

Video in Figure 7: “Alienation”

Voice-over narration: “There is perhaps no other form of transportation more emblematic of American progress and individualism than the automobile. In cities like Detroit, the birthplace of the modern car industry, the automobile is celebrated as a form of cultural expression and uniquely American technology. The automobile redefined the infrastructure of the United States. In the post-WWII boom of the 1950s and 60s, the federal government subsidized the Interstate Highway System, forever linking concepts like American progress and exceptionalism with images of the ‘open road.’ However, automobiles shield us from their most immediate effects upon our lived environments. When we drive down a busy highway on a blistering summer day, we don’t feel the heat from the pavement or hear the sounds of the engine as we drive along in our comfortable, air-conditioned cabs.”

Ulmer Interview: “Some commentators date the Anthropocene from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. As we start to burn coal, that’s when we start to act at a planetary level and change our own environment. After the Industrial Revolution, we invented a transformative scale of technology and machinery. This machinery requires human beings to change their behaviors. This goes by Taylorism, Fordism, ultimately, the assembly line. Our philosophers call the effect of this on people ‘alienation.’ As people are alienated, the world is reified and objectified and we lose our sense of agency. Individuals working in factories having their behavior correlated to fit with the machine no longer recognize the consequences of their own actions. This is a kind of psychosis. At a civilizational level, people can’t see the results of their own behavior. This is called fetishism in commodity culture.”

Video in Figure 13: “Electronic Monuments”

Voice-Over Narration: “Electronic monuments acknowledge accidents as sacrifices; they work toward a similar goal as a national war monument in that they bring a community together to mourn and acknowledge the public values for which individual lives have been sacrificed. They force a community to ask itself: ‘is the value worth the sacrifices necessary for sustaining it?’ ‘Death Drive(r)s: Ghost Bike (Monu)mentality’ works to engage publics in discourses about the sacrifices made by cyclists, pedestrians, and car accident victims on behalf of petrocentric road design. When users engage with this AR experience, they must physically inhabit spaces they may otherwise avoid as pedestrians, calling attention to the importance of location and mobility to the acknowledgement of petro-cultural values.”

Ulmer Interview: “It’s useful to think about it in terms of ritual. We say ‘what is a MEmorial doing?’ It’s testifying, it’s witnessing an event, an incident that you’re promoting as a sacrifice from individual to collective value. And we can learn a lot about these kinds of identity experiences forming collective realities through the history of ritual. So we’ve got a ritual belief, ritual practices. Both the way MEmorial is designed and the way they interact with them is that they interact with them not simply for entertainment but for ritual purposes. Let’s say when they use augmented reality and follow a bicycle route through Jacksonville., they’re doing it in a ritual way, and they’re celebrating, they’re honoring, and it can be repeated however many times

on whatever occasions. It's through those kinds of practices where it can be that people don't even fully understand it, it's not about a bunch of information but that it's in that witnessing of something that's important that creates a sense of community and that can be replicated and reproduced at different sites throughout the world. Think about the labyrinths in churches in the middle ages. People who couldn't go to the holy land would walk the labyrinthine path in the church and they had this experience where they thought about certain beliefs. In doing so, they testified and reaffirmed that particular metaphysics. I think that's what we want to have happen with the MEMorial as well."

Video in Figure 16: "MEMorials"

Voice-Over Narration: "If you've ever walked through a major American city, you've probably come across various monuments, statues, or historical markers that honor the sacrifices made by a certain individual or group of people. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., for instance, honors the lives of United States service members who fought and died in the Vietnam War. Similar to other war memorials and monuments in Washington D.C. and throughout the United States, these monuments serve as a public acknowledgement of the sacrifices that a nation has made to uphold a shared value such as freedom or equal rights for its citizens. Societies also erect other, more personal, monuments. On highways and busy intersections across America, for instance, people place flowers, wooden crosses, and ghost bikes at places where loved ones have been killed by a vehicle. Although such memorials function to honor the lives of those who have been killed, Ulmer points out that they do not operate in the same way as more public memorials, such as statues or war memorials. That is, they do not often explicitly acknowledge this specific death as a sacrifice on behalf of a value. In the case of traffic fatalities, these deaths no more accidents than the sacrifices made by soldiers are 'accidents.' Rather, they are both sacrifices made on behalf of a shared value. However, in the case of traffic fatalities, this shared value is not an explicit national ideal like freedom, but a more mundane right to own and drive a vehicle at high speeds. For Ulmer, addressing a pressing public problem like traffic fatalities is impossible until these deaths are acknowledged as public sacrifices rather than individual, isolated accidents."

Ulmer Interview: "Take the nation-state or any empire or any collective political body. It monumentalizes certain things. There are certain things it wants to remember. It acknowledges those things that are important to it. For example we have the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., the most important place where we display so many of our monuments. On it are displayed over 58,000 names, and these are the individuals killed in action in Vietnam. The wall is there to memorialize the fact that these deaths are not accidents, they're not wasted; they were spent on behalf of a national value. The way the nation is remembering it is that these are the honored dead. So, we take these individual deaths and promote them as a sacrifice on behalf of a collectivity."