdom, have established memorial gardens or sections within existing parks, recreation areas, and cemeteries for those who lost their lives to COVID-19. Four projects shall serve as further examples:

- On April 3, 2023, Covid Memorial Garden opened in Plaistow Park (Illustration III.7). Newham, where the park is situated, is one of the London boroughs that was most heavily impacted by COVID-19, as 1,013 residents lost their lives. The garden features three timber totems and draws attention to the changing seasons with its well-thought-out planting. The totems were specifically designed for the memorial garden. Together with the previously existing trees and the

12 The site, polluted by hazardous chemicals when it was used as an industrial landfill in the 1970s, has been remediated and capped to make it safe for visitors, but extra soil will be brought in for planting.

13 Overall, however, more than 503 Jersey City residents have died from COVID-19, according to the city's online coronavirus dashboard.

new planting, they represent the themes of regrowth, support, and community ("Covid Memorial Garden – A Place of Reflection" 2024).

- A Covid garden in Telford Town Park, Shropshire, was dedicated on May 12, 2023. It features benches, trees, and wild meadow areas, and a sculpture (Tudor 2023).
- On December 3, 2022, the city of Birmingham opened the first of 10 Covid memorial gardens planned in all ten constituencies to give people somewhere near where they live a focal point to remember their loved ones ("Locations of City's COVID-19 Memorial Community Gardens Are Announced" 2022; "Birmingham's First Covid-19 Memorial Garden Opens" 2022).
- In March 2021, hundreds of yellow ribbons were tied to trees near the Magna Carta memorial in Surrey to remember those who died from COVID-19. The tribute was organized by an organization called Forest of Memories, which proposed planting a tree for every Covid victim in new forests across the country (Pallot 2021). The project is ongoing, and the organization plans to establish multiple Forests of Memories across the UK ("Forest of Memories" 2022).

Illustration III.7: Covid Memorial Garden in Plaistow Park, Newham

Photos by Ingrid Gessner, August 18, 2024.

Compared to the purposely decentralized garden memorials, the National Covid Memorial Wall in London is a much more central place of remembrance than the one in London's Olympic Park. The wall was created in spring 2021, at the same time as the one in Olympic Park. It originated in a grassroots effort to remember those who died during the pandemic (see Illustration III.8). The public initiative managed to fill a 6.5-foot-high wall with close to 150,000 hearts, each standing for a person with COVID-19 marked on a death certificate in the United Kingdom. The wall stretches from Westminster Bridge, opposite Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, to Lambeth Bridge, about 500 meters away.

Illustration III.8: The National Covid Memorial Wall, London

Photo by Ingrid Gessner, August 16, 2024.

It is striking that, so far, few physical memorials like the London wall bear the designation 'national' in their name. The only other example I have come across is the planned decentralized National Covid Memorial, which is the major project agenda of the Marked by Covid group, which calls itself a "survivor-led movement for pandemic justice and remembrance" based in San Francisco ("About" n.d.). The organization works with cities across the United States to create physical memorials with an augmented reality component dedicated to those who died. The prototype of the

memorial comprises four accessible ramps leading to a small circular raised base that can be used to lay flowers, photographs, and candles. Instead of a traditional plinth, which may have carried an actual analog statue, the base of the National Covid Memorial supports a virtual helix of COVID-19 victims' photographs using augmented reality technology (Porterfield 2022).

A growing number of COVID-19 memorials are asking questions of how to include sacrifices made by ordinary people, such as healthcare workers, garbage collectors, grocery store clerks, and those who stayed home to 'flatten the curve.'[14] In the United States, New York City's Department of Sanitation unveiled what it proclaimed was the city's first permanent, free-standing memorial to pandemic victims on May 20, 2021, in downtown Manhattan outside one of the department's salt sheds. The statue was dedicated to Raymond Copeland and eight other sanitation workers lost to COVID-19.[15] Before it was permanently installed outside a department garage on Spring Street in Manhattan, the statue traveled to numerous department garages during the summer of 2021. The memorial's name, Forever Strongest, refers to sanitation workers known as 'New York's Strongest' for ensuring a clean, safe, and healthy city. The sculpture, designed by Bernard Klevickas, a Department of Sanitation employee, iron shop worker. and machinist, features a shiny bird drawing back a steel drapery to reveal an urn atop a pillar (Brooks 2021).

A similarly group-specific memorial to be dedicated to New York City's essential workers named "Circle of Heroes" was scheduled to be completed by Labor Day 2021 before it was put on hold due to residential protest in the Battery Park neighborhood. Criticism focused on the memorial's design, which included nineteen new trees but also new pavement that would replace lawn space, as well as an "eternal flame" with a nonstop open fire which would have a significant carbon footprint as well as pose a hazard to playing children (Fink 2021).

The COVID-19 Heroes Struggle Monument in Gasibu Park, Bandung, Indonesia, is another group-specific memorial. Work on the memorial had begun before the pandemic, but in the wake of the crisis, the West Java provincial government decided to dedicate the massive stone tower to what it termed 'COVID-19 heroes.'

14 'Flatten the curve' was a phrase commonly used during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need to implement measures to slow the virus's spread and prevent a rapid surge of cases that could overwhelm healthcare systems. The goal was to distribute the number of infections over time, ensuring that medical resources could adequately handle the demand.

15 The NYC Sanitation Department was not the hardest hit of city agencies. More than 300 city employees died from the virus, as well as 159 subway, train, and bus workers employed by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a state agency. In addition to commissioning the memorial, the Sanitation Foundation distributed 85,000 masks, 350 gallons of hand sanitizer and thousands of meals to the sanitation workforce, and the sculpture is also a monument to their dedication to supporting sanitation workers in ways both practical and symbolic (Brooks 2021).

The names of 300 civil servants and health workers who died are displayed on the lower tiers of the memorial. In addition to the stone memorial, two statues will be erected–one for mourning and the other for happiness–symbolizing the hope for healing. Indonesia, with a population of 270 million, ranks as the fourth-most populous country globally and is among the most significantly impacted by the coronavirus in the region ("Indonesien gedenkt Corona-Opfern" 2021; Taylor 2023).

Not all memorials in this category adhere to traditional forms of commemoration, like plaques, statues, trees, inscribed names, and eternal flames. In Austria, two abstract memorial projects were completed in 2021. Distanced Proximity by architect Wolfgang Becksteiner consists of two parallel concrete walls, each 2.2 meters high and 3.4 meters long (Illustration III.9). Becksteiner stressed that the walls are open to two sides, thus giving hope for the time after the crisis ("Distanzierte Nähe" 2021). The aesthetic is reminiscent of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. The second memorial, Untitled, commissioned as part of the same memorial competition, is the brainchild of artist Werner Reiterer. A globe made of iron and heavy concrete weighing 17,000 kilos was dedicated in the city park of Leibnitz, Reiterer's hometown, on November 18, 2021 (Schwaiger 2021). While the sphere's placement in the public park symbolizes the sudden appearance of the novel coronavirus and also the swift process by which it enters the human cell, the planned gradual sinking into the ground for 120 to 130 years reveals the memorial's message: we will forget COVID-19 as we forgot the Spanish flu. Reiterer's COVID-19 memorial is an anti-memorial, modeled, for example, after Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's disappearing Monument against Fascism in Hamburg-Harburg, Germany (Mahnmal gegen Faschismus). The antifascist memorial that was unveiled in 1986 vanished in 1993. The original 40-foot aluminum pillar invited people to write on its soft lead shell with a steel stylus as a self-commitment to be and stay attentive in the face of (re)emerging fascism, war, and human rights violations. Whenever a section of the pillar was covered, it was lowered into the ground until it disappeared. The third COVID-19 memorial, designed by Michael Schuster, emerged from the same 2021 competition of the Kronen Zeitung, a tabloid newspaper; it was unveiled on June 15, 2023, in a park at the foot of Graz's Schlossberg (Illustration III.9). The brittle metal letters and numbers of rust-colored Corten steel, which together form the word 'COVID19,' can be interpreted as symbolizing fragility, vulnerability, and inequality but also resilience and are maximally open to interpretation ("Grazer Corona-Denkmal" 2023).

Illustration III.9: Wolfgang Becksteiner, Distanzierte Nähe / Distanced Proximity, Graz (left), and Michael Schuster, COVID192020, Graz (right)

Photos by Marie Dücker, November 19, 2023.

Water and pools are among the most common features of memorials, with the Reflecting Pool, the Constitution Gardens Pond, and the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., serving as prominent examples in a US context. The significance of water is also notably evident in the design of the National 9/11 Memorial, where two cascading, sunken pools and surrounding parapets intricately encompass the footprints of the Twin Towers. It is therefore not surprising that many permanent COVID-19 memorials use water in their designs.

Conceptualized by the Latin American architecture firm Gómez Platero, the planned World Memorial to the Pandemic consists of a large walkable disk to be installed on water off the rocky Uruguay coast near Montevideo. The Texas-based Miró Rivera Architects have proposed Yarauvi, a gigantic bowl-shaped structure in the middle of the Dead Sea in Jordan as an inter-denominational burial site ("Yarauvi" n.d.). The idea was originally conceived by Juan Miró around 2013 and gained new urgency when Michael Sorkin, Miró's former professor at Yale School of Architecture, passed away from COVID-19 in March 2020. As of June 2024, the two memorials are still in the planning stages, which might be attributed to the fact that they are massive in size, and building them over already existing bodies of water requires feasibility studies (Álvarez 2020).

Another water-related COVID-19 memorial project is underway in Slovakia, envisioned by Czech architect Radek Talaš. Along the shores of Lake Ružinov in Bratislava, seven footbridges are set to be installed, designed to produce artificial waves as individuals walk on them. Furthermore, these wave-generating footbridges may also serve as part of choreographed displays during commemorative events and musical performances (Hauser 2022).

Conclusion

Emotions of grief, gratitude, and rage are reflected in many COVID-19 memorials, mirroring familiar patterns of memorialization in the form of (1) impromptu collective shrines, (2) temporary installations that collocate earlier shrines, and (3) permanent memorials or carefully planned temporary installations. Situated in the first category, biographical reconstructions draw attention to the individual victims, like the *New York Times* front page full of names and the many digital memorial walls. These collective memorial shrines provide people with a communal space to seek closure and support, express their sorrow, pay respects, and commemorate the lives lost, but they also have a political function in drawing attention to tragic deaths and lives that ended too soon. They also provide a space for visitors to channel and share their fears (the people who came to the Vienna Plague Column or the Plague memorial in the Goa cemetery).

In the second category, the temporary display of flags, lights, and empty chairs highlights the massive scale of loss. The fact that Black, Indigenous, and People of color were disproportionately affected (Tai et al. 2021) becomes apparent only in some projects (e.g., Robin Bell's nightly projection in Washington, D.C., and the Detroit funeral procession posters).

With regard to the third category, the global experience of crisis has so far mainly been translated into memorials with by now predictable elements, such as walls with names and eternal flames. Particularly, walls have lent themselves to recreate the iconic image or experience of distancing and separation (e.g., Distanced Proximity).[16]

While permanent memorials are often made of sturdy materials and maintained by governments or well-established social groups,[17] digital memorials seemingly exist in ephemerality,[18] easily lost in a sea of data or lack of interest over time. Yet, the latter's emergence and maintenance need to be evaluated in the broader context of globalized and interconnected media technologies, which have played a crucial role

16 To determine whether this pattern will continue, it will be crucial to continue to document and analyze emerging permanent memorials. Exploring the identities, motivations, challenges, and support networks of those involved in memorial initiatives will add a crucial dimension to our understanding of these memorials.

17 Madrid's two memorials, Brazil's Infinity Memorial in Rio de Janeiro, the Italian memorials in Codogno, Casalpusterlengo, and Bergamo, the Memorial Garden and the National Covid Memorial Wall in London, the Forever Strongest memorial in New York, and three memorials in Graz, Austria.

18 St Paul's Cathedral's "Remember Me," Zakat Foundation of America's COVID-19 Memorial Wall, the *New York Times* collection of 100,000 Lives Lost, memorial walls in St. Louis and Chicago and many other cities.

in shaping collective memory and perception of the pandemic since its global impact began in early 2020.

Over the last 50 years, collective shrines have shaped the construction of memory by allowing for a plurality of voices, a practice that has now migrated to digital spaces. Like commons-based peer-produced media, memory formation is handed over to the digital collective and may resist the control of memory by influential groups and powerful institutions. Depending on the cost, needs of the respective community, and determination of the memorial's initiators and maintainers, digital memorials–like permanent memorials–could exist for long periods. Permanence depends on the space the memorial exists in, whether or not it is expensive to maintain, and if there is a support group to provide long-term maintenance. In this sense, digital memorial shrines and permanent brick-and-stone memorials are not far from each other in terms of the needs they satisfy and the functions they serve. Their relative similarity also confirms the earlier assumption that although a trajectory of commemoration can be witnessed in COVID-19 memorialization, it is less in a successive but rather simultaneous mode where temporality and permanence do not rule out each other.

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