



Performing Haymarket

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Abstract

After over a century of official silence, the City of Chicago dedicated a new monument to the Haymarket Affair, one of the central events in the history of labor activism and radical politics worldwide, in 2004. The monument signaled a profound change in how divergent views on Haymarket are managed, and the monument's iconography and inscription, as well as the media coverage surrounding it, emphasized themes of consensus and closure. Yet the new monument is not the only memorial to have been placed on the site, and in the past century a range of much more explicitly partisan commemorations have taken place there. This paper critically considers performative memorials inspired by anarchist observances but coming out of arts practice, with special attention given to the poetics and politics implied by this work. The author's own memorial performance is discussed in detail; also addressed are works by Brian Dortmund, Kehben Grifter, and Michael Piazza.

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The May Day 2006 demonstrations on behalf of immigrant rights were paired, on my campus, with a student demonstration against proposed tuition increases. In our small town, neither gathering attracted more than 200 people, but the sense of excitement the following day in my classroom of film students was palpable. I duly recounted the history of May Day, as I do each year to whomever will listen, and, despite the sense of accomplishment and hope that the previous day's demonstration had given me, my students remained convinced that the idea of the general strike was one that could never happen here, not now. Earlier in the semester, during the Paris student strike, they had expressed a similar sentiment, the dismayed but still dismissive proclamation, '*that* could never happen *here*.'² I was surprised at their cynicism, considering that this was an unusually politicized group and several had attended one or both rallies. For their part, their eyes and gestures accused me of an excess of optimism.

My students' sense that *that* – a group making demands to meet their common needs and serve common interests – simply couldn't happen *here* or *now* is symptomatic of the deep crisis of political imagination in the United States. The crisis is certainly not limited to film students. In what Gore Vidal famously called "The United States of Amnesia," information that might indicate, "yes, indeed *that* did happen, and even *here*" is either censored outright or, more perniciously, managed into tidy and untroubled historical niches in hopes that the obvious conclusion – that if *that* once happened *here*, something similar could happen even now – might be avoided at all costs. In other words, social amnesia isn't just about forgetting; it also operates by circumscribing what is remembered, how it is remembered, and to what ends.

The observation that 'memory management' is often a better tool of ideological inscription than forced erasure lies at the heart of my reservations about the Haymarket Memorial in Chicago. The monument commemorates events stemming from an 1886 labor rally in which an unknown person threw a bomb into a charging police line, giving police and politicians a pretext for widespread persecution of labor and radical organizations and activists. Eight anarchist organizers were eventually tried and convicted of conspiracy in the bombing, although no evidence was found that connected them with the attack. Four were executed for the crime, while a fifth committed suicide in prison (Adelman, 1986b; Avrich, 1986; Green, 2006). The surviving defendants had their sentences commuted to life before being pardoned by Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld, who detailed pardon described the trial as "not fair" and the judge "malicious" (Altgeld, 1893). Although defendants quickly became known as the Haymarket

² In another recent essay, I discuss the disabling and dangerous formulation of "that could never happen here" in the context of art and politics. See Sarah Kanouse, 2007, "Tactical Irrelevance: Art and Politics at Play," *The Democratic Communiqué* 20(2): 23-39.

Martyrs by labor organizers worldwide and their story inspired movements from Mexico City to Seoul, they are comparatively little known beyond left political circles (Green, 2005). I certainly recognize the importance of marking space in the name of radical and suppressed histories to inform and inflect new political communities, and I do not underestimate the long, hard work of the Illinois Labor History Society, which lobbied three decades of Chicago administrations for the monument and helped to steer the project to completion (Kelland, 2005; Lampert, 2007). Rather, I'm concerned about what the new monument reveals about how Haymarket's legacy is being managed in the present and how this specific memorial functions socially and symbolically. In this essay, I quickly outline some of these reservations and then describe some memorial strategies coming out of socially engaged art practices, including my own, that take very different approaches to the politics of commemoration.



Mary Brogger, Haymarket Monument, 2004 (Photo: Sarah Kanouse).

After over a century of official silence, the monument's dedication in September 2004 signaled a profound shift in the way the event is managed. In the past, the perceived threat of Haymarket as a galvanizing event for labor and left politics triggered obvious, almost desperate, and at times intimidating forms of overcompensation on the part of the city and federal government. Instead of joining the rest of the world in celebrating May Day in honor of the Martyrs, the City of Chicago staged "Veterans of the Haymarket Riot" police parades until at least the 1960s (Adelman, 1986a). To this day in the United States, the first of May is, by

congressional and presidential proclamation, respectively, both Loyalty Day and Law Day. (1958; 1961; Bush, 2003). Three years after the incident, a monument for the police killed in the blast and the haphazard shooting that followed was erected on Haymarket Square with funds raised by the Chicago Tribune and the Union League Club of Chicago. (Adelman, 1986a; Lampert, 2007). As Nicholas Lampert has noted, “the placement of the monument, depicting a police officer with his hand raised in a “halt” pose was an overt message to the people of Chicago that if they rebelled and organized strikes, there would be consequences” (Lampert, 2007, 258). Although repeated vandalism of the police statue – including bombings in 1969 and 1970 by the Weathermen – resulted in the monument’s removal to an interior courtyard of the police academy, there was little indication until the late 1990s that the city would permit a labor-friendly memorial on the site, let alone help to fund it (Adelman, 1986; Green, 2000; Lampert, 2007).

By the late 1990s, however, Chicago was a very different city than it had been a generation ago. The mayoral administration of Richard M. Daley (son of Richard J. Daley, mayor during the 1968 Democratic Convention and the Weatherman bombings) was intent on remaking the image of Chicago as a green postindustrial metropolis for the educated and affluent (Chamberlain, 2004). As Lara Kelland noted, “Chicago of the 1990s faced entirely different challenges than it did earlier in the twentieth century. Gentrification brought a middle-class base back into the city after a generation of white flight, and heritage tourism also now offered a tantalizing revenue stream to city leaders” (Kelland, 2005, 35). Combined with a post-ideological climate exemplified by the presidential administration of “New Democrat” Bill Clinton, the political landscape seemed ready for a monument that would both emphasize and forge reconciliation and consensus.

The official Haymarket monument has been positioned to do just that. Framed by the selection committee and the media as “a new way to do monuments” and a “consensus solution” to the intractable Haymarket site, the memorial dissipates the material and ideological conflicts that Haymarket has come to represent (Kinzer, 2004). Marking the approximate location of the wagon used by speakers at the rally to address the crowd, the sculpture’s imagery echoes the most iconic depiction of the incident – an 1886 illustration published in Harper’s Weekly that clearly portrays the anarchists as aggressors – while neutralizing the menacing tone of the original etching by rendering the figures in an abstracted, almost childlike way (de Thulstrup, 1886). One faceless, coverall-wearing worker speaks from a cart while other, equally faceless and universalized workers appear busy either repairing or dismantling it. The ambiguity of the figures’ action is symbolically significant. In local and national newspaper accounts, city personnel,



Haymarket Monument with a billboard advertising Hummer's H3. (Photo by Sarah Kanouse)

labor historians, and sculptor Mary Brogger described the wagon as representing the right of free speech, which could be interpreted as either being built or destroyed by the action of the workers. "I want to suggest the complexity of truth, but also people's responsibility for their actions and for the effects of their actions," Brogger stated (Kinzer, 2004). While the monuments' lengthy plaque emphasizes the theme of justice alongside free speech, the latter theme dominated the dedication ceremony and press coverage, with emphasis placed on the complexity and responsibility of speech as much as the right to it (Burghart, 2004; Kinzer, 2004; McNamee, 2004).

As Karen Till reminds us, the media are active agents in, rather than mere reporters of, the production of memory, and the press's repetition of the free speech theme played no small part in how that question came to be framed and is now read as central to the monument (Till, 2006). Press coverage also framed the monument as the 'final word' on Haymarket, invoking the nearly one hundred and twenty year gap between the event and its memorial as permitting objectivity, sensitivity and emotional maturity (Burghart, 2004; Kinzer, 2004; McNamee, 2004). The New York Times quoted Chicago cultural historian Tim Samuelson as saying, "It took a long time to get historical perspective, to be able to look back at Haymarket and see

that it was everyone's tragedy” (Kinzer, 2004). Framing the monument in these terms implies that the legacy of Haymarket has been resolved and implicitly accuses those who continue to argue about it of partisanship and a refusal to reach consensus – cardinal sins in these “post-political” times. Even the emphasis that the ambiguous monument be perpetually open to (implicitly personal) interpretation is entirely consistent with the individualized, post-ideological culture in which my students have been raised and which makes them view with incredulity examples of organized and effective group protest. As Chicago artist and labor organizer Diana Berek noted, “Individuals can reconcile their wounds, but not classes, not institutions, and certainly not the entities of organized labor and the police (Lampert, 2007, 269).



Mary Brogger, Haymarket Memorial, 2004 (Photo by Sarah Kanouse).

Berek’s suggestion that opposition, rather than cooperation, between labor and what a few people still call capital might be a more honest and productive relationship departs radically from the approach of negotiation, compromise, and

accommodation that became the norm in the American union movement after World War II and which, despite many militant and well-organized campaigns, persists today. A more uncompromising monument to Haymarket might suggest uncomfortable critiques of institutionalization and hierarchy the contemporary labor movement. It also would never get built. At the same time as Chicago Fraternal Order of Police President Mark Donahue was collaborating with the Illinois Labor History Society in the Haymarket Memorial, he bitterly fought the naming of a 100 x 150 foot vacant lot-cum-park after Haymarket widow and labor, civil rights, and feminist activist Lucy Parsons, specifically citing her connection with the Haymarket incident as the reason (Newbart, 2004; Spielman, 2004). The visibility of the Haymarket Memorial and the rhetoric of political compromise that surrounds it obscure how deep the ideological divide continues to be and communicates a message of consensus that is profoundly misleading.

Arising in reaction to the enforced amnesia of patriotic theme days like “Law Day” and continuing into the post-political period of historical ‘consensus,’ some Chicago-based radicals and artists have produced an alternative commemorative culture. In 1893, the Pioneer Aid and Support Association (PASA), founded by Lucy Parsons to provide financial support to the families of the executed men, built a monument to the Haymarket martyrs at their gravesite in the Waldheim Cemetery just outside Chicago (Roediger and Boanes, 1988; Roediger and Rosemont, 1989; Green, 2006; Lampert, 2007). The memorial immediately became a focal point for commemorative ceremonies, mass parades, and personal pilgrimages. PASA held gatherings there on May 1 (May Day), May 4 (the anniversary of the original Haymarket bomb), and November 11 (the anniversary of the executions) until 1960, and similar observances have continued into the present (Adelman, 1986b; Lingg, 2006; Bachin, 2007). Dozens of radical organizers, from the famed anarchist Emma Goldman to less-well-known neighborhood activists, are buried or had their ashes scattered near the martyrs’ graves. Activists worldwide have forged connections between Haymarket and their own struggles, beginning with Coxey’s Army march of the unemployed on Washington, D.C. in 1894 and continuing through the Polish Solidarity movement of the 1980s, refusing to allow the event to be encapsulated in space or time (Adelman, 1986b; Green, 2005; Bachin, 2007).

Radical commemorations of Haymarket, whether geographically proximal to the Waldheim monument or dispersed in murals and marches around the world, must be understood as performances – defined broadly as both gestures imbued with self-conscious, symbolic significance as well as the more ad hoc ‘practices of everyday life’ described by Michel de Certeau – that allow for the continued rearticulation of the past in terms that are open and useful to the present (Certeau, 1984; Taylor, 2003; see also Connerton, 1989; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1999; Taylor, 2006). Performative memorials, such as marches that terminate at the gravesites, usually position Haymarket as an origin point to return to, a place to

reconnect with, and a site of emotional and political solace. While radical commemorations of Haymarket have coalesced around the gravesites, these events have been as often marked by clashes among labor groups, socialists, and anarchists as communal commemoration and healing (Kelland, 2005; Bachin, 2007). This performance of radical ‘dissensus’ contrasts sharply with the symbolic and discursive ‘consensus’ surrounding the newer monument and suggests a very different approach to political life that, to quote from Diana Taylor, “makes the ‘past’ available as a political resource in the present,” one which is often fraught, complex, and without a consensus solution (Taylor, 2003, 20).



Albert Weinert, Haymarket Martyr's Monument, 1893 (Photo by Sarah Kanouse).

While inspired by the longstanding, vernacular performative culture surrounding Haymarket, I have chosen a slightly different tactic in making artwork about the site. Rather than returning to the Haymarket as a point of origin, I prefer to take it as a point of departure. My 2004 performance, “UnStorming Sheridan,” loosely documented via [flash-based](#) and [html](#) websites in this issue, sought to

physically and imaginatively connect several events in Chicago labor history through the present-day space. The performance was a bike ride from Haymarket to Fort Sheridan, some 27-miles north of the city along an affluent stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline. Fort Sheridan was built upon land donated to the federal government by the Commercial Club of Chicago, a group drawing its members from the city's most successful industrialists, with the stipulation that it be used to build a military base within a day's march of the city to 'deal with' any lingering revolutionary impulses that Haymarket (or the abysmal working conditions of the late 19th century United States) might unleash (Smith, 1994; US Congress, 1887). The Fort was opened as a military encampment the day before the Haymarket martyrs' execution. The completed installation, designed by noted architects and landscapers on park-like grounds, was put to its intended purpose in 1895. That summer, troops occupied Chicago to defeat the Pullman Strike, which crippled railway traffic nationwide as employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company successfully organized railroad workers across the country not to move trains containing Pullman cars. One of the initial grievances of workers at the time was the overpriced and paternalistic company town on Chicago's far south side – itself a reaction to fear of working class power – which met its own ironic contemporary parallel in the recent decommissioning of the fort and its conversion into a novelty luxury housing development (Buder, 1967; Smith, 1994). I therefore chose the issue of housing as a bellwether of changing responses to the populist threat, from violent suppression of the 1890s to the bunkered suburban sprawl of the 1980s to the shuttering and gentrification of former public housing in the early twenty-first century. My path symbolically traced in reverse the route taken by Fort Sheridan soldiers during the Pullman Strike and traveled past public housing slated for demolition, along gentrified boulevards, and through exclusive 'North Shore' suburbs. This performative 'de-enactment' (hence the title "UnStorming Sheridan") was therefore as much about the present as the past, and it suggested Haymarket as a point of departure for a protracted, embodied speculation on these connections.

Because the bicycle ride is a gestural art project and neither an academic argument nor an activist campaign, it proposes a critical viewing of the places I passed through rather than elaborating a specific critique or making specific demands. The ride can be thought of as a drawing, with my tires creating an imagined line between Haymarket and phenomena that seem temporally and geographically remote from it. My gesture was meant not only to claim some sort of spiritual genealogy but also to suggest historical and material connections between Haymarket and sites and struggles also imbricated in capitalism. The project overlaid another space as well. During the 3-hour ride, I broadcasted a dissonant and distorted vintage recording of *The Internationale* over a Clear Channel-owned pop music station from a 1-watt transmitter nestled in a milk crate on the back of my bicycle. This signal reached unsuspecting passers-by, disrupting the reception of Clear Channel's multi-megawatts for a few seconds in passing car radios. The range of my broadcast became larger the further from the Haymarket

site (and Clear Channel's skyscraper-mounted antennas) I traveled, due to the decreasing power of the commercial station. This poetic accident of transmission echoed the fact that the memory of the Haymarket martyrs has traditionally been stronger in countries far from the site of the original bombing and trial. By bookending this small-scale and primarily symbolic act of present-day civil disobedience with two Haymarket-related sites, the piece also proposes the whole of contemporary Chicago – in both its physical and mediated realms – as a site for distributed, active, and mobile remembering and performs small-scale subversive action in the present in honor of the momentous events of 1886.



Lauren Cumbia, Dara Greenwald, and Blithe Riley, "Hay! Market Research." Part of Michael Piazza's Haymarket Eight Hour Action Series, 2002 (Photo by Michael Piazza; courtesy of Laura Piazza).

"UnStorming Sheridan" was far from the first artist's project in Chicago concerning Haymarket. During the Haymarket centennial celebrations in 1986, radical artists from the collectively-run Axe Street Arena cultural space organized an exhibition of mail art in which people from around the world sent in handmade postcards and photocopied ephemera that spoke to the continued relevance of

Haymarket to their own lives and struggles.³ Michael Piazza, a central member of the collective and one of the Chicago artists most closely involved in alternative commemorations of Haymarket, reported that the mail art call resulted in submissions from as far away as Yemen (Piazza, 2006). Ten years later, at the eve of the Democratic National Convention, the artist Kehben Grifter installed a hand-cut mosaic in a freshly-poured sidewalk at the then-unmarked location of Haymarket, which remained in place for five weeks until a Chicago Tribune article alerted the city to its presence (Lampert, 2007). Anarchist groups have long held celebratory events around the gravesites; by the early 2000s, these celebrations included protests, picnics and memorial bike rides that would travel between the then-empty Haymarket and Waldheim Cemetery (Anonymous Poster, 2002; The Wheels Group, 2003; CIMC-DR, 2005; Lingg, 2006). Michael Piazza coordinated the “Haymarket Eight Hour Action Series” on May Day 2002. This day-long observance celebrated the radical local heritage of May Day with a diverse group of artist- and activist-led actions. Projects included an impromptu billboard that changed every hour and contained slogans connecting Haymarket to present-day concerns; the reenactment of a Eugene V. Debs speech; a “no parking” sign modified to promise “no working – unlimited idling”; and a performance in which an effigy of the police monument was paraded through the streets toward Haymarket, only to be replaced at the last minute by an anarchist flag (Greenwald, 2007; Lampert, 2007). As part of the Action Series, Brian Dortmund organized what was to become the first in an annual series of artist-initiated May Day bike rides originating at Haymarket and ending at Waldheim (Dortmund, 2002-2007). Each year, Dortmund reworks the route to bring into focus a different element of Chicago’s working class heritage. He has lead tours that include sites related to the great Chicago fire as well as contemporary Latino activist campaigns, thereby adding additional layers of interconnectivity and, crucially, contemporaneity to the trope of memorial pilgrimage.

These ephemeral and performative memorials are notable because they make no permanent claim to the site at all. Instead, artists’ events typically foreground the action and interaction of bodies in the street, rather than the site itself, and break down strict hierarchies between artist, audience, and participant. For example, the “site” of Dortmund’s bike ride is the ride itself, not a fixed geographical location, and it is impossible to say whether those who join him on the ride are his audience or his collaborators in the experience. In addition, these projects both rely on and forge social networks for those who engage with them directly or who learn about them through documentation. Most of the artists who make these projects are deeply involved in intersecting circles of

³ The mail art submissions are now housed in the Ron Sokolsky papers in the archives at the University of Illinois, Springfield.



Brian Dortmund, "May Day Bike Ride." Originally part of Michael Piazza's Haymarket Eight Hour Action Series, 2002 (Photo by Michael Piazza; courtesy of Laura Piazza).

cultural production and activist work from which the immediate audience/participants are drawn and through which documentation of the project is first distributed. Yet because they take place in public and emphasize spontaneous interaction, passersby can easily join the event, and old relationships can be renegotiated and renewed through shared experience. The fluid, non-hierarchical and constantly unfolding qualities of some artists' memorial performances instantiate anarchist or egalitarian values rather than represent them, as an object-based monument might. These are memorials that do not try to fix the narrative or the lessons that might be learned, but instead they perform Haymarket, adapting its memory to suit the needs of present political struggles and commemorating it not

through bronze and concrete but through social practice and whatever materials lie at hand.

On the other hand, these memorials all ‘fail’ to commemorate Haymarket in that they themselves need memorializing in the form of the telling and retelling of the fact that they occurred at all. Because these actions are typically unpermitted, ephemeral, scantily documented and spread by word of mouth, it’s difficult to get a comprehensive view of artists’ intervention into the memorial culture surrounding Haymarket. Nicholas Lampert and Michael Piazza have discussed how each Haymarket performance might just as well be the first for all that the performers know of what others have done at the site, and Lampert’s recent article on anti-authoritarian commemorations of Haymarket has substantially increased awareness of these projects (Lampert, 2006; Piazza, 2006; Lampert, 2007). When I began working on the site, my only knowledge of many of the earlier performative Haymarket memorials began through conversations in which past events were told in highly personal ways that were only as factually accurate as the memories of the participants permitted. The greater accessibility of communications technologies since the 1980s (such as photocopying, videotape and, more recently, digital media) has resulted in more of these projects being documented and distributed via informal networks, zine culture, academic and independent archives, and the Internet. That documentation necessarily mediates and renders performance less “live” goes without saying, but in order for a performance to participate in public culture, reliance on some form of documentation is necessary. Further, as Amelia Jones has argued of feminist body art of the 1960s and 1970s, the live event is itself not without unseen layers of cultural and environmental mediation, and documentation can provide qualitatively different (rather than quantitatively less) information than direct experience (Jones, 1997). In any case, documentation of Haymarket commemorations should be read less as ‘memorials to memorials’ and more as artifacts that permit what are in fact fairly marginal practices to circulate more broadly in public memorial culture.

The ‘partial recall’ of the disappearing, performative memorial cannot be understood outside of the widely decried ‘culture of amnesia’ in which they unfold. However, it is too simple to say that ephemeral memorials are simply artifacts of the tensions between remembering and forgetting that mark the dominant, media-saturated, hypermodern US culture (Huysen, 1995). Instead, they must also be understood as responses to historical memory that self-consciously seek to operate within spatial politics in a very different way than a monument does. The contemporary surge of artistic interest in the writing of Michel de Certeau indicates a desire, in a moment characterized by unprecedented levels of social control via design, architecture, and electronic surveillance, to explore ways of re-inventing spaces by changing the way one inhabits them. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he discusses the creative navigation of space and use of language as resistant practices against the powers that construct, regulate, and police them (Certeau,

1984). De Certeau has been criticized legitimately for homogenizing and romanticizing moments of dispersed and everyday “resistance” and drawing overly stark distinctions between “tactics” and “strategies,” and I do not follow him in overestimating the efficacy of individualized and unorganized actions in making substantive political change (Frow, 1991; Mitchell, 2002). Yet the poetics of resistance he describes mediates between the symbolic and material in ways that resonate with artists, whose limited resources and emphasis on metaphor make temporal interventions into the uses of space both appealing creatively and accessible organizationally. Rather than seeking to permanently change the spaces in which they unfold, the performative memorial is satisfied with multiple, shifting, contextualized, and perpetually incomplete manifestations of memory. Because artists’ memorials rarely ask permission and often proceed without even inquiring about whether permission might be required, they behave as if forms of spatial control were simply irrelevant, thereby sometimes actually making it so. An extreme example is Kehben Grifter’s mosaic, which was installed by construction workers who discovered her guerilla action but whom she managed to convince that the memorial was actually a city project (Lampert, 2007). Her temporary memorial achieved a measure of spatial impact only by proceeding as if forms of spatial control – permitting, selection committees, insurance estimates – simply didn’t exist. While I was fully aware that my bike broadcasts were not allowed, the signal itself transgressed both the spatial divisions of the electromagnetic spectrum, where strict limits are placed on which parts of the band can be used, by whom, and how far their broadcasts might reach, and, through transmission, the divisions of physical space that separate me on my bicycle from the interiors of the cars, businesses, and homes that I passed (see Milutis, 2006).

This refusal of the dominant ordering of space contrasts with the impulse to build a labor monument on the Haymarket site, which can be read as a campaign for incorporation into the spatial regime, perhaps motivated both by a recognition of the need for practices of democracy to take “place” and by the very real power and legitimacy created by having a territory to call your own. However compromised its iconography might be and whatever the city’s tourism agenda, the memorial is nevertheless a very powerful and very physical signifier that the importance of labor and working class struggle can no longer be ignored. The monument legitimates as common history what had been previously denigrated or overlooked as minority history, while smaller-scale and ephemeral actions emphasize an affective communal or personal relationship to public memory. The sort of poetic-symbolic commemoration represented by my bike ride performance and the other small-scale, ephemeral actions does not intervene or seek to intervene in the lives and struggles of working people, though they are often in solidarity with such interventions. Instead, they operate as artwork has for a long time – with symbolic actions that gesture towards (but does not dictate) other possibilities for apprehending, commemorating, and experiencing the ‘time-space’ of memory.

Performative and physical memorials are not mutually exclusive, and despite my caution, I do not discount the importance of Haymarket Memorial or any of the hotly contested, hard-fought and long-negotiated monuments to working people and our struggles. Indeed, these monuments may well become points of departure for future experiential and gestural memorial actions. The Chicago Federation of Labor has held May Day rallies annually since the Haymarket Monument's dedication that have fed into vital mass movements for immigrants' rights or honored the struggles of workers abroad, and the memorial is a very public reminder that seemingly impossible struggles might eventually be won (Chicago Federation of Labor, 2005; Latino Union, 2006; Fernandez, 2007). As James E. Young has written of Holocaust memorials, no monument can be considered apart from the practices – social, emotional, spiritual, and political – that surround it (Young, 1993). It remains absolutely essential that archival, scholarly, and creative work be done that both preserves and activates the memory of events like Haymarket for people who might never happen along a more experiential memorial or stumble upon its documentation. What I continue to like about performative memorials, however, is precisely their imprecision and partial recall, their ways of inhabiting space as if the powerful did not exist, and their life within a gestural and symbolic realm in which the lesson isn't fixed, the outcome isn't known, and human agency is still a force where history might well prove to be otherwise than what is now. To my students and others who find Haymarket so hard to understand and mass action so far from the realm of the possible, an embodied memorial practice that is simultaneously sensual, social, and poetic might help inflame the political imagination. Dedicated to Michael Piazza, 1955-2006.

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Please note that many posts to the Chicago Indymedia Web site are pseudonymous. "L. Lingg" was the Haymarket martyr who died violently prior to the execution.

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