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**FLASHBULBS: THE CENTRAL LIBRARY PROJECT, 2005**

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Though the Central Library Project has been installed in the main reading room this fall, it has in fact already begun. It has two parts. From May through June, I am asking library users to complete a survey. The explanatory information provided includes the following:

Though I doubt many contemporary users of the library personally witnessed the destruction of Louvain in 1914 or 1940, we have all experienced moments in which we have witnessed or first learned of significant events. Many of us feel that we experience and remember such events differently than ordinary events... Psychologists call such memories 'flashbulb memories.'...

Participants are asked to provide their own recollection of such events. Later, excerpts of the results will be analyzed according to criteria used in psychological research, printed and affixed to the exposed fluorescent tubes of the lamps hanging in the reading room.

Though it may seem redundant to place text in a library, particularly in a structure already so laden with architectural inscription, I want to reposition both the reception and production of text within the main reading room, which is the social and symbolic core of the interaction between readers and texts. The often-overlooked light fixtures make reading possible and signify to the outside that the library is in active use. Writing directly on the bulbs will bring the experience of reading to the limit of what makes it possible. I need not recount the history of the library here to explain that its dual status as library and memorial/monument lead me to deal explicitly with memory. Though their relationship to the collective and personal seem reversed both memorial structures and 'flashbulb memories' exist at the intersection of personal and historical memory. When installed the texts taken from the surveys will make no mention of the events that precipitated a particular recollection. Rather, they will form a catalog of places, people, events, etc. that were marked by the apprehension of those events. They will be indications of the things that happen in everyday life synchronous to those events about which the majority of histories are written.

Because of their arrangement no more than four bulbs of one lamp can be seen from any given point. When installed it will be impossible to comprehend the whole (or any one part) of the texts at one time, rather it will be combined and recombined according to the viewers position. Viewing this project will be much more about the experience of producing connections (texts) than of receiving them. Though not explicitly about any of the tragedies that have befallen the library or the efforts to remember them, I hope to explore the way we constitute ourselves personally, socially and politically (consciously or not) relative to historical events, as well as, personal memory.