2012

Auschwitz: Art, Commemoration and Memorialisation: From 1940 To The Present

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http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/1194

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Auschwitz: Art, Commemoration and Memorialisation: 1940 to the Present day

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Humanities

Faculty of Arts

October 2011

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AUSCHWITZ: ART, COMMEMORATION AND MEMORIALISATION: FROM

1940 TO THE PRESENT

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores chronologically the art, commemoration and memorialisation of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps at Auschwitz, from their establishment in 1940 to the present day. Following a review of the literature in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 examines the production of works of art by the inmates of the camp. That art should have been produced at all in Auschwitz may conflict with our expectations, given the conditions of life within the camp. Nevertheless, art was as necessary in Auschwitz as it is elsewhere. The present account of the making of art under such difficult circumstances attempts to make a significant addition to the established narratives of Auschwitz.

The post-war development of Auschwitz as a site-specific museum, established to commemorate the victims of the camp almost as soon as the site was liberated in 1945, permits analysis of techniques utilized by the museum authorities to display artefacts in order to narrate the story of Auschwitz. This is the subject of Chapter 3. For a period, the site was used by successive Polish political administrations to construct and bind Polish national identity to Russian political demands.

The act of memorialisation has been shaped by political requirements almost throughout Auschwitz's post-war history. The determinant of recognition for memorial purposes was national identity. The use of overtly religious iconography, whether Christian or Jewish, was severely limited. Communist governments defined all victims as political, and specifically as victims of the struggle against Nazism. These political

considerations affected the inconclusive 1957 memorial competition. This competition, and its political contexts, is described in Chapters 4 and 5.

In 1968 the Polish government began an anti-Semitic campaign that provoked international condemnation. Chapter 6 surveys these events, and describes one significant outcome, the establishment at the site of what was known locally as the Jewish pavilion.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I draw together the three overriding concepts of art, commemoration and memorialisation – the predominant themes of this discussion – in order to show how the conception of Auschwitz has moved beyond the physical boundaries of the historical site. The question of what the site itself means, or should mean, remains a matter of continuing debate.

The narrative of memorialisation at Auschwitz becomes increasingly marked by single events such as the establishment of the Jewish Pavilion, each embodying the turn towards the recognition that what should be remembered lies beyond nationality, and is separate from the contingent politics of the post-war settlement. Behind this, however, lies a further and more important narrative: that at every point in its history Auschwitz was intrinsically and inescapably a Jewish experience. This subsumes the particularities of the slow realization that this is what the site should celebrate. This thesis is committed to embodying this overarching narrative, and aspects of it can be found throughout, in every chapter.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go too many people for their untiring enthusiasm and assistance with this project, namely Sam Smiles and Jenny Graham at the University of Plymouth. At the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum at Oświęcim, Poland, my particular thanks go to the Director of Education, Dr Alicija Biełecka and Dr Igor Bartosik (Senior Curator), Dr Jacek Lachendro (Deputy Head of the Research Department), and Beata Juszczyk, who acted as my translator.

Outside of the University of Plymouth and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum many people have offered assistance, in particular Jonathan Marshall, Jack Mellor, Jackie Armstrong, Jill Bright and Alan Munton. Finally and most of all, I thank my partner Robert Nunn.

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The heritage of the German occupation of Poland during World War II is highly complex. It is both physical and conceptual. On the larger scale it includes such survivals as the traces of ghetto walls that may still be seen in Warsaw. Concentration and extermination camps survive, whether fully intact as in the case of Majdanek, or marked by memorials as at Treblinka. However, the name of one camp predominates, Auschwitz, the subject of this dissertation. The name and history of Auschwitz has moved beyond the barbed wire of its own historic limits, and beyond Poland's borders. The camp has become a central feature of such museums as the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and at the dedicated Holocaust Galleries at the Imperial War Museum in London. The name of Auschwitz is now used globally to illustrate the realities of the Holocaust, in effect a metonym that represents, independently, the totality of the subject. At Auschwitz an immense quantity of artefacts has also survived, ranging from traces of the physical body, such as human hair, prosthetics and civilian clothing, as well as artefacts that provide evidence of life within the camp. These include for example domestic utensils, prisoner uniforms and the blocks in which the inmates were housed. Also, there are objects that combine the physical and conceptual, such as original works of art. A sustained post-war commitment to these relics has led to the establishment of a museum that has recovered, and continues to maintain, the story of the period. Archives have been created, and memorialisation, often in the form of monuments, has been undertaken. Site-specific museums dedicated to the memory of victims also tell their story. Successive political regimes in post-war Poland, from the Communist (effectively Stalinist) regime in 1947, immediately following the Second World War, down to the democracies of the Right in the twenty-first century, have

sought to use Poland's war-time experience to support differing interpretations of Polish national identity. The question of anti-Semitism coming from within the memorial process has arisen in cases where the accounts of one particular group have been seen to be privileged over those of another. This is only one indication of the ways in which this period in Poland's history has been subject to competing narratives, narratives that necessarily affect the history and processes of memorialisation.

When the question of Holocaust memorialisation is applied to its best-known cultural subject within the history of the Holocaust, Auschwitz, an immediate consideration to be faced is the vast literature on this vexed subject. Leo Eitinger, a Norwegian survivor of the camp, remarked in 1998 that the literature on survivors alone 'has grown so large that it is impossible to quote individual authors, and one must refer to bibliographies.'[1] Other substantial areas of research include the establishment and organisation of the camps, the life and work of the prisoners, the means of mass murder, and inmate resistance. Scholars from a range of disciplines in literature, history, and politics, together with the more recently-established field of cultural memory studies, have brought their perspectives to bear. In recent years with the rise of the study of memorialisation, and of memorial museums themselves, it is perhaps surprising that the notion of Auschwitz as a site around which art was created, both during its time as a functioning camp, and afterwards as a heritage site, is one that has been scarcely studied. Literature does exist in relation to the study of the Holocaust as a tripartite dynamic of art, memorialisation and commemoration that has been explored by such authors as James Young, Sybil Milton and Ziva Amishai-Maisels. Within this context, it remains surprising that Auschwitz has not received more attention than it has, particularly from the perspective of art history.

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[1] Leo Eitinger 'Auschwitz −A Psychological Perspective', in Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (eds), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington and Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 480.

In this dissertation, 'Auschwitz: Art, Commemoration and Memorialisation: From 1940 to the Present', I address the ways in which Auschwitz as an object of memorialisation has been mediated for different audiences, from the camp's origins during the Second World War down to its present day status as a heritage site and museum. I begin with art produced in the functioning camp, proceed to the camp's memorialisation by means of a variety of monuments in the post-war period, and conclude with the present-day museum itself. In doing so, I bring together a corpus of surviving images and visual histories, and put them in dialogue with relevant texts, some of which have not before been translated into English. My intention is to allow new voices to be heard within the subject. This is especially true where previously-unheard speakers, such as the inmate artist Jozef Szajna, contributed to existing debates concerning matters of art, memorialisation and commemoration at the site. Although Szajna's post-war career has incorporated work as playwright, set designer, theatre theoretician and artist, often referencing his experiences as an inmate of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, his survivor testimony – first published in Polish – was not translated into English, and therefore available to a larger audience until 1980.[2]

The same is true of the inmate artist Marianne Grant, deported with her mother, to Auschwitz II-Birkenau on 18 December 1943. While imprisoned in the camp, Marianne Grant painted murals in the *Children's Block* at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. These drew the attention of SS Dr Josef Mengele, for whom she made detailed family trees and painted portraits of twins, as part of Mengele's research into genetics. She also chronicled her own survival by making watercolours of the environments she found herself in. Both she and her mother were transferred from Auschwitz to Neugraben work camp and from there to Bergen-Belsen in January 1945. Following her liberation from that camp, she first moved to Malmö (Sweden), where she recuperated and had an

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[2] Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton, *Art of the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 265.

exhibition of her Bergen-Belsen pictures. In 1951 she moved to Glasgow where she lived for the rest of her life. In 2003, some of her artwork, from the period 1940-1945, was purchased by and displayed at the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow.[3] Amongst the collection is a unique example of a representation of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, painted in 1952, without the now iconic Gate of Death. The Glasgow exhibition marked the first major display of her work in Britain. In 2004, an education pack about her life was sent to every child in Scotland. She died in 2007, aged 86.

The late entry of Szajna and Grant into a narrative of war-time Auschwitz as having been a site where artists created images indicates that artwork deriving from that camp may present a problem of specific interpretation. If, for example, the museum is producing a narrative of annihilation and suffering on the one hand, and producing pretty pictures on the other, a tension ensues. Therefore the museum and scholars alike have been reluctant, even though no formal prohibition is in place, to offer Auschwitz's artwork as cultural achievement in the normal way of art on display.

Insofar as scholarship has begun to think about the work of Auschwitz's inmate artists, research has primarily concentrated upon specific periods or events, and these have, of necessity, been treated in isolation. What has not been done is to consider the larger picture of the camp's representation by artists, by memorial architects and sculptors, and by curators, across more than six decades and to view the camp's changing representation across time. What emerges from such a study is that the competing narratives, to which I have briefly referred, show Auschwitz to be a contested site that has been subject to the shifting concerns of the worlds of visual and museum culture, whilst at the same time enduring the changing demands of political ideology. The broad chronological scope of this discussion is essential to gaining a

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[3] Hasse, Deborah, and McAdam, Ellen (eds), *I Knew I was Painting for My Life: The Holocaust Artworks of Marianne Grant* (Glasgow: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, April 2002).

better understanding of the art, commemoration and memorialisation associated with Auschwitz.

We shall discover that rival narratives appear between victim groups, most notably between Poland's Catholic population and Europe's Jewish nationals. In Poland this problem is more contested than anywhere else. James E. Young, whom I shall refer to more extensively later, describes the problem thus:

> Poland has always seen itself, in Polish terms, as the 'Christ among the nations'. The Poles see themselves as the great martyred nation in Europe, and for good reason. Being part of a Catholic culture, they have a very good vocabulary for talking about themselves as the 'Calvary of European culture.' When you take the ultimate martyr – even in Christian eyes – the Jewish people (which also obviously sees itself as the martyr of all the nations in Europe), and you put them together, there do tend to be 'competing narratives'.[4]

As Young suggests, part of the problem of memorialising Auschwitz is that the two groups participate in a contest to establish which two of conflicting accounts should achieve supremacy. The imposition of Stalinist communism upon Poland in 1947 resulted in a situation where competing narratives that had earlier focused on questions of hierarchies of martyrdom were replaced by a concept of Polish national identity that could serve both Poles and Jews alike. This strategy was an attempt by the authorities to bind the Poles to Russia, by adopting a scheme that posited Poland's eastern neighbour as both liberator and political visionary. At the same time, German National Socialism was equated with radical capitalism, a move which served to link Auschwitz with the perceived imperialist ambitions of the former Allies, especially those of the U.S.A. This correlation of Nazism with the strategies of advanced capitalism would influence how the story of Auschwitz was delivered, not only to the Poles, but also later, to visitors from outside of the Eastern Bloc.

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[4] Adi Gordon and Amos Goldberg, 'An Interview with Prof. James E. Young' in *Eclipse of Humanity*, (Jerusalem: Shoah Resource Centre, Yad Vashem, 2000), p. 219.

Literature Review

Literature Concerning Art of the Holocaust and Inmate Art at Auschwitz

Many artworks that represent the different levels of the Nazi genocidal project, known later as the Holocaust (1933-1945), were made and consumed at the time of the events they attempted to describe. They document state sponsored social exclusion, isolation, ghettoisation and concentration and extermination camps, of which Auschwitz was the largest. Nearly all the makers were victims of National Socialism's racist policies, and many died as a result. The audiences were drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds, and the circumstances in which they saw the works were equally varied. Among them are the sufferers, many of whom donated their time and other precious resources attempting to hide the work, hoping that it would survive and serve as both a visual testimony and a warning for later generations. Also among these viewers were Holocaust perpetrators, who were far from being those for whom most of the art was created. The existing narratives usually focus on memoirs given by artist inmates alone. However, the SS did commission art. Curators and institutions are even less likely for obvious reasons to give SS-commissioned seascapes, hunting scenes and other objects made at Auschwitz for the perpetrators exhibition room on a larger stage, again, as cultural achievement. Dr Krystyna Oleksy Director of the Education Department at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum explains, 'We are not here to tell the story of the SS.'[5] Presumably this would divert attention away from the suffering of the victims. However, in many cases both victim and perpetrator are linked. For example, inmate artists decorated the interiors of a number of prisoner barracks; this could only have been sanctioned by the camp authorities, which attempted to control virtually every moment of the inmates' lives. Inmate artists also worked on large scale visual projects, such as those commissioned by and for consumption by the SS, an instance of which

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[5] Private conversation with Dr Krystyna Oleksy at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, September 2005.

were the wall murals painted by Koscielniak in the *Haus der Waffen SS* at Oswiecim. I discuss the making and possible meanings of these in Chapter 1.

Regarding the general phenomenon of art produced during the Holocaust, sufferers and survivors were also important interpreters of inmate art. One such was the Franco-Jewish art historian Hirsh Fenster, a survivor of the Łódź ghetto and later author of *Undzere Farpainikte Kinstler* (Our Martyred Artists), written in Yiddish and published by the author in Paris in 1951.[6] The choice of language is surprising given the radically different linguistic landscape the Jews found in Europe following the Holocaust, where the number of speakers of a language that was already dying in 1939 had plummeted from eleven million to six million in just five years.[7] However, the possibility exists that Fenster's use of the Yiddish language was an ideological statement of protest at the recent atrocities. Fenster thus produced a memorial book to eighty-four Jewish painters who had lived in France and were killed by the Nazis; he established biographical details, and Marc Chagall, a prominent Jewish painter, who had experienced anti-Semitic persecution in pre-revolution Russia and later in Nazi occupied France, provided a preface. Fenster's book has been out of print for many years and its influence has diminished as can be seen in its omission from many bibliographies of books that consider the subject of Holocaust art.

A further contributor to the subject of artwork made by those enduring the hardships of life during the Holocaust is by the survivor Nelly Toll, herself an art historian. Her relationship to the topic of the Holocaust, like Fenster's is a personal one, since she spent thirteen months, as a child, in hiding at the house of a Polish non-Jewish family. During that period she painted watercolours that expressed her innermost feelings of fear, isolation and loneliness. These themes were later explored by Toll in

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[6] Hirsh Fenster, *Undzere Farpainikte Kinstler* (Paris: the author, 1951).
[7] Raphael Patai, *Encyclopaedia of Zionism and Israel* (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), p. 141.

relation to artists who had contributed to visually recording the impact of the Holocaust at the time that it was unfolding. In 1978 she published *Without Surrender: Art of the Holocaust*,[8] which serves as an overview of a number of artists, all of whom had suffered, as she had done, during the war years. Some of the artwork that she created as a child can be seen in the permanent collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and Yad Vashem Children's Holocaust Museum, Israel. Toll's coverage of the subject, like Fenster's earlier publication, presented the reader with an overview of the art of the Holocaust as witnessed by those to whom it was aimed. Most notably the Jews of Europe.

Through the work of Janina Jaworska (writing in Polish), and subsequent English-language authors such as Janet Blatter, Sybil Milton and Ziva Amishai-Maisels, discussion of the subject of inmate art from concentration camps generally have begun to enter the canon, and become part of debates concerning the Holocaust.[9]

Blatter and Milton's contribution to the subject begins with the publication of their co-authored book, *Art of the Holocaust*, in 1981. This landmark volume, which was ten years in the making, allowed scholars and lay readers alike the opportunity to view three hundred and fifty reproductions of artworks, thirty-two in colour, produced across Europe during the years 1939-1945. As the generalised title suggests, the book is a survey of art created in many different locations, ranging from ghettos and prisoner of war camps to concentration and extermination camps. The authors explained not only why the artworks were made, but also focused on the issue of presentation and the survival of artworks for future generations. Discussing the artist Frances Audoul, for example:

> In 1943 she [Frances Audoul] was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Ravensbrück. There she recorded everything she saw − scenes, faces,

[8] Nelly Toll, *Without Surrender: Art of the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1978).
[9] Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton, *Art of the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 1981). Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction & Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1993).

every phase of camp life. Luck was with her and she was able to take her works with her after the liberation.

A further example concerns the German Jewish painter Irene Awret:

> After 1941, she [Irene Awret] was interned in the transit camp at Malines, where she produced many drawings. Many of these survive, as do the works of her fellow artists at Malines, which she was able to hide and thus save.

A final instance is their consideration of a non-Jewish artist, the Polish sculptor Xawery Dunikowski,

> A large number of his [Xawery Dunikowski's] drawings were smuggled out of Auschwitz by other prisoners. The drawings were later sent back to Kraków [where] in 1946 he resumed his professorship at the Kraków Art Academy.[10]

Blatter and Milton's approach is thus largely about gathering a corpus of works that can be justified under a banner, not of canonical status, but of survivorship to mirror the general narrative then prevalent of survivor discourses. At this time it was essential as a traditional task to bring together and expose the works themselves. Blatter and Milton also supplied detailed biographies for the one hundred and fifty artists included in the book. This resource has been of constant value to those working in the field since. As the title suggests, the book is a survey of art created in many different locations, ranging from ghettos and prisoner of war camps to concentration and extermination camps. Theirs was not, of necessity, a sustained enquiry into the production of art at Auschwitz alone. The authors use seventeen images from the archive at Auschwitz; the present thesis extends the research by broadening the types of artworks produced at Auschwitz. These include sculpture, carved domestic objects and a greater number of wall paintings.

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[10] Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton, *Art of the Holocaust* (New York, Routledge, 1981), pp. 240-246.

Blatter's introductory essay to *Art of the Holocaust*, 'Art from the Whirlwind' outlines artistic production at Auschwitz, briefly telling the story of art produced at the camp during its period as a functioning death camp.[11] In the essay Blatter makes a valuable distinction regarding the types of art produced, namely that there is an important difference between the representation of the Holocaust in art and the art of the Holocaust. 'The former, broader category', Blatter states, 'refers to any art depicting or alluding to the Holocaust. On the other hand art of the Holocaust is more specific: it is limited to works created by the victims of the Holocaust 1939-1945.'[12] For Blatter, the significance of the art of the Holocaust lies in its ability to act as a document for such places as Auschwitz and shows that the inmate artists refused to be condemned to silence by the Nazis. Like the focus generally in Holocaust literature, on survivorship, this focus reflects the drive at this time during the 1980s to restore to the canon 'outsider' art of many kinds. Sybil Milton's solo contribution to *Art of the Holocaust* discusses 'The Legacy of Holocaust Art'; in it she surveys representations made during the Holocaust, but outside of Auschwitz, in such places as the Warsaw ghetto, transit camps and Death camps such as Treblinka.[13] She also discusses post-war Holocaust art collections in Germany, Israel and Frances, thereby extending the subject to show a continuum of images that link geographic locations and themes.[14] Blatter and Milton reinforce the idea that narratives told about Auschwitz and Holocaust artworks understandably play up notions of survivorship and witnessing as priority before telling the story that a need for the art existed from both sides. Indeed, although it is however very uncomfortable for us to acknowledge, a dialogue existed on both sides.

In the same year that Blatter and Milton's study appeared, the art historian Miriam Novitch published *Spiritual Resistance: Art from Concentration Camps 1940–*

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[11] Blatter, 'Art from the Whirlwind', in *Art of the Holocaust* (New York, Routledge, 1981), pp. 20-35. .
[12] Blatter, 'Art from the Whirlwind', in *Art of the Holocaust* (New York, Routledge, 1981), p. 21.
[13] Sybil Milton, 'The Legacy of Holocaust Art', in *Art of the Holocaust* (New York, Routledge, 1981), pp. 36-43.
[14] Blatter, 'Art from the Whirlwind', in *Art of the Holocaust* (New York, Routledge, 1981), p. 36.

1945: A Selection of Drawings and Paintings from the Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetot.[15]

According to Pnina Rosenberg, keeper of The Ghetto Fighters' House Collection, Israel, it was Miriam Novitch, a survivor of the Nazi internment and transit camp at Vittel, France, who was responsible for coining the term 'Spiritual Resistance'. Novitch argued that 'without art, without the courageous and heroic manifestations of the human spirit [spiritual resistance] produced in the camps and ghettos, the story would be incomplete.'[16] For Novitch, the value of this art exists in the fact that the art is self-explanatory, and its application and communicative capabilities are total. She also held that the pieces could support both oral and written accounts of the Holocaust and that they contribute towards an understanding of traumatic experiences that are often beyond the general conception. This is especially true of sites such as Auschwitz and Birkenau. The publication also generated the exhibition *Spiritual Resistance*, which opened in Strasbourg in 1983.[17] Much of the work reproduced in the book is sourced from the archives of the Terezin ghetto and is therefore complimentary to the scope of this study. Novitch's study fits in to the already established form of survivorship and witnessing.

In 1982 Mary S. Constanza continued the theme of survivorship when she published *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*.[18] Constanza gathered one hundred drawings and sculptures by inmates from a broad range of locations connected with the Holocaust. Significantly her focus, like that of the earlier authors, was upon work produced by Jewish artists. However, going further than Blatter, Milton and Novitch, Constanza included interviews with artist-survivors, allowing for a consideration of the techniques of survival adopted by those engaged in

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[15] Miriam Novitch, *Spiritual Resistance: Art from Concentration Camps 1940 – 1945: A Selection of Drawings and Paintings from the collection of Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetot, Israel* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981).

[16] Pnina Rosenberg, 'Art of the Holocaust as Spiritual Resistance: The Ghetto Fighters' House Collection', in Corinne Granof (ed.) *Last Expression: Art from Auschwitz* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 2000), available online at www.lastexpression/northwest.edu/ Last updated 20 September 2000, accessed 1 October 2010.

[17] Philip Rosen, *Bearing Witness: A Resource Guide to Literature, Poetry, Art, Music and Vidoes by Holocaust Victims and Survivors* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 160.

[18] Mary S. Constanza, *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos* (New York: Free Press, 1982).

visual responses to the Holocaust as it unfolded. Constanza interviewed Alexander Bogen, for example, an artist-survivor of the Vilna ghetto, who spoke of his reasons for making art during this period:

> I asked myself why I was drawing, when I was fighting day and night. The artist reacts through his medium. This is his protest! This is my medium! He reacts artistically. This is his weapon. He must leave his mark as a 'mensch' [as a human; a person of honour] on mankind. This is what shows the Germans could not break his spirit.[19]

Whilst Constanza's research brought new voices and approaches to the subject of Holocaust art, art resulting from the lived experience of Auschwitz still formed only a small part of her study. In this, Constanza was like others continuing the tradition of the 'survivor studies.' Contributing to an already established form, she thus sought to provide the reader with as comprehensive as possible selection of art and artists from a general spread of experiences.

Finding more of a balance between 'survivor studies' and cultural history, Sybil Milton turned to the study of a single artist Felix Nussbaum in her 1985 book *Art and Exile: Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944).*[20] The book constitutes a study of the work of the German-Jewish artist Nussbaum, exploring and interpreting the symbolist art of an émigré whose situation became more extreme as the war progressed. Nussbaum and his wife were deported to Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1943 and it was there that they both died in the following year. In this book Milton moved away from the discourse of survivorship discussions and developed new arguments by producing a study of an artist who had died as a direct result of the Nazis genocidal policies.

Milton continued her survey of Holocaust art with the publication of two further volumes. The first was *The Art of Jewish Children, Germany, 1936-1941: Innocence*

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[19] Constanza, *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos* (New York: Free Press, 1982), p. xviii.
[20] Sybil Milton *et al.*, *Art and Exile: Felix Nussbaum (1904 – 1944)* (New York: Zimmer, 1985).

and Persecution (1989);[21] the second, *Is there an Exile Art or Only Exile Artists?* (1990).[22] The former identifies the influence of social and psychological isolation upon the Nazis' youngest victims especially in the light of the implementation of the Nürnberg race laws in 1936. Milton's narrative takes the reader to the year in which National Socialism put into operation its now familiar industrial genocidal techniques, such as the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1941. *Is There an Exile Art or Only Exile Artists?* considers the artistic expression of three German-Jewish artists, Karl Schwesig and Hans and Leah Grundig, all of whom had been forced in to exile by the Nazis anti-Semitic programme. Milton acknowledges that certain themes develop out of their particular experiences, such as the depiction of identity cards, or factory-like chimneystacks belching out smoke, this symbolism bringing cohesion to the different styles and approaches used by artists. Both books examine the effects of Nazi policy on the production of art by those whom the state had defined as 'other'. With her 1989 and 1990 publications Milton advanced the subject of Holocaust art. First she included images created by children, something that had not been attempted before, but has since become a staple of Holocaust art exhibitions. The 1990 publication allowed for a consideration of the value of themes within the genre; again this was new to the subject. As a pedagogical tool the two publications enabled an expansion of the aspects of Holocaust art.

In 1993, Ziva Amishai-Maisels published *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*.[23] The importance of her book lies in its wide scope, which demonstrates the impact of the Holocaust on modern art in general. The pioneering nature of her work brought the topic to the attention of academics both

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[21] Sybil Milton, *The Art of Jewish Children: Germany, 1936-1941: Innocence and Persecution* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1989).

[22] Sybil Milton, 'Is There an Exile Art or Only Exile Artists?', in Alexander Stephan (ed.) *Exil: Literature und die kunst nach 1993* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1990).

[23] Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on Visual Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Her earlier writing reflects the research undertaken to complete her 1993 publication.

in Israel and abroad and established a new area of research. A groundbreaking work, it is today the basis for all research on Holocaust art. *Depiction and Interpretation* goes further than Blatter and Milton's general surveys of period-based Holocaust art to offer a more fundamental study of the Holocaust in the visual imagination to the present day.

Amishai-Maisel's book followed twenty years of extensive research, which can be mapped through a number of important journal articles by her, such as 'Faith, Ethics and the Holocaust: Christological Symbolism of the Holocaust', for example, published in the *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* in 1988.[24] This was proceeded by Amishai-Maisels' 'The Complexities of Witnessing: Art Confronts the Holocaust',[25] later to be included in the exhibition catalogue, *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*.[26] *Depiction and Interpretation* was unique at the time of its publication because of the sheer range of work that Amishai-Maisels had assembled. The book attempted to deal with the impact of the Holocaust on artists of various backgrounds. The work is divided into two parts. The first explores problems arising from depictions of the Holocaust in works of art. Here Amishai-Maisels deals with two groups of artists – those who were themselves eyewitnesses, and those who lived at the time but did not themselves witness the atrocities. She distinguishes between the two, focusing primarily on the motivation that lay behind the works. Since the eyewitnesses wished above all to document what they had seen, she finds that their works are more detailed and realistic in style, while the latter group aimed at creating an artist's reaction to the events which can be characterized as being less in the style of reportage, whilst engaging in more abstract approaches.

The second part of Amishai-Maisels's book deals with the interpretations of and commentaries on the Holocaust that find expression in the visual depictions. Like

[24] *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3:4 (1988), pp. 457-481.
[25] Ziva Amishia-Maisels, 'The Complexities of Witnessing: Art Confronts the Holocaust, in *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studied*, 2:1 (1987), pp. 123-147.
[26] Monica Bohm-Duchen (ed.), *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art* (Sunderland: Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, in association with Lund Humphries, 1995).

Milton she discerns implicit and explicit symbols common to all the artists, employed in order to deal with their difficult theme. Explicit depictions make reference to barbed-wire fences, chimneys and corpses, whilst the implicit employed symbolic content derived from the Bible: such as depicting Job to represent the suffering of the Jewish people, David to depict opposition to the Nazis, and Moloch to represent the Nazis' evil deeds. Christian symbols were employed – for example, the crucifixion of Christ – along with mythological symbolism such as the tale of Prometheus, the ancient Greek mythological champion of mankind, or the rape of Europa, abducted without a struggle, mirroring the post-war idea that the Jews had gone to their deaths in likewise fashion.

Discussing the problems of representing the aggressor and the victim, Amishai-Maisels demonstrates how abstract styles served certain artists as a means of psychological containment, by which I mean to indicate a lack of ability (or desire) to tackle the topic in more representational form. In her opinion, the Holocaust is an archetype that plays an active role in our collective subconscious and will therefore continue to be represented in art. In the course of her discussion she deals with numerous Israeli artists, dwelling on the special problems that relate to their being Israeli, for example, the founding of the state of Israel as recompense for European Jewry's war time suffering. She concludes by dealing with artists of the 'second generation', the children of Holocaust survivors. Amishai-Maisels is convinced that there is clear evidence of the Holocaust in the work of children and even grandchildren of the survivors, who seek to cope with and to understand the events of the Holocaust in their own manner, on the one hand, and through their national history, on the other. A later publication, 'Haunting the Empty Place', explores the complex strategies used by artists to remember the Holocaust.[27]

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[27] Ziva Amishai-Maisels, 'Haunting the empty place', in Stephen C. Feinstein (ed), *Absence/Presence: Critical Essays on the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2005), pp. 123-150.

Although outside of the present study, which focuses on the camps now referred to singly as Auschwitz, and developments at that site from 1940 to the present, the British art historian Mark Godfrey's book, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*,[28] explores the legacy of artistic engagement undertaken by twelve artists and architects, working in a range of media: painting, architecture, video, installations, sculptures and photographs. [29] He investigates how certain abstract artists have negotiated the Holocaust over a 54 years trajectory, from 1951 to 2005. He explores the ways in which the history of the Nazis programmatic extermination of European Jewry has been employed to tell the story of that catastrophe. Dr Godfrey manages to capture the specificities of the Holocaust's meanings, as well as the generality of its horror. His contribution, beyond his scholarly research and critical assessments, is his insistence that abstraction embodies the absoluteness of the material world while also creating space for allusion, and even transcendent feeling.

Dr Godfrey draws our attention to the fact that of all the artists, only two – Eisenman (*Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*) and Hiller (*J Street Project*) – confront the Holocaust in the present tense. Eisenman's memorial is designed as a warning to present and future generations, whilst Hiller's video instillation, offers the viewer the opportunity to consider the Holocaust and subsequent acts of genocide, such as the Balkans and Rwanda, through the idea of absence. Godfrey states: 'Eisenman's field is only ever activated as the visitor walks through it and Hiller's photographic series shows the contemporary situation of the streets.'[30] The artist has said that her use of "J. Street" recalls, with bitter irony, the loss of Jewish communities by using the type

[28] Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[29] Artists and works considered are: Morris Louis's calligraphic paintings, *Charred Journal: Firewritten*, 1951, Barnett Newman , *Stations of the Cross*, 1958—1966, Frank Stella, *Polish Village*, 1970—1974, Louis Kahn's (unrealized) *Memorial to the Six Million Martyrs*, 1966—1972, Beryl Korot's video instillation, *Dachau*, 1974, Mel Bochner's, *Via Tasso*, 1993. The contributions made to the subject by Joel Shapiro, Richard Serra, Ellsworth Kelly and Sol LeWitt are framed by their responses to the commissions each received from the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C. In conclusion Godfrey examines two projects, Peter Eisenman's, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, Berlin, 1997—2005 and Susan Hiller's, *J Street Project*, 2002—2005.

[30] Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 262.

of classification terminology that the Nazis employed to destructive ends. The work's title suggests the dangers of reducing individuals and groups to an abstract bureaucratic code. By probing the tension between past and present, Godfrey draws the reader's attention to the fact that his chosen examples of artistic meditation focus on the incurable traumatic absence, which causes us to think of more recent attempts to destroy minority cultures and erase their presence. This is especially true in the wake of more recent acts of genocide and ethnic violence in such places as the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur. Godfrey's work allows us to grasp the tragic relevance of the Holocaust to present-day world affairs. Amishai-Maisels draws our attention to the fact that it is through the work of post-war visual artists, working in an astonishing variety of media, that 'the Holocaust refuses to remain dead and buried.'

The development of the literature of Holocaust art reflects the general changing shape of art history studies since the 1990s. While Blatter, Milton et al in the 1980s were concerned with more traditional methods and approaches – creating a corpus, assembling biographies and a survey study of artists who would otherwise be forgotten – Amishai-Maisels is more concerned with the conceptual impact of the Holocaust on the modern imagination of artists in Europe, North America and Israel, from 1945 to the time of publishing 1993. Necessarily this entails a shift of focus from an underlying attempt to 'canonize' characterized by the earlier approach, to a broader cultural history of Holocaust representation and ideas at work in the larger world.

Literature Concerning Attempts to Memorialise Auschwitz

Following her survey of Holocaust art, Sybil Milton turned to the subject of memorialisation in her 1991 book, *In Fitting Memory: the Art and Politics of Holocaust*

Memorials.[31] This study resembled Milton's earlier work in being an overview of the subject. Milton used the book to advance an argument that we are still 'confronted by the issue of defining appropriate memorial art for public spaces designed in fitting memory of all victims of the Holocaust.'[32] I show that the memorials which have been placed at the Auschwitz site, whether temporary, such as the first memorial placed at Auschwitz II-Birkenau following the liberation of the camp in January 1945, which was a wooden cross, rich in Christian symbolism, or the subsequent memorials appear to demonstrate that the social and political function accorded to the monument at the time of its placing depended less on their forms than on the contexts in which they were conceived, erected or perceived.

An enquiry in to the various attempts to envisage and construct a fitting monument that would serve to memorialise those who had experienced the death camp at Auschwitz, presents the researcher with a rich and complex history. For example, it is little acknowledged that the first significant design for a memorial to the dead of Auschwitz was first instigated by the inmates themselves. It was they who contacted Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, an inmate artist, to plan a memorial to the camp's genocidal period. Little has been written about the culture of memorialisation at Auschwitz. The earliest reports that appeared in the Polish press have been generally overlooked by scholarship and these primary sources form a central part of the work presented here. However, a recent Polish-language publication by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, *Zburzyć i zaorać* (Destroy and Plough) [2007], has also offered new perspectives on the earliest forms of memorialisation, as well as the responses made by Polish nationals to these attempts.[33] The competition of 1957, for example, with Henry Moore as its chairman, was established to find a suitable monument that would replace

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[31] Sybil Milton, *In Fitting Memory: the Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).
[32] Sybil Milton, *In Fitting Memory: the Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p. 17.
[33] Jacek Lachendro, *Zburzyć i zaorać* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2007).

earlier structures that were thought to be inadequate to the business of memorialising the tragedy that had unfolded at the site. This period of the site's history is treated by another Auschwitz museum publication, published to coincide with the competition itself. It is noteworthy that many of Moore's biographers tend to either ignore his contribution to the competition, or give incomplete or incorrect information about his part in it. My own research at the Henry Moore archives at Perry Green shows that there is little information available there. However, by using the archives at Auschwitz it is possible to flesh out this period of the site's history. This I shall do later in the discussion.

James E. Young developed the topic of Holocaust memorialisation with his own publication, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning.*[34] Young explored Holocaust monuments, analysing their form and function. His work concentrates on their making, and on the possible roles that such monuments play in public memory. He suggests that there is a plurality of possible meanings and that these are embedded in such memorials. By concentrating solely on the attempts at memorialisation at Auschwitz, I extend the scholarship of Milton and Young through a sustained enquiry into this single, most evocative and emotive of locations. This allows for a detailed examination of the difficulties encountered by the museum in their endeavours to resolve the problems of what form the memorial should take and which of the victim-groups should have been included within that memorial process. These problems have been emphasised by both Milton and Young.

In regard to the monuments that have been placed at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site, I suggest that a plurality of meanings can be detected in the various names that have been attached to them. The large wooden cross, with the wording 'For Our Martyred Brothers', inscribed upon the tau, of the immediate post-liberation period in

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[34] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

1945, is a monument rich in Christian symbolism that has until now not received attention as a cultural object in terms of the history of the memorialisation at the site. The same is true of two further monuments, The Stone of Martyrdom (1947), which memorialised Jewish suffering whilst excluding all other victim groups, and The Urn of Martyrdom (1955), whose only text bore the name of the Oświęcim, which is the Polish name for the Germanised Auschwitz, used during the occupation years. The limited range of reference of each monument is evidence that those who initiated them were unable, or unwilling, to find a way making a unified telling at the site. I explore these memorials in order to show that they failed as memorials because they articulated the collective social values imposed on post-war Poland by the state. This was a failure to find a way of making an appropriate honour in a traditional manner. The imposition of a single account by each of these memorials exhibits the state's attempts to present exclusive narratives and not to recognize the inclusivity of all of those who had died at the site.

Two authors have also undertaken sustained investigations into Auschwitz and its memorialisation. They are Jonathan Huener, in *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979*, and Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, in 'Oskar Hansen, Henry Moore and the Auschwitz Memorial Debates in Poland, 1958-1959.'[35] Huener offers a major analysis of the post-war history of the site from its liberation in 1945 to the important visit by Pope John-Paul II in 1979. He examines the role played by successive Polish political authorities in fashioning the site, and their decision to stress Polish national martyrdom at the expense of what should have been made more prominent, the Jewish element in the destruction. Huener pays close attention to elements of the site's visual culture, and in the chapter entitled 'From Liberation to

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[35] Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003). Katarzyna Murawska-Methesius, 'Oskar Hansen, Henry Moore and the Auschwitz Memorial Debates in Poland, 1958-1959', in Charlotte Benton (ed.) *Figuration/Abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945 – 1968*, (Burlington: Ashgate, in association with the Henry Moore Institute, 2004), pp. 193-212.

Memorialisation: The Transformation of the Auschwitz Site, 1945-1947', he lays bare the thinking of the earliest curators at the site, who were returning inmates, he focuses particularly upon the politicisation of Auschwitz by the state. His engagement with the history of the museological narrative of Auschwitz supports his argument concerning the contradictory ways Poles and Jews have attempted to record and memorialise the site. What I show is that at least one memorial was envisaged for the site before the cessation of hostilities and during the immediate aftermath of war, and that a memorial was actually placed at the site as soon as it was possible to do so, even if that structure was overtly Christian in its symbolism. Huener does not acknowledge this earliest memorial, nor does he comment on the later (1947) stone construction placed at the highly emblematic location of Auschwitz II-Birkenau. This memorial was designed to commemorate exclusively the Jewish suffering at that site. By paying attention to these initial memorials I establish the grounds for arguing that the museum was able to address some of the problems of commemoration that would dog later more politicised initiatives. Building on Huener's account, using primary research from the Auschwitz archives, the present dissertation has a fuller description, and offers a more comprehensive reading of the earliest attempts to memorialise the site.

From an art-historical perspective, the account given by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius of the international competition of 1957 to find a suitable form for the memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentrates on the three shortlisted finalists.[36] Murawska-Methesius finds that although the competition was successful in attracting over four hundred and fifty designs, the winning entry, which was by a Polish team led by the architect Oskar Hansen, proved too controversial for many survivors and was not realised at the site. The present day memorial represents the amalgamation of elements drawn from the three placed designs. However, this memorial was also deemed to not

[36] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Oskar Hansen, Henry Moore and the Auschwitz Memorial debates in Poland, 1958-59', in *Figuration/Abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945 – 1968*, Charlotte Benton (ed), (Burlington: Ashgate, in association with the Henry Moore Institute, 2004), pp. 193-212.

fully answer the difficulties of symbolizing the tragic history of the site, with substantial changes being made to the structure in the week before the official dedication ceremony. Led by my own examination of the archives at Auschwitz I am able to extend the discussion beyond the three finalists by undertaking an acknowledgement of the British contributions to the competition. These artists and architects have thus far received no critical attention at all in the literature for their participation in the competition.

Literature Concerning the Museum at Auschwitz

Auschwitz was established as a site-specific museum in 1947, by statute of the Polish government, with the intention of narrating the story of both the camp and its inmates, but the process by which this was done has until recently received little attention from within Holocaust or museological scholarship. It is not the case that there is an absence of available material, for as I have already mentioned, the initial reports concerning the museum were published in the Polish press. There, debates for and against its establishment were fiercely argued over by those who stood politically on both the Left and the Right. It was not until the publication in 2007 of Jacek Lachendro's *Zburzyć i zaorać...?* (Destroy and Plough) that any information in book form was available to scholars, beyond the archives at the Auschwitz museum. I use these texts in the dissertation to show that it was not always the case that the Polish authorities considered that Auschwitz should hold the primary position as the foremost site for Holocaust memorialisation and commemoration, at first in Poland in the 1940s and 1950s and later on an international stage. These reports allow the reader to engage with the many possibilities that the Poles considered for the twin sites of Auschwitz and Birkenau. There was a demand for the demolition of Birkenau and for the land to be returned to agricultural use. Another problem for the authorities was the pillaging of the site by

those hunting for supposed treasure hidden by Jewish inmates before their deaths. These newspaper reports reinforce the sense of the site as a place of contestation between victim groups almost as soon as the camp was liberated. Such were the conditions that returning former inmates encountered at the commencement of their self-initiated project to found a museum at the site, and which particularly affected the politics of its foundation and identity.

Very little scholarship exists concerning the first displays at the museum in 1945 and 1946. The present study gathers together a number of first-hand accounts located in various sources, such as memoirs and early guidebooks for the museum.[37] One such source, previously largely untapped, is the photographic archive at the Auschwitz museum, which has been so far underused by researchers examining the museum's strategies for displaying its artefacts. The archive is used in the dissertation to illustrate the earliest exhibition of the newly founded Auschwitz Museum in 1947, previously absent from the published scholarship on this subject. The reports written by the directors of the museum have been similarly underused. For example, in the report prepared for the Ministry of Culture in 1955, Kazimiersz Smoleń describes the state of the site, the need for a more fitting monument, and the condition of the museum's displays. This suggests that the site only ten years after its liberation was falling into a liminal space between museum and unclaimed territory.

I go on to explore the development of the Jewish Pavilion (1968) at Auschwitz through a detailed case study. This exhibition represented the first-time that the museum had attempted to create an independent display of the Jewish suffering at the camp. Until this time the Jewish identity of the majority of inmates had by and large been subsumed under the category of nation states, for example Poland or France to name but two of the twenty-three countries that had their citizens interned in the camp. This

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[37] Kazimierz Smoleń, *Auschwitz Birkenau: Guide Book* (Oswiecim: State Museum in Oswiecim, 1955).

exhibition highlighted the specific Jewish experience at Auschwitz and Birkenau. Further, it is possible to argue that the setting-up of this exhibition involved extensive and conspicuous interference in the work of the museum by the state. Here I use Huener as a guide to the debates then taking place in Poland in order to situate the development of the exhibition politically. Unlike Huener, whose primary concern is to explore the politics of the site, I choose to concentrate on the museological questions, such as what was displayed and the strategies for showing those artefacts.

Some scholarship concerning this period of the museum's history is often puzzling. For example, with regard to the inauguration of the Jewish Pavilion, such authors as Monty Noam Penkower and Iwona Irwin-Zarecka report that once opened the exhibition was closed to the public.[38] However, my research at the museum, supported by conversations with visitors who were at the site at that time, indicates that the display remained open. There has been further confusion between the date of the inauguration of the pavilion. A case in point is Lucy Dawidowicz's observation that the pavilion opened in 1978, that year in fact marked its rededication, which followed an extensive overhaul by the museum's curators.[39]

Literature concerning Auschwitz as a Global phenomenon

Given the role that communism has had in shaping Auschwitz as a national commemorative vehicle for the Poles, the fall of that particular branch of politics could possibly have suggested that Auschwitz might then become a less contested site. The museum authorities have attempted to address this problem with the publication of 'Oś

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[38] Monty Noam Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 317. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jews in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), p. 153.
[39] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 112.

Oświęcim-People-History-Culture. The Auschwitz Memorial Magazine.'[40] In it they discuss the history of the town, with articles ranging from a discussion of the historic castle to the town's once thriving motor industry. However, at the time of writing, few of the 1.4 million visitors to the site venture in to the town, believing that there is nothing to see.[41] Seeing such large numbers going to the museum site and then leaving again, promotes a tension between museum and town. It is of interest to note that the same situation exists at Majdanek (Poland) and at Dachau (Germany).

Auschwitz has also become the provider globally of artefacts, such as shoes, suitcases, and even drawings and paintings. At the Imperial War Museum Auschwitz has provided the autopsy table once used by a Dr Mengele whilst he practiced his own brand of medicine at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site. According to James Young, the encounter with these relics becomes the key experience for most visitors to Holocaust museums. He asks: 'What precisely does the sight of concentration-camp artifacts [sic] awaken in the viewer? Historical knowledge? A sense of evidence? Revulsion, grief, pity, fear?'[42]

Liliane Weissberg, a specialist in German and Comparative Literature, has sought the answer to Young's question. In her essay 'Memory Confined' (1999) she discusses the visual representations of Auschwitz beyond the site itself. She writes of museums that use artefacts from Auschwitz as the means of creating a sense of immediacy. 'An object like a shoe should aid identification and bridge the gap in time.'[43] Weissberg is suggesting that the strategy for exhibiting the shoe as a totemic object exposes a relational system of value-recognition, which opens up the many possible links that might subsist between the object and the viewer.

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[40] Available on line www.en.auschwitz.org.pl/os

[41] Figure taken from on line www.en.auschwitz.org.pl/visiting

[42] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 132.

[43] Liliane Weissberg, 'Memory Confined', in Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (eds), *Cultural Memory and the construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 66.

My discussion of the ways in which Auschwitz has represented itself, and has been represented by others, is grounded in the work of the scholars described here. I have throughout attempted to develop existing discussions in particular directions, and to introduce new material that I hope will provide new perspectives on the history of Auschwitz. In particular, I have introduced what I believe to be largely new material on the artistic colony that existed within the functioning camp, and to have made a radical extension of our understanding of its legacy in the post-war decades.

The present study is intended, like Amishai-Maisels's, to look more broadly at the general cultural and ideological impact of Auschwitz on the visual imagination across a wide span of its history. The aim of this dissertation is to present a more complete account of the history of Auschwitz's art, commemoration and memorialisation from the founding of the camp in 1940 to the present day.

Chapter 2

Inmate Art at Auschwitz 1940 – 1945

Sixty-five years have passed since the liberation of Auschwitz. In the intervening years it has proved difficult for many people to understand that works of art were created inside the labour, concentration and death-camps of the Auschwitz complex by a combination of professional artists, students and amateurs.

This chapter will discuss the work of the inmate artists of Auschwitz. I shall argue that as significant examples of cultural production and as social discourse, the artworks created in Auschwitz form an important part of twentieth-century cultural history and ideologies, and certainly of accounts of Auschwitz itself. I will argue that art created in Auschwitz was a means of hope and survival for inmates, the means of imperialist triumph for the SS, and a mode of witnessing and documentation for both.

The work of inmate artists has been discussed before, by such scholars as Janet Blatter, Sybil Milton and Ziva Amishai-Maisels. However, their work focuses primarily on illicit artworks, the production of images created by the inmates with the express intention of bearing witness to the atrocity and trauma of daily life in the camp. What is needed is a more comprehensive account. By building on the already established body of scholarship my account will present the fuller picture, thus restoring the range to the account. For example, scant attention has been paid to the objects produced at the orders of the SS; these can be classified as commissioned works. This category includes serene landscapes, furious seascapes, harvest and peasant scenes, as well as nudes. Images of hunting were made alongside portraits, whilst illustrations showing the development and expansion of Auschwitz were created as both diagrams and physical models.

Significant quantities of educational and instructional graphics were also produced. Voluntary work is another category; the inmates created such pieces as decoration for the interiors of the bleak housing in which they lived which were tolerated by the SS. Included within this group are craftworks such as personal objects made of wrought iron, rings, cigarette-holders and cigarette boxes, produced for both the SS and inmates alike. This category also comprises crucifixes and rosaries produced for those inmates who retained their faith. Some illicit works on the other hand, were realised as scratches on the surfaces of walls, such as the *Crucifix* (*fig.* 1), by the Polish inmate Stefan Jasienski, in Block 11 of the *Stammlager* (Auschwitz I). A further example can be found at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, in Block 2, where a clock without hands, itself suggestive of the lack of connectedness to the world, can be found (*Fig. 2*). Neither of these works were reproduced by Blatter and Milton in *Art of the* Holocaust, presumably because they are not 'canonised' art. Others can be found on doors or window frames. Some are only visible when illuminated by raking light.[44]

A third category thus concerns the illicit works of art already mentioned; these pieces, which account for the majority of artworks held within the present day archives and displays of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, were made with the express purpose of providing evidence of what was taking place at Auschwitz. This type of work ranges from drawings depicting the violence which was endemic to the site, portraits of fellow inmates and rare examples of photography. This work survived in concealed places on the Auschwitz site, in basements and attics, accentuating the unauthorised nature of the images. Other pieces have been found hidden between the felt covering of barrack roofs, or in the earth below the floors. These always represent scenes from camp life, frequently taking the form of a kind of documentary reportage, and were intended to verify written and oral accounts of the crimes that took place in the

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[44] For a discussion of some methods that researchers have employed to locate and photograph these works, see Joseph P. Czarnecki, *Last Traces: The Lost Art of Auschwitz* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 171 – 172.

name of National Socialism. Carol Zimmel writes: 'As historical documents, they report a carefully concealed programme of incarceration and extermination.'[45] John Berger, quoted in the catalogue to accompany the permanent exhibition in Glasgow, entitled *I Knew I was Painting for My Life: The Holocaust Artworks of Marianne Grant*, herself an artist inmate survivor of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, draws attention to the purpose that art plays in documenting trauma. He writes:

> Painting is, first, an affirmation of the visible which surrounds us and which continually appears and disappears. Without the disappearing, there would perhaps be no impulse to paint, for then the visible itself would posses the surety (the permanence) which painting strives to find. More directly than any other art, painting is an affirmation of the existent, of the physical world into which mankind has been thrown.[46]

Auschwitz and Its Origins

The literatures that consider the reasons for the founding and running of the Auschwitz complex are extensive, so that space forbids a detailed summary here.[47] Auschwitz is the Germanised colonial name for the town of Oświęcim, in the southwest of Poland. When Nazi Germany overran Poland at the outset of the Second World War, it initiated a vicious policy of intimidation towards the population. Reinhardt Heydrich, Director of the Reich's main security office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), made it clear how Nazi policy in Poland was to be run: 'The people must be shot or hanged without trial. The little people [peasants] we want to spare, but the nobles, priests and Jews must

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[45] Carol Zimmel, 'Bidden and Forbidden Sights: Images of the Holocaust', in Ellen Spolsky, *Iconotropism: Turning Towards Pictures* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 37.

[46] Deborah Hasse and Ellen McAdam (eds), *I Knew I was Painting for My Llife: The Holocaust Artworks of Marianne Grant* (Glasgow: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, 2002), p. ix.

[47] For an introduction to the history of German anti-Semitism see: Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Little, Brown, 1996), pp. 27-130. For the issues concerning the background to the 'Final Solution' see: Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy 1939-1942* (London: Heinemann, 2004). For a consideration of Germany's Second World War occupation of Poland see: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets: Occupation Politics in Poland, 1939-1947* (Lenham: Lexington Books, 2004), pp. 39-181. The most scholarly account for the establishment of the camp can be found in: Aleksander Lasik, Franciszek Piper, Piotr Setkiewicz and Irena Strzelecka, 'The Establishment and Organisation of the Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds.), trans William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), Vol I. See: Yisrael Gutman, 'Auschwitz – An Overview', in Michael Berenbaum and Yisrael Gutman (eds), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC).

be killed.'[48] In an attempt to foster control over the inhabitants, the Nazis initiated a programme of arbitrary executions, in reprisal for any defence of Poland. Notoriously, they also inaugurated a programme of incarceration in specially constructed camps, where the concentration of dissident members of the vanquished population could take place. These hastily-constructed sites were first used to house Polish political prisoners in conditions that were often fatal.[49] Concurrent with this policy was one by which Poland's Jews were first forced into ghettos, then exploited for their labour, and later deported to death camps, in what famously became known as the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Problem.'[50] Auschwitz's first commandant was Rudolph Höss, appointed on the day of his arrival at the camp on 1 May 1940.[51]

As the Nazi war machine invaded the countries of Europe so their genocidal project grew, and with it the size of Auschwitz. The major extensions to the initial camp were Auschwitz II-Birkenau, which became the main site for the internment of the Jews, and for their killing in purposefully constructed gas-chambers. Auschwitz III-Monowitz, an industrial complex, housed both Jews and prisoners of war, during its

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[48] Browning (2004), p. 17. The contents of a letter – no longer extant – from Martin Bormann to the party polemicist Rosenberg, explains how the treatment of the Poles was intended to progress: '[T]he Slavs should work for us; if of no use to us, they should die; health provisions were superfluous; the fertility of the Slavs was undesirable, their education dangerous; it would do if they could count up to one hundred. Every educated person is a potential enemy. We could leave them their religion as an outlet. As sustenance they should receive only the barest necessities; we are the masters and we come first.' *The Trial of German Major War Criminals, Sitting at Nuremberg, Germany*. 2 July to 15 July 1946. One Hundred and Seventy-Fourth Day: Tuesday, 9th July 1946. (London: HMSO, 1948, Part 10 of 11), p. 246. For a full discussion of the effects of Germany's cultural policy in Poland throughout the Second World War, including the incarceration of nobles, priests and university teaching staff, together with detailed records of the looting and destruction of museums, libraries, archives and private collections, as well as the destruction of significant buildings and monuments see: *The Nazi Kultur in Poland, by several authors by necessity temporarily anonymous, Written in Warsaw under the German Occupation and published for the Polish Ministry of Information by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1945* (London: HMSO, 1945).
[49] There are many firsthand accounts of the experience of incarceration in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. For a portrait of the Polish experience of Auschwitz, see: Alina Brewda, *I Shall Fear No Evil* (London: Kimber, 1966). For the Jewish experience in Auschwitz II-Birkenau the most notable authors are: Primo Levi, *If this is Man*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal, introd. Paul Bailey (London: Abacus, 1989); and Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).
[50] For a discussion of these developments, see: Franciszek Piper, 'Mass Murder', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), trans William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp, Vol. III* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000). For a detailed account of the meeting that would endorse the Nazis' policy of the state-sanctioned murder of the Jews, see: Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).
[51] This date is taken from case No 38, 'TRIAL OF OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER RUDOLF FRANZ FERDINAND HOESS, PART 1, COMMANDANT OF THE AUSCHWITZ CAMP, SUPREME NATIONAL TRIBUNAL OF POLAND, 11TH – 29TH MARCH, 1947', PART II, The Indictment, paragraph 1 & 2 (HMSO: 1948), p. 2. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Harper Collins, 1987), p. 121, states 29 April 1940.

existence (*fig. 3*).[52] Apart from these three major centres for the imprisonment and destruction of those deemed 'other' by the Nazis, Auschwitz also had a network of satellite camps that numbered at least forty, reaching as far as Czechoslovakia, to the north of Poland.[53] The liberation of the complex of camps, by Soviet forces, took place on 27 January 1945.[54]

The first deportees, numbering 708 in total, arrived at Auschwitz on 14 June 1940 from the prison at Tarnów. A photograph in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum captures the moment of their banishment to the camp, yet sadly none of the prisoners have been identified (*fig 4*).[55] However, we do know that amongst this group was the thirty-one year old Polish Olympic skier and landscape painter Bronisław Czech.[56] His fellow-student Izydor Luszczek accompanied Czech, as did a lecturer from the National School of Woodcraft at Zakopane, Antoni Suchecki, who died in the camp after two years of imprisonment. The nineteen-year-old student Marian Kołodziej, who later went on to become a prominent theatre and film designer in Poland, found himself registered as prisoner 432.[57] Professor Xawery Dunikowski, from the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts, was the most notable artist deported to Auschwitz in this first draft; he was internationally recognised for his Neo-Romantic figural work.[58]

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[52] For a history of Birkenau see: Miriam Chaikin, *A Nightmare in History: the Holocaust 1933–1945* (New York: Clarion Books, 1992), pp. 83-96. Jean-Claude Pressac and Robert-Jan van Pelt, 'The Machinery of Mass Murder at Auschwitz', in Gutman and Berenbaum (1998), pp. 182-270.

[53] Kazimiersz Smoleń, *From the History of KL Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1967), pp. 36-39. For a full list of the sub-camps, including prisoner numbers, employment and duration see documents in this book.

[54] For details of the liberation of the camp see: Danuta Czech, 'A Calendar of the Most Important Events in the History of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), trans. William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp Vol. V,*(Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 230.

[55] Only 137 would survive the war; see Gilbert (1987), p. 122; Rees (2005), p. 37.

[56] Bronislaw Czech, born Zakopane 25 July 1908: died, 5 June 1944, KL Auschwitz. Camp serial number 349. See Janina Jaworska, *Nie wszystek...Tworczosc plastyczna Polakow w hitlerowskich wiezieniach I obozach koncentracyjnych 1939-1945* [Not all of me will die…. Art Work of Polish Prisoners in Nazi Prisons and Camps). Warsaw: Ksiazka I Wiedza, 1975], p. 31.

[57] Marian Kołodziej, born Rashkoff, 6 December 1921: died 13 October 2009, Gdansk. Camp serial number 432. For an account of Kołodziej's imprisonment in Auschwitz and examples of his work see: Marian Kołodziej, *The Labarinths: Passing 2* [*sic*] (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2009).

[58] Xawery Dunikowski, born, Krakow 29 November 1875; died, Warsaw, 26 January 1962. Camp serial number 774. For Dunikowski's biographical details see Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton, *Art of the Holocaust* (London: Pan Books, 1982), p. 246.

Indeed, the details of Dunikowski's arrest are interesting for what they tell us about the significance of artists to the Auschwitz project in the mind of the Gestapo. The official account is that the Gestapo arrested him on 24 April 1940 under the mistaken assumption that he had assisted someone to flee abroad. An unofficial story gleaned from the curators at the Dunikowski Museum in Warsaw tells of the Gestapo entering Dunikowski's studio with the intention of acquiring sculpture without paying. Dunikowski told the Gestapo that he had a photograph of Hitler admiring one of his pieces, though I have not been able to establish whether Hitler did or not. However, Dunikowski did have a photograph of Stalin looking at his work, which he showed to the Gestapo, and for this, he was apparently arrested and sent to Auschwitz.[59] Dunikowski was imprisoned in Auschwitz for the next four and a half years. He worked with his fellow deportee and former student Jan Machnowski, in the carver's workshop. Jan Komski,[60] who had been arrested by German soldiers on the border with Slovakia when attempting to join the Polish army, was registered as prisoner number 564.[61] An art-blacksmith, and master metal forger, another visual artist, Jan Liwacz was deported to the camp on 20 June 1940.[62]

We should note the high percentage of artists in this initial draft of deportees to the camp. I would argue that this incidence might well have been part of the larger official Nazi policy to rid Poland of its pre-war intelligentsia. According to the artist Jan Komski, 'There were about 500 artists that I know [of in] Auschwitz.'[63] Hans Frank, Governor General of the Polish Occupied Territories, put it succinctly: 'The Poles do

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[59] I am indebted to Joanna Torchała and Małgorzata Rusin (curators) at the Muzeum Rzeźby im Xawerego Dunikowskiego w Królikarni, Warszawa, for these details.

[60] Jan-Baraś-Komski, born Bircza, 3 February 1915; died Arlington (USA), 20 July 2002. Camp serial number 564. Komski gave an oral testimony interview at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington) in 1990. See Jan Komiski *Interview with John (Jan) Komski* (Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 7 June 1990), RG50-.030*0115. Available online at http.//.collections.ushmm.org/artefact/image/h00/00/h0000122.pdf.

[61] Ellen Rosenbush Methner and Bert van Bork, *Auschwitz Eyewitnesses: The Artwork of Jan Komski* (Houston: Holocaust Museum in Houston, 1988), unpaginated.

[62] Jan Liwacz, born Dukla, 4 October 1898; died 22 April 1980, Bystrcyca-Kłodzka. Camp serial number 1010. Creator of the *Arbeit Macht Frei* gateway. For biographical details see: Jürgen Kaumkötter, *Sztuka w Auschwitz 1940-1945* [Art in Auschwitz 1940-1945], (Oświęcim, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkeanu [Auschwitz-Birkeanu State Museum], 2005.

[63] Komski (1990), p. 10.

not need universities or secondary schools: the Polish lands are to be changed into an intellectual desert.' [64] Auschwitz was a significant part of this process of cultural genocide, and it can be shown that Poland's intelligentsia were aware of this development. Jan Komski, speaking in an interview in 1998, describes how, once inside Auschwitz, it was difficult to tell what strata of society people came from: 'The educated people pretended they were cobblers, tailors, workers.'[65] This illustrates an attempt by the inmates not to draw attention to themselves, in a calculated effort to survive through anonymity, since intellectualism would be seen to be dangerous. 'In Auschwitz', Komski continues, 'the intelligentsia disappeared into the crowd.'[66]

Tadeusz Iwaszko, a research historian of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum at Oświęcim, has noted how inmate functionaries, working as administrative staff in the prisoner's reception (*Aufnahme*) at Auschwitz, would advise incoming detainees on what details to include on the prisoner's personal data forms (*Häftlings-Personalbogen*), that had to be completed for each prisoner. He writes: 'Other information, such as occupation, might be falsified. This was one way in which prisoners attempted to save persons with higher education.' [67] Concerning the role of artists as part of the intelligentsia, I would go further and suggest that the removal of Polish artists from society, and the placing of them within the milieu of Auschwitz at the outset of the war, was an example of the requirement that the arts, according to Nazi doctrine, should only function in the service of the state.

Principally, the role of the visual arts in Germany was to support 'heroic' and 'noble' Nazi ideals. Josef Goebbels, Minister for Propaganda, said of German art: 'Art

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[64] Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (London: McFarland, 1998), pp. 21-22.
[65] *The Sarmatian Review*, XVIII:2 (April 1998), 529-532 at 529.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Tadeusz Iwaszko, 'Reasons for Confinement in the Camp and Categories of Prisoners', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), trans. William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000, Vol. II), p. 22.

must be good, but beyond this it must be responsible, professional, close to the people and aggressive.'[68]

If this was to be the role carved out for art within the ideologies of Nazi Germany, then the possibility that art could perform subversively among the subjugated populations of the occupied countries, would have made artists suspect at the least. If this was the case, then the significance of artistic activity of all kinds at Auschwitz, supported by the observation made by the Polish art historian Irena Szymanska – '[A]rtistic creativity existed at Auschwitz from the very moment of the camp's foundation in 1940' – is not surprising at all.[69] Later transportations to the camp would bring other artists, and as we shall see, as a result, artists formed a crucial part of the cultural life of the camp, as it was both officially and unofficially configured. Whilst the story of the politicisation of art in the cause of Nazi German ideals has been made before, the joining up of the story of visual art at Auschwitz with the larger story of Nazi policy regarding art has not been made before and will be explored later in this chapter.

Artist Inmates

Franciszek Piper, a Polish historian specialising in the history of Auschwitz, has noted that: 'In its original conception Auschwitz was to be a holding-camp (quarantine and transit) where prisoners would be held for a short time before being sent into the depths of Germany.'[70] This suggests that at its inception the authorities at Auschwitz had a problem finding employment for the prisoners. However, the camp changed to a 'standard' concentration camp soon after its' founding.

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[68] Kurt F. Reinhardt, G. Hoffmeister and F. C. Tubach, *Germany: 2000 Years. From the Nazi Era to Unification* (New York: Continuum, 1992, Vol 3), p. 18.
[69] Irena Szymanska, *Suffering and Hope: Artistic Creations of the Oświęcim Prisoners,* (Oświęcim: Panostowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1989), p. 12.
[70] Piper (2000), Vol II, p. 75.

With this change came the organisation of workshops, which offered a more certain chance of survival through improved conditions, away from the exhaustion caused by hard labour and by adverse weather conditions. There was a metalworking shop, employing qualified building machinists, boilermakers, sheet metal workers, lathe operators, engravers and blacksmiths. A carpentry workshop was established, divided into three departments: furniture, construction and mechanical. A paint-skills workshop employed wall painters, enamellers and sign painters, and their tasks included the production of 'various informative inscriptions and slogans, such as those on the roof of the kitchen', so-called the "Milestones to Freedom", which offered advice to the inmates on what was to have been their correct behaviour. The texts read: 'Honesty and Cleanliness, Love of Work and Love of the Fatherland, Are the Milestones to Freedom.'[71] I will return to this subject of signs and texts later. According to Piper, other work included 'the signs at the gas chambers, [and] the warning signs placed around the outside of the camp.'[72] The numbers employed in each of these shops could run as high as 200 inmates during busy periods of construction.

For artists, positions as draughtsmen in the construction and extension offices of the camp were obvious situations for them to fill. However, not all artists found their way into a work detail (*arbeitskommando*) in which their talents could best be used. The landscape painter Bronisław Czech, for example, was initially assigned to the carpentry workshop to make wooden clogs for the prisoners, and later he made spoons. In the carver's workshop, Dunikowski, the sculptor arrested for a connection with Stalin, and his student Machnowski, made a number of models of Auschwitz. The first, *Auschwitz As It Was*, a realisation of the camp as it appeared in 1940, was commissioned by Rudolph Höss and presented to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler on the occasion of his visit to Auschwitz in 1941. Two further models were made in the following year;

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[71] Rudolph Vrba, *I Escaped from Auschwitz* (London: Robson, 2006), p. 208.
[72] Franciszek Piper, 'The Exploitation of Prisoner Labour', in *The Prisoners – Their Life and Work* Vol. II (Oświęcim, Panostowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2000), p. 87.

one is thought to have been sent to Berlin, and is now lost, whilst the other remained at Auschwitz, where it was later found to have notes about conditions in Auschwitz hidden inside it. This final model may have been made with the assistance of the artist Jan Komski, who had been assigned to the camp architects' office, where he made architectural drawings.

The typical employment of many other artists at Auschwitz can be traced. Adam Bowbelski[73] worked in the blacksmith's shop, and made furniture for the SS-owned German Equipment Works (*Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke*). Interestingly, images of the furniture produced for this company seem to indicate that the SS had a taste for the 'rustic', using oak as their favoured wood (*fig. 5*), which, might chime with their wider ideology of a Germanic rusticity deriving from the Romantic age of peasants and folklore. Waldemar Nowakowski[74] worked in the stable block, using his talents as a painter to illustrate prisoners' letters, and make hundreds of small watercolours; these represent illicit forms of Auschwitz's inmate culture. He also decorated the prisoners' infirmary, providing an example of voluntary work. Władisław Siwek[75] carried out hard labour in the quarry, until he became emaciated and ill. The artist Leon Turalski secured an appointment for Siwek in the painters' commando, thus saving his life.[76] As with other trades and professions within the camp, the SS placed the painters together, creating an exclusive work detail of artists, whom the SS used for making and maintaining signs and painted texts. Włodzimierz Siwierski,[77] who arrived in Auschwitz in September 1940, was originally forced to undertake hard labour, and was later,

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[73] Adam Bowbelski, born Vladivostok, 14 October 1903; died, Warsaw, 24 April 1968. Camp serial number 4135.
[74] Waldemar Nowakowski, born Białogrodek, 10 November 1917: died, Krakow, 30 January 1984. Camp serial number 2805. See Jaworska (1975), p. 34. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 260.
[75] Władisław Siwek, born Niepolomice, 14 April 1907: died, Warsaw, 27 March 1983. Camp serial number 5826. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 264. Glen Sujo, *Legacies of Silence: The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory* (London: Philip Wilson, 2001), p. 111.
[76] Leon Turalski, born Gostynin, 28 December 1912: d, 1991. Camp serial number 2692. Jaworska (1975), p. 52. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 267.
[77] Włodzimierz Siwierski, born Brzeziny, 19 September 1905: died, Warsaw, 19 October 1984. Camp serial number 4629. Jaworska (1975), p. 95. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 264. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, *Remembering for the Future, Original Drawings and Reproductions by Victims of the Holocaust 1940—1945* Vol II (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 25. Sujo (2001), p. 111.

transferred to the carpentry workshop where he made toys, such as marionettes, for the children of the SS, as well as ornaments and wooden sculpture (*Fig. 6*). Franciszek Targosz,[78] whom as we shall see played an important role in the arts in Auschwitz, arrived at the camp in December 1940. He worked in a range of Kommandos, including the Penal Company and at the gravel pits. Wincenty Gawron,[79] a stained-glass window-maker, was deported to Auschwitz on 5 April 1941. Initially he worked in the building commando before being transferred to the carpentry workshop. When he became ill he was transferred to the sub-camp of Harmęże, before escaping with his diary and a number of drawings, all illicit, that illustrated the conditions in the camp.[80] Mieczysław Koscielniak[81] was arrested by the Gestapo for producing a painting completed many years earlier in 1928 that depicted a German shooting at Poles; this resulted in his deportation to the camp, where he worked in the demolition Kommando. Koscielniak's case again suggests the seriousness with which artistic expression of ideologies – especially those at odds with Nazi policy – were taken and that Auschwitz was deemed a suitable site for their prevention and punishment.

Jósef Szajna,[82] arrested in 1940 and deported to Auschwitz in July 1941, was placed in a number of different commandos before finding himself at Birkenau, where he dug the *Königsgraben* (Kings Ditch), a sanitation canal. Interestingly, Szajna was the only inmate artist who seems to have engaged with abstractionism to narrate his experience of the camp (*fig. 7*). In his picture *Our Personal Data*, Szajna reduced the

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[78] Franciszek Targosz, born Lipnik, 7 September 1899: died, Bielsko-Biała 10 September 1979. Camp serial number 7626. See Franciszek Targosz, Vol. IV: 17 (APMO. Statements, file No. 2569). Jaworska (1975), p. 34. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 266. Philip Rosen and Nina Apfelbaum, *Bearing Witness: A Resource Guide to Literature, Poetry, Art, Music and Video by Holocaust Victims and Survivors* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 160. David Mickenburg, Corrine Granof, Peter Hayes, *The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 61.

[79] Wincenty Gawron, born Stara Wies, 28 January 1908: died, Poland, 25 August 1991. Camp serial number 11237. APMO. Statements, file No. 3421. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 248. Sujo (2001), p. 108.

[80] Sujo (2001), p. 72.

[81] Mieczysław Koscielniak, born Kalisz, 28 January 1912: died 6 March 1993, Warsaw. Camp serial number 15261. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 254. Sujo (2001), p. 107.

[82] Jósef Szajna, born Rzeszów, 13 March 1922: died, Warsaw, 24 June 2008. Camp serial number 18729. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depictions and Interpretations: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), pp. 248-50, 285-86. Rosen and Apfelbaum, (2002), p. 159. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 265. Sujo (2001), p. 112.

image of the inmates to rows of striped featureless silhouettes; their only distinguishing characteristic being created by his use of thumb prints to generate their individual heads. This suggests that whilst the inmates appeared to the SS as identical characterless beings, for the inmates themselves their true identities remained. Interestingly Szajna's turn to abstractionism comes at a time when the running of the camp saw the inmates living conditions slightly improve. For example, the change of Commandant from Rudolf Höss to Arthur Liebehenschel on 11 November saw the dismantling of the 'Wall of Death', where executions had taken place, and the closing of the Standing cells in the basement of Block II.[83] All other inmate artists employed a documentary approach to their images because of the nature of witnessing.

Franz Reisz,[84] a Viennese Jew, was placed in the offices of the SS, carrying out administrative duties. The same was the case for Marian Ruzamski,[85] who worked on portrait sketches, especially of his close friend Dunikowski (*fig. 8*). Ruzamski also taught Józef Mrozek to draw whilst they were both employed in the same office.[86] A number of paintings by the Polish artist Antoni Suchanek survive from the period of his incarceration in Auschwitz, now in the permanent collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. All of his paintings are connected to the theme of the sea, a subject that appears to have had some currency amongst the SS, if only because of the subject's old-master-esque qualities[87] He was initially sent to work in Block 11, 'The Block of Death', and later moved to the *Lagermuzeum*, the SS sanctioned art gallery that existed within Auschwitz I, which will be treated in detail later in this chapter, where he is

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[83] Gutman, Yisrael, 'Auschwitz – An Overview', in Michael Berenbaum and Yisrael Gutman (eds), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC), p. 19.

[84] Franz Reisz born, Vienna, 3 April 1909: died, New York March 1984. Camp serial number 42477. Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 261.

[85] Marian Ruzamski, born Lipnik, 2 February 1889: died Bergen-Belsen 1945. Camp serial number 122843. Mickenburg et al (2003), p. 230.

[86] Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 262.

[87] Antoni Suchanek, born Rzeszów, 27 April 1901: died, Gdynia, 22 September 1982. Camp serial number 139388. Mickenburg et al (2003), p. 271. Works by Suchanek, dating from his period of incarceration in the Pawiak prison (Warsaw), prior to his deportation to Auschwitz have been identified by Andrzej K. Olszewski. See Andrzej K. Olszewski *An Outline History of Polish 20th Century Art and Architecture* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1989), p. 73.

known to have painted landscapes, again traditional old master fare. Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, a secondary school art teacher, was arrested by the Gestapo in Kraków for 'helping the Jews' in 1942. He was sent to Auschwitz on 14 January 1943. There he worked in the Clothing Kommando distributing prisoners' uniforms (the subject of Brandhuber's memorial design for Auschwitz II-Birkenau, a commission received from the Auschwitz Resistance Group will be discussed in Chapter 3).[88] On 11 November 1943, Czesław Kaczmarcyk,[89] a graphic artist, was deported to Auschwitz, where he worked at first in the print shop and later in the *Ausrüstungswerke*, an SS-owned crafts and furniture factory, a number of which were sited near to concentration camps.

We can see then, that artists arriving at Auschwitz would not necessarily be placed in a Kommando where their skills might have proved useful. Nevertheless, the transformation of Auschwitz from quarantine camp to 'standard' concentration camp meant that for certain individuals forms of employment were created whereby artist inmates did find work to which their skills were suited.

Illicit Artworks

Illicit artworks were made under conditions of extreme danger and represent an exceptional and moving document of an historical time. They comprise a visual record of the daily struggle that inmates faced. According to Ahron Appelfeld, Israel's leading Hebrew language author, the main source of motivation for producing illicit artworks was, 'The vow to tell everything, to leave nothing untold, to report every aspect of the horror.'[90] Therefore, illicit artworks can be said to represent a significant strand of

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[88] Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, born Kraków, 23 August 1897: died Oswiecim 19 June 1981. Camp serial number 87112.

[89] Czesław Kaczmarcyk, born Kovno, 22 August 1899: died, Warsaw 18 February 1971. Camp serial number 162142.

[90] Cited in www.Holocaust-education.net/learn.asp?langid=1&submenu=200. Accessed 12 January 2011, last updated 2001.

communication that confronts what has been termed the 'chaos of an unfathomable ordeal.'[91]

Concerning the supply of materials for the production of illicit works, Boris Taslitzsky,[92] an inmate of Buchenwald, provides details of how artists took advantage of the system of procurement for the creation of illicit works of art in the camps. He tells of the SS providing circulars and practice targets full of holes.[93] Inmates would also steal paper, pens, pencils and ink from the offices in which they worked, often at great risk to themselves.[94]

The power of the illicit artworks resides in their authority to convey the reality of the camp, in their status as witness items, or simply as a means of psychological release for artists. Alfred Kantor, deported to Birkenau from Theresienstadt in 1943, recalled his reasons for drawing in the camp: '[I] felt obsessed, driven in fact by the overwhelming desire to put down every detail of this unfathomable place.'[95] Fear of discovery drove Kantor to destroy the more incriminating pictures: '[I] tore up the images as soon as they were finished.' The act of drawing served the purpose of psychological processing, and of committing the experience of the camp to Kantor's memory, later allowing for accurate recollections of places, people and events. Of the destruction of the images Kantor describes the process, '[N]ot before I had memorised every line and every figure with the idea that I would someday be able to draw these scenes again in order to reveal the true nature of the place.'[96] The same was true for the Polish artists Isaac Celnikier, deported to Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1943. The few drawings that he made of the hanging of inmates, a common form of capital punishment in the camps, he chose to destroy, fearing their discovery by the authorities.

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[91] Lawrence L. Langer, *Using and Abusing the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 125.
[92] Boris Taslitzky, born 30 September Paris 1901; died 9 December 2005, Paris.
[93] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 145.
[94] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 145.
[95] Alfred Kantor, *The Book of Alfred Kantor: An Artist's Journal of the Holocaust* (London: Judy Pitkus, 1987), unpaginated.
[96] Kantor (1987), unpaginated.

Further examples of illicit work were produced in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. However, it is impossible to tell exactly how much art was produced at Auschwitz II-Birkenau or indeed, the proportion of illicit artworks compared with commissioned objects. This is largely due to the fact that towards the end of the war the SS dismantled much of the camp, including some of the wooden barracks which were discovered after liberation on the *Judenrampe* still awaiting collection (*fig. 9*). Images that were made directly on to surfaces of these buildings would have been lost as a result of this demolition process. Following the cessation of hostilities the site was used as a prison for members of the SS. The possibility exists that they may have destroyed some art, considering it to be incriminating. A further reason may be offered: that the returning Polish population salvaged wood from Auschwitz II-Birkenau to build their homes. This may explain the reason for the imbalance between the amount of artworks that survived at Auschwitz I, which was largely intact at the time of its liberation as opposed to Auschwitz II-Birkenau, which had suffered from a prolonged period of dismantling by the SS prior to the evacuation of the death camp in January 1945. In the case of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the loss of much of the artwork, which had been made directly on to surfaces within the wooden barracks, can be attributed to this period of destruction during the functioning camp.

The most striking example of Auschwitz II-Birkenau's illicit graphic culture however, is a set of four photographs, referred to as the *Sonderkommando* photographs. The resistance groups at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, especially those of the *Sonderkommando* (Special Command: those forced to aid in the killings at gas chambers), were aware of the credibility that attaches to the status of the photograph as document. According to Sybil Milton, the *Sonderkommando* obtained parts to make a simple camera and secretly assembled it on site. The testimony of Alter Fajnzylberg, a member of the *Sonderkommando* who took part in the illicit photography, tells how in

mid-1944 the idea of photographically recording the genocide at Auschwitz began. The *Sonderkommando* acquired a camera and prepared to record the evidence. 'At last the moment came', Fajnzylberg writes. 'We all gathered at the western entrance to the gas-chamber of Crematorium V: we could not see any SS men in the watchtower overlooking the door above the barbed wire, nor near the place where the pictures were to be taken.' Thus unobserved, the photograph was taken by 'Alex, the Greek Jew', who 'quickly took out his camera, pointed it towards a heap of burning bodies, and pressed the shutter'. The speed with which the photograph had to be taken underlines the illegal nature of the photographer's job. 'That is why the photograph shows prisoners from the *Sonderkommando* working at the heap.' The 'heap' refers to the piles of bodies awaiting cremation in the open-air pits (*fig. 10*). 'One of the SS was standing beside them, but his back was turned towards the crematorium building.' [...]. 'Another picture was taken from the other side of the building, where women and men were undressing among the trees. They were from a transport [an SS term for the delivery by train of those who had been deported to the camp] that was murdered in the gas-chamber of Crematorium V.'[97]

The decision to document by camera shows us that the inmates, those who took the photographs, were conversant with the currency of photographs as a documentary mode, suitable for the act of witnessing. It may seem obvious to us now that the thoroughness of the Nazis' campaign of brutal conquest and extermination, as recorded by photographs, was partly successful, in as much as it dictated the terms in which the victims would be remembered. But as Baer suggests, the Nazi photographs 'might [also] afford us privileged access to a counter memory.'[98] The *Sonderkommando* images more intentionally, and graphically represent the full horror of the victim's

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[97] Teresa Swiebocka, *Auschwitz: A History in Photographs* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland, 1999), p. 37-38. Janina Struk, *Photographing The Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 114-115.
[98] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press), 2002, p.129.

hopelessness, whilst also conveying something of the steeliness of the organised procedure of the death manufactory at Auschwitz II Birkenau.[99]

The photographs also capture the open-air pits in use for cremation. The image in *fig 10* was obviously taken surreptitiously from the window of an adjacent block. We see male figures dragging bodies through a smoke-filled environment, and placing them in rows ready for their final destruction. A further image shows women being forced naked into Gas Chamber V (*fig.11*). This practice is mentioned in the *Sonderkommando* diaries as happening specifically to Jewish women. The disposal procedure was extended to include open-air cremation pits: the need for large-scale efficiency, to cope with the astounding number of corpses produced by the gas chambers, eventually led to the design and construction of new crematoria, and daily capacity rose from as low as 648 per day to a high of over 10,000 bodies per day.[100]

However, the well-constructed crematoria fell far behind at a number of camps, and especially at Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1944. In August the total cremation reached a peak one day of 24,000, but still a bottleneck occurred. Camp authorities needed an economic and fast method of corpse disposal, so they again dug six huge pits beside Crematorium Five and reopened old pits in the woods. Thus, late in 1944, pit burning became the chief method of corpse disposal. To keep the pits burning, the stokers poured oil, alcohol, and large quantities of boiling human fat over the bodies.[101] It is also important to acknowledge that the illicit nature of the photographs shows that they were neither casual nor trivial. Indeed there is a total correspondence between the photographer's perspective and the authority invested in the photograph. These were acts of witnessing, harnessing the visual means most suited to the purpose.

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[99] Świeibocka (1999), p 172.
[100] Ervin Birnbaum, *In The Shadow of the Struggle* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 1990), p. 183.
[101] Information taken from *Auschwitz 1940-1945*, *passim*.

The reception of the photographs is not so well documented. The intention 'was to convince the West to bomb Germany's largest death factory.'[102] We know that they were smuggled out of the camp via the Polish Socialist Party in Breszcze, reaching Kraków on 6 September 1944. It was hoped that the Polish Government in exile would get to see the images. However, there is no proof that the images ever reached their intended destination.

An interesting link between Auschwitz II-Birkenau, where the photographs were taken, as a functioning camp and the post-liberation site can be found in the work of the Polish film director Wanda Jakubowska. Her film, *Ostatni etap* (The Last Stage), conceived during her incarceration in the camp, was completed and first screened in Poland in 1947. Jakubowska expressed the opinion that the years in the camp represented her most significant experiences, both in terms of her personal life and her artistic development.[103] She asked her fellow inmates to relate their stories to her; it was these that she used in the film of 1947. According to film critic Marek Haltof 'Certainly, to this day *The Last Stage* remains a seminal film about the Holocaust, a prototype for future Holocaust cinematic narratives.' [104] As such, it was largely conceived of artistically within the camp itself – and thus becomes evidence of another form of visual representation of Auschwitz.

Voluntary Artworks

Whilst much of Birkenau's illicit artworks may have been lost, some examples of the did survive; among them are two sets of murals and a ceiling painting, each

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[102] Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), p. 221.
[103] Cited in Mazierska (2006), p. 151.
[104] Marek Haltof, 'The Monstrosity of Auschwitz in Wanda Jakubowska's "The Last Stage" (1948). Unpublished paper, given at *The Fifth Global Conference, Perspectives on Evil*, Prague, 19 – 24 March 2004. Available on line at: www.inter-disciplinary.net/.../session-5b-responding-to-the-holocaust/ Accessed 10 May 2010. Although distributed in 1948, the film was completed in 1947.

created at separate locations. These images represent the category of voluntary works. The murals in the interior of the Children's Blocks (blocks 29 and 31), which was located within the Czech (Theresienstadt) Family Camp, in sector BIIe, from 8 September 1943 to 21 July 1944. The SS created the Children's Block as part of a planned deception of the International Red Cross. Two artists are known to have been active in the creation of murals within Auschwitz II-Birkenau. One such was the twenty-year old inmate Dina Gottliebova, deported from Czechoslovakia in February 1943. She initially painted numbers on to the barracks, and then, upon orders from SS-men, painted their portraits from the photographs that they delivered to her. Following this she produced murals of Disney characters for the Children's Block in the Gypsy family camp, which was in existence from 26 February 1943 to the night of 2/3 August 1944. The intended date for the liquidation of the Gypsy family camp was 21 July 1944. However, the Gypsies, understanding what was in store for them defended themselves with sticks, homemade knives and stones; this was the first recorded inmate uprising at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.[105]

A further inmate artist, Marianne Grant, whose documentation of her own survival would later be purchased by and displayed at the Kelvingrove Museum Glasgow, can also be identified with the production of art specifically directed at children. Her murals for the *Kindergarten Block* in the Czech (Theresienstadt) family camp depict a procession of children, with toys, as they make their way to a schoolhouse (*fig. 12*).

For the child inmates, the murals not only contributed to cheering a bleak environment, they also served educational purposes. For example, the representation of

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[105] Czech, Danuta, 'A Calendar of the Most Important Events in the History of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds.), trans William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000, Vol. V), p. 483. Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 162.

toys reminded the children how to play, whilst the illustration of grass and flowers helped the children imagine the world beyond the camp. Many of the younger children, the age range in the block being from 3 to 14 years of age, would not have known real flowers, given that they would have been born after Nazi occupation, therefore their experience of the world would have been formed from within the ghetto, where access to parks was denied. As has been noted, didactic murals were a common feature of Nazi German propaganda, their purpose was to provide messages of loyalty, physical and mental soundness and a belief in the Fatherland. The murals in both the Children's Block and the Kindergarten Block at Auschwitz II-Birkenau cannot be said to function in the same manner. Their existence suggests that they were considered useful by the camp authorities to become part of a carefully structured plan to cover up the truth of the camp. Regardless of any purpose that the murals may have served for the SS, they are not representative of commissioned work, such as decorative metalwork, illustrations for educational texts or posters, used for political and ideological purposes. If anything they draw attention to the possible slippage that exists between categories of art in Auschwitz, where voluntary, illicit and commissioned works began to overlap in function and use.

A further example of mural painting, an additional voluntary work, can be seen in the Penal Company Block of Auschwitz II-Birkenau where a ceiling painting records the treacherous working conditions that the company had to endure. For Birkenau's inmates one of the most feared situations was to be sent to the penal company, which was located in Block I. Jozef Kret, a former inmate described it thusly 'Whoever went through it soon realised that the concentration camp was only the anteroom to Hell. Hell itself, its very bottom, was the penal company.' [106] These prisoners were kept in complete isolation from the rest of the camp. Within their block an unknown artist

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[106] Czarnecki (1989), p. 14.

created the ceiling painting *Königsgraben* (King's canal) in 1943 (*fig. 13*). The canal, which was really nothing more than a ditch, was dug to drain swampy water away from Birkenau. The purposes of such a painting are multiple. The most obvious was to record the daily torment of the inmates as they toiled for their persecutors. As Sybil Milton points out: 'The artist's view of himself as a chronicler to a future audience bespeaks an amazing optimism. […]. And even if he himself did not survive, his work would speak for him'.[107] In *Königsgraben* a number of the faces of people are clearly rendered, although none of the characters have been identified. This may be due to the high mortality rate amongst this group, leaving no one alive to carry out such identification. Also, the violence endemic to the camp is realised in some detail. We see a *Kapo* with his whip raised and an inmate being carried by his fellow workers. Such a representation of brutality and its consequences makes the sanctioning of the image by the SS all the more surprising. The painting's purpose within the block, perhaps less obviously, may simply have been that a decorated barrack gave the impression of normalcy, presenting the sense of a clean dwelling, and an industrious work force. It may also have given the impression that the Nazis had interests in cultural production, by and for the inmates, in the midst of the realities of the camp.

Indeed, regarding the function of art in the form of communication, there is a further kind of artwork that has received scant attention concerning Auschwitz, Birkenau, or any of the sub-camps, which is that of epistolary artwork. The sending of letters by inmates was considered a privilege, and took place on what was known as letter-writing day (*Schreibtag*).[108] This day was considered as a holiday, and any excuse could be used to take away it away from a prisoner. These legitimately sanctioned letters were composed on official forms and had to be written in German. Within them

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[107] Blatter and Milton (1982), p. 31.
[108] Anna Strzelecka-Jasiewicz, 'Ticket To Freedom', in *Promemoria* 9 (June 1998), p. 89, The State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oswiecim, Poland.

we read the muted and reserved language of the inmate authors, the content very often formally censored by the SS, who demanded that a strict adherence to rules for communication with the outside world be followed. However, these schematised letters were often enhanced with illustrations, where the author could use either his or her skills as an artist, or call upon the help of an inmate artist to enrich the correspondence with a picture or design (*fig. 14*). According to the Polish historian Strzelecka-Jasiewicz, 'the illustrated letters became a special kind of expression, a communication of personal thoughts.'[109]

The idea for creating such letters came from those in Block 9 (later, after renumbering, Block 24, the location of the *Lagermuzeum*), and began as early as 1941. These letters were sometimes sent with the informal consent of the SS. Targosz described how this was arranged:

> The decorated letters […] on which there were pretty views, painted or printed by woodcut or copperplate, left the camp 'with a wink from the censors.' Sometimes a picture or a painted holiday card given to the censor at the right moment broke the last resistance.[110]

At other times inmates smuggled letters out of the camp and delivered them to an SS owned laundry in Bielsko, approximately thirty kilometres from the camp. According to Sweibocki, the Poles employed at the laundry not only acted as intermediaries in illicit correspondence but also 'artistic works secretly done in the camp, from prisoners to the outside world.' [111] Among these were drawings and paintings by Miecyslaw Koscielniak, Tadeusz Myszkowski, Zofia Stepien, and Franciszek Targosz. The illustrated letters therefore left the camp in ways that were astoundingly bold and exhibited once again the extraordinary testimony to the strength of those individuals involved, in their commitment to visual forms of communication and expression.

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[109] Anna Strzelecka-Jasiewicz (1998), p. 89.
[110] AMPO, Testimony of Targosz, unpaginated, 1954.
[111] Henryk Swiebocki, 'The Resistance Movement in the Vicinity of the Camp and Its Support of the Prisoners', in *Auschwitz 1940–1945 Central Issues In The History Of The Camp* (Oswiecim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), Vol. IV p. 165.

Of the 194 letters in the archive at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, sixteen illustrators and twenty-one prisoners have been identified. The existing correspondence displays a commonality of themes, confirming the romantic, artistic predispositions of the inmate artists and their inclination toward the charming and poetic. There are mountain scenes, where eagles soar high in the sky, suggestive of longed-for freedom. As Koscielniak wrote to his fiancée, '*Bei shonem Wetter sehe ich schlesische Beskiden, was mir erinnert Ausfluge in Tatra*' ('In pretty weather I see the Silesian Beskid Mountains, which reminds me of our trips in the Tatras').[112] A further example of the symbolism inherent in these works can be found in the illustration made by Czech for a letter sent by Leon Mateja to his much-loved wife. It shows a birch tree, representative of marital love, and was sent to mark the occasion of the birth of his son. Most clear is the representation of a ship, inward bound to port, quite clearly readable as a homecoming, the conclusion of a journey, in this case the termination of the inmate's incarceration, either by death or release, and their subsequent freedom.

In the conditions that existed at Auschwitz, where punishment and death predominated, the illustrated letter was a porthole onto the joy that was once a normal life. The great value of these illustrations is that they reinforce the role that art played in the resistance of the individual at Auschwitz.

The founding of the *Lagermuzeum* (Prison Museum) can be understood as the catalyst for the formalisation of artistic culture and certainly for commissioned artworks. The *Lagermuzeum*, the block officially designated as a museum from 1941, for the display of both officially commissioned inmate art, and looted objects, originated, it could be said, from the tension in the camp between illicit and commissioned art. The founding of the museum came about and was suggested by the

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[112] AMPO, letter under accession number 1/5/89. Present author's translation.

Polish artist Franciszek Targosz, when he was caught sketching a horse in the stable block at Auschwitz (*fig. 15*).

Franciszek Targosz, a Polish artist, was deported to Auschwitz on 8 December 1940.[113] Little is known of his pre-war life, except that he studied art in Vienna before fighting with the Austrian army during the First World War and with the Polish army from 1919 to 1921. There is some evidence that he may have served as a cavalry officer. Wincenty Gawron, another inmate artist, recognised the quality of Targosz's equine drawings. He was of the opinion that 'Targosz's horses reflected a deep reality, only a passionate rider and cavalryman could draw this way (*Fig 16*).'[114] According to Sybil Milton, 'Targosz knew that art not officially ordered by the camp administration was a punishable offence. To save himself he suggested that Höss establish a museum in one of the camp buildings.'[115] According to Jan Komski, it was SS Hauptsturmführer Karl Fritzch, founder of the Auschwitz inmate orchestra, and Deputy to the camp Commandant Rudolf Höss, who apprehended Targosz. Whichever is correct, the museum was intended to be a place of Nazi approved culture.

Komski was of the opinion that, like the mural in the Children's Block, the museum served a purpose going beyond the camp itself, that it was an attempt to hide the more uncomfortable evidences of Nazi oppression, because '[T]hey [the Germans] were always expecting an International Red Cross visit.'[116] The museum would therefore become part of a cover for the inhuman conditions suffered both mentally and physically by the inmates.

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[113] Franciszek Targosz, born 7 September 1899 in Lipnik, Poland; died 10 September 1979 in Bielsko-Biała, Poland. Camp serial number 7626.
[114] Sybil Milton, 'The Museum at Auschwitz, 1941-45', in *Last Expression: Art from Auschwitz* (Evanston: Block Museum of Art. Northwestern University), unpaginated, available online at: Lastexpression.northwestern.edu/essays/Museumessay.001.pdf. No date given for last update, accessed 10 October 2004.
[115] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 20.
[116] Komski (1990), p. 8.

Höss, who gave a verbal order authorising his deputy Karl Fritzch to continue with plans for a *Lagermuzeum* in October 1941, recognised the potential for the propaganda uses of a museum, and realised that it would reflect well on himself. Höss's superiors would see him as a cultural achiever, and as an instiller of Nazi artistic values.

Janina Jaworska has noted the possible functions of the museum, 'to collect, in small quantities, various rarities, artworks, valuables, objects, coins and stamp collections as well as rare objects located among the prisoners' possessions.'[117] Targosz, in his post-war testimony,[118] pointed out that the collecting of items from around the camp was in fact a cover for Höss's interest in art works which could be produced by the inmates, especially representations of horses, of which Höss was particularly keen.[119]

Auschwitz was not the only camp with a museum on its grounds. During his time as Blockführer at Dachau, Höss would have been able to visit the museum there. Johann Neuhasler has described the main thrust of the contents as being: '[P]laster cast figures of prisoners distinguished by physical infirmities or unusual characteristics, [and] which were favourable for Hitler's dignitaries to visit.'[120] Apart from being able to view displays in the museum, visitors to Dachau were also permitted to 'inspect' and study the inmates. Once again, we see that the figure of the artist was seen as a cultural type of note:

> For a long time, the plaster figures on display were not enough, and so dignitaries and visitors to the camps were also shown outstanding personalities, high level clerics from different religions, e.g., Bishop Kozal,

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[117] Janina Jaworska, *Nie wszystek: Tworczosc plastyczna Polakow w hitlerowskich wiezieniach I obozach koncentracyjnych 1939-1945* [Not all of me will die: Art Works of Polish Prisoners in Nazi Prisons and Camps] (Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1975), p.77.

[118] Targosz, The State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau testimony archives, vol 10, unpaginated.

[119] Szymanska (1989), p. 9.

[120] Johannes Neuhäusler, *Wie war das im KZ Dachau? Ein Versuch, der Wahrheit näher zukommen* (Dillingen: Donau, 1981), p.10. [Dachau Concentration Camp As It Was: An Attempt to Get To The Truth]. Author's translation.

and also government dignitaries from subjugated countries, *well-known artists and politicians.*[121]

Dachau had set the earlier precedent for locating museums within the camp. In addition the concentration camp at Buchenwald and the extermination camp at Treblinka both boasted zoological gardens.[122]

Another dimension to the displays at the *Lagermuzeum* was the showing of specifically Jewish items, such as a Talmud, skullcaps, prayer books, candlesticks and a Torah.[123] The inclusion of items of Jewish faith was not specific to the programme of collecting at Auschwitz alone. For example, the content of what is now the Jewish Museum in Prague, then under the direction of Dr Josef Polak, formerly the Director of the State Museum Kosice, was created with the permission of the SS in 1942, and here 'Art treasures and religious objects held over the centuries in synagogues and institutions were saved from destruction.'[124] Following what they believed would be their successful prosecution of the war, the Nazis intended to show the collection publicly, in a special central museum, under the title 'Extinct Jewish Race.' The museum in Prague, like the museum at Auschwitz, would not countenance any images or objects that could have been interpreted as showing signs of Jewish assimilation to European culture, or evidence that there had been any acceptance of the Jews by non-Jewish groups.

According to Szmanska the *Lagermuzeum's* diverse collection was to include items that had formerly belonged to the entire deported, not just the Jews. Polish folk costumes, a Russian army uniform, the banner of the former Polish Worker's Party of

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[121] Neuhäusler (1981), p.10. My italics.
[122] Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretation of the Evidence* (London: I. B. Turis, 2003), p. 103.
[123] Irena Szymanska (1989), p. 14.
[124] David S. Wyman, *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 168. Dirk Rupnow, 'The Jewish Central Museum in Prague and Historical Memory in the Third Reich', in *The Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 16,1 (Spring 2002), pp. 23-35 at p. 31.

Brzezinka (Birkenau), a fireman's helmet, architectural details, an ancient bicycle and Polish books broadened the assortment. [125]

This is the only description of the interior of the museum and no photographs exist of it. Curiously, however, an oil painting by the inmate artist Mieczysław Koscielniak, painted in 1942, exists in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (*fig. 17*). In it we see the cramped space that was available to Targosz as a curator. Whilst the choice of such a variety of objects seems chaotically conceived, especially if compared to the now sparing presentation of collections in a post-modern age, the more famous example of a Nazi- sanctioned exhibition, the 'Degenerate Art' display of 1937, is actually similar. Descriptions of the visual presentation and reception of the 'Entarte Kunst' exhibition (its full translated title is: 'Degenerate Art: Culture Documents of the Decadent Works of Bolsheviks and Jews') shows that it bears comparison.[126] The strategy adopted for this exhibition was similarly crowded, perhaps reflecting the museological tradition of the cabinet of curiosities. That mode would almost certainly have been understood in both cases to separate what was being seen from true art treasures. According to the pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition, 'Even where the artists have portrayed themselves, or each other, the resulting faces are remarkably cretinous.' [127] Attempts by Modernist artists to explore through artistic means deep human emotions were famously interpreted by the state as a failure, presumably because they failed to express superficial empirical realism. Artists whose

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[125] Szymanska (1989), p. 9. Komski (1990), p. 9.

[126] The exhibition was organised at the behest of Adolf Hitler by the Reich's Minister for Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, with aid of Adolf Ziegler, president of the Reich's Chamber of Visual Arts. The exhibition opened on 19 July 1937, on the second floor of the Institute of Archaeology, Munich. 20,000 people visited the show daily, amounting to over two million during its four-month run. To this figure should be added a further one million visitors, as the exhibition toured eleven cities in Germany and Austria. Across the park, in Munich, a further exhibition was taking place at the Haus der deutschen Kunst. There the acceptable front of German contemporary art was being shown. The literature concerning both these exhibitions is large; see Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992). For a detailed study see, Stephanie Barron (ed.) *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (Los Angeles and New York, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1991), and Kempton Mooney, 'Degeneration in World War II Germany', in *Art Criticism*, 17:1 (2001), 73-85.

[127] Quoted in Tracy Fessenden, 'Mark C. Taylor and the Limits of the Postmodern Imagination', in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (eds), *Postmodernism and the Holocaust* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), p. 93.

work did not conform to the hyperrealism of the style beloved by Hitler were recast as 'the idiot, the cretin and the cripple.' We can also understand the exhibitions as exemplifying Adolf Hitler's use of art to rally support, to instruct the Germans in identity politics, and to fuel their hatred against those Hitler created as enemies. Accordingly, the crowded display of objects in the *Lagermuzeum* showed a similarly curio-like display that undermined their intrinsic worth and paraded them in the manner of colonial spoils of war.

An additional model, one that was both like and unlike the displays within the *Lagermuzeum*, and could possibly have influenced the arrangement of the *Lagermuzeum* at Auschwitz, was the Kunstkammer or cabinet of wonders. These encyclopaedic collections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries both preceded and heralded modern concepts of classification. Their contents could include geology and archaeology, and – like the later *Lagermuzeum* at Auschwitz – religious and historical relics, works of art, and antiquities. Francesca Fiorani, a scholar of Renaissance histories, states: 'The Kunstkammer was regarded as a microcosm or theatre of the world, and a memory theatre.' She also considers that in its political ambitions: 'The Kunstkammer conveyed symbolically the patron's control of the world through its indoor, microscopic reproduction.'[128] In the case of Auschwitz, the more shocking of the contents of the *Lagermuzeum* 'Kunstkammer', such as foetuses, dwarfs and the disabled, represented both in images and by 'real' objects, were easily acquired as the deportations grew. Their display was not uncommon, as at Dachau (noted above). As for the political significance of the Kunstkammer, 'The *Kunstkabinett* itself was a form of propaganda', as Peter Thomas has succinctly put it.[129] The Kunstkammer was, therefore, conceived as an expression of power and conquest. So at Auschwitz the

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[128] Francesca Fiorani, review of *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art and Technology*, by Horst Bredekamp, in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51:1, 268-270, at p. 269.
[129] Peter Thomas, 'Charles I of England: The Tragedy of Absolutism', in A. G. Dickens (ed.), *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400 – 1800* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 201.

hoped-for result was the realisation, through material and visual displays, of the superiority of Nazi culture over the oppressed.

Concerning the display of items formerly belonging to the Jews by the Nazis, Hannah Arendt makes the following point '[A]n eagerness to establish museums commemorating their enemies was very characteristic of the Nazis.'[130] Indeed, we may say that the problem for the Nazis, expressed by some within the ranks as a necessity to remember and to forget, became more urgent as the 'Final Solution' was put into action. The disappearance of the Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe presented the German authorities with the problem of explaining to later generations exactly how the Jews vanished. This predicament was apparent to the high command, fearing that future generations of Aryans might not understand the necessity for a 'Final Solution' at all. To answer this issue Odilo Globocnik, Chief Inspector of Concentration Camps, suggested that when the mass graves were cleared: 'one should bury bronze plaques, on which should be recorded that we had the courage to carry out this grand and indispensable work.'[131] No designs for such plaques have been found.

As soon as the *Lagermuzeum* became operational in 1941, with the equine artist Franciszek Targosz as its *Kapo* (Leader), the inmate artists began to expand the collection to include oil paintings, graphics and sculpture. Jaworska outlines their official duties:

> About six prisoners were assigned, two [rabbinical scholars] to translate the Talmud into German, one [inmate] repaired watches for the SS, the remaining prisoners were mostly artists, graphic artists, or fine artists, and created works of art that were considered [the] property of the camp and were used as presents to visiting dignitaries from the Reich.[132]

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[130] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 37.

[131] Hans Rothfels, (ed.) *Augenzeugenbericht zu den Massenvergasungen* (Dokumentation), Viertejahreshefte fur Zeitgeschte 1:2 (1953), p.189. Present author's translation.

[132] Jaworska (1975), p. 77. Szymanska (1989), p. 10. Komski (1990), p. 9. Punctuation as in the original.

The watchmaker was Władysław Tkaczk, 'whose professional skills were much appreciated by the SS men.'[133] The two rabbinical scholars were Icek Bryn and Moses Blum; Targosz had managed to have the latter released from the punishment squad on the grounds that he would help make the translations.[134] Komski gives further details of the translation project in his oral testimony:

> There were two Jewish fellows who were translating the bible. It was also Fritzch's idea. He wanted to have a bible translated from Hebrew to German; so there was an older man, he was a rabbi. And he knew the bible, and he was translating it into Polish. And there was another friend and he translated it from Polish to German. Now in four years I understand they translated two pages. And they both survived, simply because the Germans forgot about them.[135]

The artists who joined Targosz as full time workers in the *Lagermuzeum kommando* were Stefan Didyk, a sculptor who had been deported to Auschwitz on 5 April 1941 and initially placed in the carvers' Kommando,[136] where he made cigarette boxes with delicate inlay, and working later in the museum, prepared the captions that accompanied the works of art. Bronisław Czech continued his mural and glass painting, whilst Izydor Luszek created folk art, which as we shall see shortly developed the theme of the peasant as part of an important set of cultural signifiers within the Nazi project.

Each of the artists began their careers in the museum by attempting to please the SS with work that they hoped would impress them. The aesthetic tastes of the SS were relatively simple, limited mainly to portraiture, still lives, hunting scenes, images of warfare, myths and legends, landscapes and seascapes. All had to be executed in the sentimental-realistic style favoured by the Nazis. The collection grew to include German military symbols of office, documents and genealogies.

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[133] Szymanska (1989), p. 10.
[134] Szymanska (1989), p. 10.
[135] Komski (1990), p. 9. Punctuation as in the original.
[136] B, Zbaraz, 24 December 1908. Camp serial number 11, 752. Moved to KL Flossenberg in 1944.

The museum became a place of refuge for inmate artists to gather in their few hours of free time. According to Komski, '[T]here were about 500 artists that I know [of in] Auschwitz. So many of them that sometimes it was hard to get a place to stand in the Museum and do some work.' [137] And indeed, regarding the number of artists in Auschwitz, an SS man is recorded as saying '[S]urely there were enough artists in the camp.'[138]

Jan Komski, making his oral testimony 1990, commented on the importance of the museum to himself and to other inmates: 'I went to the museum from time to time after finishing work. This was due to my love of drawing, but also I wanted to meet others whose interests I could share.' [139] This suggests that the museum became a cultural and social hub, a place where artists could congregate, exchange ideas and offer each other support. It was here that Bronisław Czech took drawing lessons from the Polish inmate Mieczysław Kościelniak.[140] This implies that the museum also became a place of clandestine learning for the inmates, in defiance of the education policy that the Nazis exerted over the Polish people, whereby no Pole would receive any form of schooling beyond the most basic. Sybil Milton writes that Kościelniak's move from the *Abbruchkommando* (demolition squad) to the museum, which came about in 1941, was realised through a dangerous conversation with an SS guard, dangerous because direct dialogue between SS and inmates was illegal. This courageous act resulted in Kościelniak making a drawing of the SS guard. According to Milton: 'The Kapos enjoyed informing Kościelniak that he would last two weeks then he would leave the camp through the chimney.' Determined to defend himself, Kościelniak explained that he could make a portrait of the guard and was granted five minutes in which to do it. 'He [the SS guard] tore a piece of paper from his notebook and started timing on his

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[137] Komski (1990), p. 10.
[138] Milton (1989), p. 31.
[139] Komski (1990), p. 10.
[140] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 245.

watch. He assumed a favourite Nazi pose – head held high, legs apart'. Completing the portrait to a standard that clearly went beyond the satisfactory, and in the allotted time, Kościelniak was redeployed to the *Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke* (German Equipment Works). There, he was engaged as a sculptor, producing a bust of Beethoven: its quality astounding the Germans, who believed that the Poles could not accomplish such work.[141]

A further example of the benefits of the museum to inmates can be found in the experience of the inmate artist Władysław Siwek. As noted at the outset of this chapter he became ill through hard labour, becoming – in the language of the camp – a Musselman (a living skeleton), a condition that found him in the camp infirmary. Leon Turalski helped him to secure an 'easier' labour assignment, in the painters' commando. There he produced calligraphy, landscapes, and warning signs for the electrified fences, instructional illustrations, but also two thousand clandestine portraits of inmates. The quality of Siwek's portraiture drew the attention of an SS officer who commissioned him to make paintings from photographs of SS men and their families. The SS man signed these pictures and sold them to the sitters, passing them off as his own.

Indeed, this further category of semi-official works became a lifeline to the artists. The commissioning process represented an opportunity for the inmate-artist to gain supplementary rations, which offered a chance to survive the harsh conditions. The daughter of a former prisoner said: 'My father had to paint SS men with their families and dogs, because that represented a chance for him to survive'.[142] For the artist, outside the procedure of assignment, the act of creating was itself a vital factor in his or her own continued existence. Halina Olomucki, an artist-educator, deported to Auschwitz II-Birkenau following the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, considered that her task as an

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[141] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 254. Sujo (2001), p. 108.
[142] 'Art In Auschwitz 1940-1945 Exhibition Opens in Berlin'. Auschwitz.org.pl/m/index.php?options Last updated 23 May 2005. Accessed 27 November 2009.

artist was to act as witness. She used her skills as an artist to record the daily humiliation inflicted upon the female inmates at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. In her drawing, *Ringworm is Cured in the Camp*, we are shown the degradation imposed by the SS, whilst the 'cure' was immediate dispatch to the gas-chambers (*fig. 18*).[143] In her memoir she wrote: 'At Auschwitz someone told me "if you resist until you leave this hell, continue to draw and tell the world about us."'[144]

Artists found it possible to create their own works within the museum. Targosz, for example, was illustrating Henryk Sienkiewicz's epic trilogy of Polish patriotism. Perhaps one reason that Targosz could get away with this project was that Höss showed interest in the pictorial representation of a 'battle scene where…there were horses and movement.'[145] For Targosz, his self-created assignment allowed him 'the great satisfaction to be able in Auschwitz, to remember with drawings and to recall those glorious times of Polish knighthood.'[146]

Nevertheless there was an attempt by Höss to end the process of both official and semi-official commissions. In his garrison order of 8 July 1943, Höss stated:

> I have found out that members of the SS have ordered prisoners to make various objects for themselves, such as pseudo works of art, for example, roses made of metal. Apart from the fact that prisoners were to be used for useful labour, art has led to an irresponsible and wasteful use of materials that [are] difficult to get. I forbid all black-market work, all senseless and kitschy works, irrespective of the rank of SS personnel who order such work.[147]

The order did not apply to the Commandant himself, who continued to present the work of inmate artists to visiting officials, and to private guests, as well as commissioning domestic objects such as light fittings (*fig. 19*). Höss's order appears to have been an attempt to police and ensure aesthetic quality from the growing menace of a non-Aryan

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[143] Luba K. Gurdus, 'Reconstruction of an Artist's Life: Genia (Gela) Sekszstajn-Lichtensztajn', in *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (2:2, 1987), pp. 277-288, at p. 278.
[144] Blatter and Milton (1981), p. 260. Sujo (2001), p. 110.
[145] Szymanska (1989), p.10.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Archives of the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum, Nr 24/1943.

'ersatz culture' within the camp. The order was evidently ignored and officers continued to commission works from the inmate artists.

These semi-official commissions took a number of forms: portraits, usually drawn from photographs, peasant scenes and as Höss's order indicated, a craze for wrought-iron roses, mentioned above, forged by artists such as Liwacz in the blacksmith's workshop. Commissions could also be more spectacular. Helga Schnieder, the author of *Let Me Go*, an account of a meeting between herself and her estranged mother, a former SS guard in Birkenau, writes: 'One *Lagerführer* (SS Officer) got them [inmate goldsmiths] to make him a Viking ship entirely of gold. It must have been over a foot high. It was a present for his son's fifth birthday.'[148] This sculpture, now lost, suggests that there was a currency for such themed material amongst the SS. This view is supported by the work of the Polish marine artist Antoni Suchanek (see 'Inmate Artists' above), who produced for the SS a number of paintings of ships seen under full sail, during his imprisonment at Auschwitz (*fig. 20*).

The plundering of both the living and dead at Auschwitz and Birkenau, including the confiscation of jewellery and the extraction of gold fillings was commonplace and probably fuelled such objects, as did the intimate body searches of the newly gassed. Yisrael Gutman has remarked, 'By early 1944, members of the prisoner underground in Auschwitz estimated that the SS had amassed 10 to 12 kg of gold a month' (*fig 21*).[149] In a drawing made in 1946, David Olere, a survivor of Auschwitz, shows members of the *Sonderkommando* (inmates forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria) removing teeth from the recently gassed.[150] In 1943, a workshop, staffed by inmate dental technicians, was opened for the express purpose of

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[148] Helga Schneider, *Let Me Go* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 129.
[149] Gutman and Berenbaum (1998), p. 258.
[150] Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 177.

melting down this gold.[151] However, according to Höss, 'The Jewish gold was a disaster for the camp.'[152] On at least one occasion the commissioning of a gold picture frame led to the death of the SS patron. The 'smiths had poisoned the frame.'[153]

It could be argued that the *Lagermuzeum*, with its official and semi-official commissions, although distorted by the horrors of the camp in which it was set, corresponded to the historical notion of the sorts of princely cabinet's, discussed earlier, replete with its attendant objects of triumph and consolidated further the general artistic cultures of the camp. The museum was intended to show the garrison soldiers what their Aryan culture was (and in the case of Jewish and inmate objects, was not) and how they (the garrison) were very much part of that culture. The authenticity of the Aryan cultural product would give the Aryan viewer a sense of authority and an understanding of what the German state considered 'real art' to be. This would then empower the viewer and give to the individual a sense of ownership of the culture. The intention for the museum was very much that it should be a place for the SS to contemplate the destiny of the Aryan people. Triumphalism deriving from the theft of the victim's property has been practiced previously by many imperial powers, of course, and in Auschwitz, it similarly demonstrated the superiority of the collector over the collected.

The enslavement of the population, including the artists, was itself a visible reminder of the victors' self-glorification if we consider the performative tropes of the camp itself. For inmate artists the museum was a place of refuge. There, they could find the necessary resources for the production of official art. From this stock, as well as from materials gained from elsewhere, such as through 'organising', which was a system of bartering, mainly of bread or cigarettes, staples of the inmate economy, could be exchanged in return for materials that artists could use to create work.

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[151] Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 368.
[152] Langbein (2004), p. 137.
[153] Schneider (2005), p. 129.

Commissioned Works

It is a little-known fact, that the object representing the most iconic image of Auschwitz, the 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (Work Brings Freedom, or Work Makes You Free) gate is itself an example of officially commissioned work made by the inmates. The literature on this commission is minimal. The commission for the gate was received in 1941 from Rudolph Höss, Commandant of the camp, when the official entrance to the camp was moved from ulica Legionów to ulica Stanisławy Leszczynskiej (*Fig. 22*).[154] It was completed in the blacksmith's workshop at Auschwitz under the direction of the inmate artist-craftsman Jan Liwacz from Bukowsko, who had been deported to Auschwitz on 20 June 1940 (*fig. 23*).

The 'Arbeit Macht Frei' proverb was taken directly from the title of Lorenz von Diefenbach's 1873 novel.[155] The phrase, popular in nationalist circles, became well known through its use by the Weimar Government in 1928, as part of their policy of large-scale public building projects. The use of the *Arbeit Macht Frei* slogan by the Nazis, first appeared at Dachau concentration camp, founded in March 1933. There, the inmate Jura Soyfer, a former cabaret writer and socialist journalist set the proverb to music, whereupon it became the refrain of the Dachaulied, the prisoner's song.[156] This indicates that the slogan not only became part of that camp's culture, but also part of a wider cultural experience for the inmates. The slogan can also be seen at the entrance gates of the concentration camps of Gross-Rosen and Sachsenhausen, as well as the ghetto-camp of the Kleine Festung (Small Fortress) at Theresienstadt (Terezín). Other camps such as Buchenwald had the proverb 'Jedem das Seine' (To Each His Own)[157].

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[154] It should be noted the Arbeit Macht Frei gate is an internal entrance well within the environment of the camp. The actual access point through which entry to the camp was made can be seen by the contemporary visitor at the tourist car park on ulica Stanisławy Leszczynskiej.

[155] Lorenz von Diefenbach, *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Bremen: J. Kühtmann's Buchhandlung, 1873).

[156] Katrin M. Khol and Ritchie Robertson, *A History of Austrian Literature 1918-2000* (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), p. 134.

[157] More figuratively, this proverb can be translated to mean 'everyone gets what he deserves.'

Regarding the meaning of the gate's slogan, at Auschwitz itself, Höss explained in his autobiography, that his use of the maxim was not purely cynical:

> [N]ot as a mockery, or a false promise that those who worked to exhaustion would eventually be released, but rather as a kind of mystical declaration that self-sacrifice in the form of endless labour does in itself bring a kind of spiritual freedom.[158]

Höss's comment appears to be consistent with the sorts of mystical theories that permeated some aspects of Nazism. But as Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz III-Monowitz attests, for inmates there was no such spiritual enlightenment. He interpreted the text as meaning: 'The only freedom which awaits you is death.' [159] For artist inmates, the Nazi use of texts offered a form of employment that made them of use to the SS, and by extension, increased their chances of survival.

Further examples of texts, realised by inmate artists, survive at both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Ruth Klüger, a survivor of the camp, recalls other maxims nailed to the crossbeams of the barrack blocks by earlier transports, to the orders of the SS, whose members were no longer alive: 'REDEN IST SILBER, SCHWIEGEN IST GOLD (Speech is silver, silence is gold).' She continues: 'Even better was LEBEN UND LEBEN LASSEN (Live and let live).' Whilst in the latrine block, 'Verhalle dich ruhig' (No noise, behave calmly) told the inmates how to conduct themselves (*Fig. 24*). Klüger wrote of her understanding of these proverbs, 'I stared at them every day, disgusted by their absolute claim of truth, which this reality exposed as a total lie.'[160]

The use of decorative proverbs at Auschwitz has its counterpart in their public usage throughout Nazi Germany prior to and during the Second World War. Alyce M. McKenzie states: 'Hitler's advisers recognised the persuasive power of the proverbial

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[158] Cited in: Elena Gomel, *Bloodscripts: Writing the Violent Subject* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 145. Höss wrote his autobiography following his capture by British troops on 11 March 1946.
[159] Primo Levi, 'Arbet Macht Frei', in Marco Belpoliti (ed.), *The Black Hole of Auschwitz*, trans. Sharon Wood (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 8.
[160] Wolfgang Mieder, *The Politics of Proverbs: From Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 12. Other slogans included: 'The Block is Your Home', and 'Maintain Cleanliness.' Leni Yahill, *The Holocaust: the Fate of European Jewry, 1932 – 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 372.

form and both coined and culled proverbs from biblical and folklore sources.'[161] By adopting the principle that what the state said was right, the proverbs were used to convey messages that took the form of an injunction and were grounded in myth. Their purpose was to inform and create the 'correct' attitude in the German – the Aryan – public. Such maxims as 'There is no better dowry than a healthy mind and body' made their way into the public consciousness. So did the encouragement of a love of the homeland: 'The common good takes precedence over self-interest'. Anticipating the proverb 'Arbeit Macht Frei', later used at Auschwitz, the public was reminded that 'Work is no disgrace'. Racial purity within a suitable marriage was promoted: 'Three things make the best couples: same blood, same age, same passion'.[162] Anti-Semitic assertions occupied a special position in engaging the public hate: 'The Jews are our misfortune',[163] whilst 'Women and Girls, the Jews are your ruin',[164] echoed the meaning in a gendered and sexualised form.

The desired effect of the conjunction of Nazi propaganda and ideological rationality, as confirmed through its civic use of texts, was the production of a politically intoxicated German public. Its local use in Auschwitz transcended the institutionalised nature of the concentration camps and formed a crucial strand of official employment for inmate artists. Consequently, the Nazis use of visual cultural propaganda was reproduced microcosmically in Auschwitz and its nascent artistic community.

The living conditions for inmates in the concentration camps were horrendous. In an attempt to deal with such problems as typhus epidemics, caused by the squalid conditions the authorities at the camps also commissioned posters, providing us with

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[161] Alyce M. McKenzie, *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 13.
[162] Wolfgang Mieder, 'Proverbs in Nazi Germany: The Promulgation of Anti-Semitism and Stereotypes through Folklore', in W. Mieder, *Proverbs are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 239-242.
[163] First used by Heinrich von Treitschke in 1879. Cited in Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic? : Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 82.
[164] Goldhagen (2001), p 29.

further evidence of artistic activity within the camp. There are a number of variations of the poster 'Eine Louse – Dein Tod!', now in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (*fig. 25*). Occasionally the louse is seen on its own, such as in the posters that were produced for both Dachau and Buchenwald, now in the collections of the State Museums at both of those former camps. At other times, as with the Auschwitz example, the louse – realised in bright red – was accompanied by a skull, in order to underline the risk of death, together with a text reproduced in Polish, which was unusual for an official communication from the authorities, and in German, the official language of the camp (*fig. 26*). However, regardless of the text used to accompany the louse, the message was the same, this being that lice carry typhus, which kills.

It was the Polish inmate draftsman Zbigniew Raynoch, more generally known in Auschwitz by the name of Zbyszek, who designed the first version of the poster and went on to undertake further graphic work.[165] Roman Halter recalled how the SS would sometimes make a general call for graphic artists: 'One morning, after the arrival of a group of new inmates, immediately after roll-call, the Kapo and block leader announced that numbers (for we no longer had names) who could draw should take three steps forward.' Offered extra bread-rations, a number of newly-arrived prisoners accepted the drawing test. Halter continues: '[T]hroughout the morning one by one they reappeared from the block bruised and bleeding. The one or two who were retained had to draw bread, lice, bugs or fleas.'[166]

Apart from the poster appearing in a number of barracks and latrines, it was also used at the barbers. There it was used to emphasise the danger of typhus and to serve as an explanation for the reason why prisoners were shaved when they arrived. [167]

[165] Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, trans Harry Zohn (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), p. 208.

[166] Cited in Elisabeth Maxwell and Roman Halter, *Remembering for the Future* (London: Macdonald, 1988), p. 20.

[167] Pierre Berg and Brian Brock, *Scheisshaus Luck: Surviving the Unspeakable in Auschwitz and Dora* (New York: AMACOM [American Management Association], 2008), p. 48. John Wiernicki, *War in the Shadow of Auschwitz: Memoirs of a Polish Resistance Fighter and Survivor of the Death Camps* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), p. 90.

According to Naomi Baumslag: '[T]he purpose of the warning poster served only to promote fear amongst the inmates.'[168] By adopting the convenient rhetorical device of the louse, the Nazis were practicing their ideology of what has been termed elsewhere as 'Race Branding.'[169] At Auschwitz, of course, the Nazi-constructed counter-identity of the Jews reached its apogee. In the poster: allegory and actuality became one with the production of the 'Eine Louse – Dein Tod!' Auschwitz's inmate artists thus became agents, coerced into supporting the authorities in the Nazi campaign.

Perhaps the most cynical use of the health-poster was in the latrine blocks, where it would often be accompanied by the s slogan: 'Nach dem Abort, vor dem Essen, Hände waschen, nicht vergessen' (After the latrine, before eating, wash your hands, do not forget).[170] The purpose of this slogan may well have been to present an orderly and health-conscious image of the camp to any inspectors, such as the Red Cross, who visited the camp in September 1944.

A further example of inmate artists being commissioned to make illustrations is that of the SS educational document, 'Falsch Richtig' (Wrong and Right, a reversal of the idiom that normally reads 'Right and Wrong), now in the archive and permanent display of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (*fig. 27*). Little is known of the history of this pictorial instruction manual, outside of the fact that it was produced as a lithograph in Auschwitz at some point in 1941. It provides guidance to guards, in a visual format, for the treatment of prisoners who are shown under a variety of circumstances, each arising from the type of work and the differing locations in which they might be employed. The Jewish historian Henry Friedlander, writing in the

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[168] Baumslag (2005), p. 58.
[169] Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 13. Mamdani uses this term to link the Holocaust with subsequent acts of genocide.
[170] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008), p. 117.

introduction to Blatter and Milton's *Art of the Holocaust*, notes the brutality of the images and the fact that the artist was 'making it easier for his captors to torture him.'[171]

Clear instructions are given in fifteen pages. The cartoon-like images address such problems as the transportation of prisoners in open box lorries, including the use of trailers; how best to organise and keep order amongst prisoners when marching in a column formation; and the correct behaviour if civilians are encountered during the working day. Also shown is how to load and unload prisoners from cattle wagons; an activity that would become pivotal to the smooth running of the death-machine at Birkenau. The images make it abundantly clear that the members of the SS should show no mercy when dealing with inmates. Many of the illustrations show that the most effective way to stem any disorder was to shoot the offender. The cartoon quality of the images could possibly suggest that humour was an intended component of the educative process.

Why were these images necessary at all? The answer lies in the fact that many of the guards at Auschwitz were not native German speakers. According to the Polish historian Aleksander Lasik, the archives at Auschwitz show that 86 out of a garrison of 212 were not of German descent. This figure rose to 116 out of 412 soldiers by the end of 1941. By the time of the camps' liberation in January 1945, 219 out of a total defence force of 721 were not of German ancestry.[172] This suggests that the images in the 'Falsch Richtig' pamphlet were necessary to educate an SS workforce that was neither German nor competent for the positions that they occupied. Thus art and graphics were essential to the professional running and function of the camp, offering artists the opportunity, albeit only as long as they proved their worth through the products they supplied to the SS, their chances of survival within the camp was greatly improved. The

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[171] Blatter and Milton (1982), p.26.

[172] Aleksander Lasik, 'The Auschwitz Garrison', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds.), trans. William Brand, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp Vol I* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), pp. 324-325.

commission of the 'Falsch – Richtig' series is an example of the essential role art played and that artists were used in the service of the camp.

As I have shown, the category of official art at Auschwitz ranged from, fine art and graphic work, to sculpture, craftwork and furniture-making. A further category, for example, was that of wall paintings that were created for the SS at the House of the Waffen SS (*Haus der Waffen SS*), sometimes referred to as the German House (*Deutsche Haus*). These have received scant attention, and the information about them has often been incorrect, especially concerning their attributions.[173] The *Haus der Waffen SS* was a hotel building used by the SS for social gatherings and for the accommodation of visitors. The building, which is outside the camp, still exists today. However, all traces of the wall paintings have been lost since 1959. Attribution for the work has usually centred on claims that Bronisław Czech painted them. He was a Polish inmate for whom the SS had some regard because of his sporting prowess as a skier. It is known that he received a number of commissions from the SS, and this led to the erroneous suggestion that Czech was the artist responsible for the commission.[174] However, recent research undertaken by Agnieszka Sieradzka, a member of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Collections Department, suggests that the murals were painted by the inmate artist Mieczysław Kościelniak.[175]

It took the offer of commissions (dates of which are unknown), to two artists, and an apparent change of theme, before the wall paintings were finally completed in 1944. Initially Wincenty Gawron was 'assigned to make wall paintings in the restaurant.' The SS commissioned the subject in advance: 'The theme being "*Drang nach Osten* (The Thrust Toward the East)," a motto used by German nationalists in the

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[173] Czech had been twenty times All-Polish skiing champion, and had taken part in the 1928, 1932 and 1938 Winter Olympics.

[174] Janina Jaworska in 1975 (see footnote 36 for details). This information was then repeated by Christoph Heubner, Alwin Meyer, and Jürgen Pieplow (eds) *Lebenszeichen: Gesehen in Auschwitz* (Bornheim-Merten, 1979). An English language publication by Sybil Milton and Janet Blatter, *Art of the Holocaust*, then duplicated these inaccuracies. They have since been reproduced without question.

[175] Agnieszka Sieradzka, 'Man was not Alone in the Face of Evil', in *Oś – Oświęcim, People, History, Culture Magazine* 11:2009, p. 4.

late nineteenth-century, and connected to the German medieval *Ostsiedlung* (east colonization), which referred to the expansion of German culture, language, states and settlement into eastern European regions inhabited by Slavs and Balts. Presumably in the *Haus der Waffen SS*, the murals were intended to function as a visual celebration of the Third Reich's fulfilment of the medieval *Ostsiedlung*. Gawron's reluctance to tackle the subject, or even his fear of it, hastened his decision to escape, which he did in May 1942.'[176] As a result Mieczysław Kościelniak created the paintings on the restaurant's walls some two years later. However, it is clear that the theme of the commission was in this instance changed. In his memoir, Kościelniak writes: 'satisfied with such a commission, I set to work on a historical subject – the German Renaissance.'[177] Regarding the shift of subject, one can speculate that by 1944 the SS may have wanted to celebrate their German identity over that of their genocidal handiwork.

Surviving photographs of the interiors show a sequence of life-size images of male and female Aryan peasants, garlanded and dancing, and dressed in German regional costumes (*figs 28, 29, 30*). This folkish theme, popular with the SS, can be found reproduced throughout official SS publications. One such, *Bauerntum als Heger deutschen Blutes Zeichnungen* (Peasantry as occupants of German blood)[178] was written and illustrated by Wolfgang Willrich, described by the art historian Jonathan Petropoulos as 'a hateful *völkisch* art critic and painter'.[179] Willrich propagated the virtues of an agrarian life, a view which was in keeping with both Höss and Himmler's working lives, as farmers prior to their careers with the SS.[180] It is also worth

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[176] Sieradzka 11:2009, p. 4.
[177] Sieradzka 11:2009, p. 4.
[178] Wolfgang Willrich, with an introduction of Reichsbauernfuhrers R. Walther Darre, *Bauern als Insassen des deutschen Blutes* [Peasantry as occupants of German blood] (Goslar: Blut und Boden Verlag, 1935), his book, *Nordisches Blutserbe* [Nordic Blood Inheritance] (Goslar: Blut und Boden Verlag, 1938), contains sixty-four watercolour portraits of Aryan agricultural workers, chosen for their Teutonic physiognomy.
[179] Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 55.
[180] Höss and Himmler joined the right wing agricultural group known as the Artamans. For a discussion of the founding and principles of this organisation see Walter Lacqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 111-190. For Höss's views on the Artamans see: Rudolf Höss, Steven Paskuly (ed.), *Death Dealer: the Memoir of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz* (Buffalo: Prometheus

remembering that 'In the early years, the Nazi party consisted almost entirely of sons of horse and cow farmers.'[181] During the period, Arthur Greiser,[182] *Gauleiter* (regional leader) of the Warthegau (the German name for Greater Poland, annexed 1939), and one of the chief architects of the Holocaust in Poland, argued for the ideological significance of the peasant: 'Only a [German] peasant could make the Warthegau a German country – he alone rendered the Polish labourers redundant.'[183] In the minds of the Nazis the Poles were little more than drones, whereas the German peasants were capable of developing the potential of the land, and establishing an agrarian utopia that confirmed Germany's innate right to own it. The peasant images created by Mieczysław Kościelniak for the SS were a reminder to the SS that following their victory the *Völkisch* myth would be realised, and that there would be a 'return to a simpler, less complicated, greener society, based on principles such as hierarchy, patriotism, social harmony, order and obedience.'[184] And as early as 1933, Hitler had said that '[A] glance at population statistics shows us that the future of the nation depends exclusively on the conservation of the peasant.'[185]

The idea of decorating the workplace was something that the Nazi government had made official policy as early as 1936. The government organisation 'Strength through Joy' (*Kraft durch Freude*), began with the intention of improving the nation's working conditions and continued with a programme of spiritually uplifting cultural

Books, 1992), pp. 200-203. A further link between the SS and the image of the German peasant is noted by Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 106. She states: 'Heinrich Himmler, who had a degree in agriculture and worked as a chicken breeder, joined the Artam League in 1928 and ordered the SS to wear the 'peasant black' of the Atamans when he became head of that organisation in 1929.' Having addressed the colour of the SS uniforms, the choice of design and cut was given to the young German designer – and Nazi party favourite – Hugo Boss, who created the look of the infamous uniform. For a discussion of Hugo Boss's role as slave labour employer during the Third Reich see: Michael J. Bazyler, *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in American Courts* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 65.

[181] Regina Schulte, 'Peasants and Farmers' Maids', in Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee, *The German Peasantry: Conflict and Community in Rural Society from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 198.

[182] Arthur Greiser, born Schroda 22 January 1897; died Fort Winiary 14 July 1946. His was the last public execution in Poland.

[183] Anne C. Bramwell, 'The resettlement of ethnic Germans 1939-41', in Anne C. Bramwell (ed.), *Refugees in the Age of Total War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 120.

[184] Frank McDonough, *Hitler and the Rise of the Nazi Party* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), p. 63.

[185] Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of genocide from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 423.

activities. These included art, music, theatre, sport and tourism.[186] According to Hans Schemm, Minister for Culture, speaking on 15 October 1933, the day on which the idea of 'The House of German Art' (*Haus der deutschen Kunst*), a showcase for what the Third Reich regarded as Germany's finest art, was inaugurated: 'Public life and art had to condition each other mutually. The German people could not under any circumstances live without art, on pain of losing its soul.'[187] Through a series of public commissions the German population were presented with civic works, intended not for display in art museums and galleries, but at their places of work and entertainment. German artists such as Werner Peiner and Franz Gerwin produced monumental canvasses, murals and tapestries, which were intended to bolster the masses spiritually and educationally. The sculptor Arno Brecker supplied now infamous larger than life-size figurative sculptures showing the perfect Aryan physique, and Josef Thorak created a studio, dubbed by the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* as, 'The largest Atelier in the World', to allow for the production of his sculpture.[188] Evidently art and artists were accorded an important position within Nazi society. On the eve of the Second World War Hitler himself spoke of his own desire – now also infamous – to be remembered as a painter:

> All my life I have wanted to be a great painter in oils. I am tired of politics. As soon as I have carried out my programme for Germany, I shall take up my painting. I feel that I have it in my soul to become one of the *great artists of the age* and that future historians will remember me *not* for what I have done for Germany, but for my art.[189]

Although that was not to be the case for Hitler, his art, and that of the artists whom the party had financially supported and promulgated, presented values in the service of National Socialist ideals.

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[186] Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 42.

[187] Eric Michaud, *The Culture of Art in Nazi Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 105.

[188] *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 1938, No 51:2103. Unacknowledged author.

[189] Peter Viereck, *Meta-Politics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 160.

By the time Kościelniak had made his wall paintings at the *Haus der Waffen SS* in 1944, the German public would have become accustomed to having art around them, both in their workplaces, and as a part of their leisure spaces as well.

In the Officers' Mess inside the concentration camp at Auschwitz, the SS also commissioned an earlier series of murals, but it is not known whether these were by Czech or Kościelniak. Now lost, they were however described by Mieke Monjau, the non-Jewish wife of the German-Jewish artist Franz Monjau. She visited Auschwitz in a futile attempt to learn something of the well-being of the German-Jewish artist Julius Levin, deported to the camp on 17 May 1943.[190] Meeting with an SS officer, who was known for accepting bribes that allowed for the possibility of prisoners making reunions with friends and relatives, she described the interior of the Officers' Mess there: 'The walls were decorated with frescoes, with life-size figures from the "Minnesänger" era.'[191] The figure of the Minnesänger, a knightly troubadour of the German Middle Ages, raises interesting questions concerning the role of identity politics as they were played out by the authorities at Auschwitz.

The Haus der Waffen SS acted as a meeting place and was open to all SS members. Its interior decorations of rustic peasant figures can be compared to those from the "Minessänger" described by Miche Monjau in the Officers' Mess in the functioning camp. We have seen how the Haus der Waffen SS was decorated with images of peasants, thus promoting for the SS in leisure hours a sense of communion with the land and consequently with national identity. In terms of National Socialism's insistence upon the uniqueness of the Germanic character, I suggest that this looking back upon German folkish stereotypes was very much in line with the idea that the SS 'adopted ideological pronouncements to promote continuity between previous powerful

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[190] This set of murals was in existence at least a year earlier than their counter-parts in the *Haus der Waffen SS*.
[191] Sybil Milton (ed. and trans.), *The Art of Jewish Children: Germany 1936 – 1941: Innocence and Persecution* (New York: Allied Books, 1989), p. 31.

epochs and its own present strengths.'[192] However, I shall argue that for the officers in their mess, a further set of identity politics was being played out.

The figure of the Minnesänger, German troubadour players, evokes an age of chivalry and courtly love in thirteen-and fourteenth-century Germany.[193] Thomas Carlyle, a famous Germanophile of the nineteenth century, and himself a revivalist of German Romantic Culture, described their supposed appearance and behaviour:

> With long swords and lances
>   They led a lordly life;
> They sang of beauty's glances,
>   In many a minstrel's strife,
> They sang of armour ringing,
>   Of Heavenly grace above,
> Of May flowers fresh up springing,
>   And gentle ladies love.[194]

For Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS, the role of the Minnesänger in the production of German culture during the High Middle Ages was important. Their lances, like Tannhäuser's, in the legend made famous by Richard Wagner's opera of 1845, were made from the '[s]ame apple wood as Eden's tree and Golgotha's Cross.'[195] This effectively placed them within the cultic ambitions of Heinrich Himmler, which were developed to spectacular effect in Himmler's adoption of the circa 16th century Wewelsburg castle. There, Himmler created a school for the SS elite, where subjects such as pre and early history, mythology, archaeology, astronomy and art, all given a German nationalist slant, were to be taught. Himmler also chose the Wewelsberg castle as the location for a Nazi occultic religion, the details of which are vague at best. However, to explain it as a Camelot, presided over by a demonic King Arthur, together with his knights of the round table, may go some way to capturing the nature of Himmler's historical imagining.

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[192] Paul B. Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labour and the Nazi Monumental Building Programme* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 123.
[193] Daniel Power, *The Central Middle Ages: Europe 950 – 1320* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 172.
[194] Cited in Charles G. Leland, *Meister Karl's Sketch Book* (Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan, 1855), p. 282.
[195] Peter Viereck, *Tide and Continuities: Last and First poems 1995-1938* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), p. 239.

The SS officer class could thus – through association with the Minnesänger and the Garden of Eden – claim a lineage that connected them to the creation of mankind and the salvation of the world. The Minnesänger had Teutonic, aristocratic and Romantic associations. These offered the SS officer class an ideologically-cohesive institutional identity that reached back to the time of Henry I.[196] The link between the role of the SS with that of the earlier Minessänger, can be understood as an adaptation, by Himmler, of the Minnesingers' defence of Germanic cultural and racial ideals.

Thus two slightly different messages were being advanced in the different messes at Auschwitz. *In the Haus der Waffen SS*, where ranks commingled, the images of peasantry were principally intended for those of a lower status, drawn from the already mentioned 'sons of the horse and cow farmers', where they could see their families' rural identities held up as a mirror to their own virtues, which were in turn contributing to the greater good of Germany. At another location, at the Officers' Mess on site, the officer class were offered images that were both militaristic and mythical, and this was in keeping with Himmler's views. As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke has written, Himmler's '[c]onception of the SS as an elite military religious order spearheaded an Aryan crusade to reconquer the East [which] found many echoes in his romantic view of medieval German history.'[197]

I suggest that the officer class were offered images that were more overtly mythologizing of the aristocratic, princely Minessänger, whose noble ideals they should copy. Whereas, for the ranks, the representation of the simpler, rural peasants, was in keeping with the agrarian role planned for them following Germany's hoped for victory at the cessation of hostilities.

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[196] Henry I, also known as Henry the Fowler, created the confederation of German principalities, thus uniting Germany in 919.
[197] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 124.

Once Kościelniak had completed the cycle of images at the *Haus der Waffen SS* and another artist, perhaps Czech, had done so in the Officers' mess, Czech certainly did go on to paint folk scenes in the barracks at Auschwitz.[198] There he also produced a number of landscapes, in oils and etched glass. These works show the Tatra Mountains, where before the war, Czech had pioneered an influential system of mountain rescue. Especially painful for Czech the skier must have been the view of the mountains afforded from within Auschwitz. According to fellow prisoner Tadeusz Baudyna, '[T]he Nazis offered Czech his freedom in return for training German youth, but he refused, maintaining his patriotism for Poland.'[199] Thus an artist could find himself unable to protest his patriotism through art in this instance, but only through life.

Whilst the murals were being painted at Auschwitz, inmate artist at the even bleaker environment of Auschwitz II-Birkenau were finding that their skills could be put to work. The production of commissioned art in Birkenau seems to have relied on the same processes of commissioning, as it did to some extent in Auschwitz I. One employment of artists at Birkenau was in the context of 'scientific' research being undertaken by the Nazis. One such was the Nazi doctor Mengele, appointed medical officer to the Gypsy camp in Birkenau on 24 May 1943. Throughout his twenty-one month residency at the camp he undertook medical trials on inmates. He was interested in researching the hereditary causes for multiple births. He required his experiments to be visually recorded, commissioning a number of inmate artists to make illustrations. These were sent to his teachers, Theodore Mollison and Eugene Fischer, in Berlin, both of whom had carried out live research on the Herero (Namibian tribespeople) in 1912.[200] This may explain why neither doctor was shocked by the content some of the images.

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[198] Blatter and Milton (1983), p. 245.

[199] 'In Memory of Bronisław Czech', in *The News, pl* (News from Poland). radio.com.pl/.../artykul109504_in_memory_of_bronislaw_czech.html. Last updated 4 June 2009, accessed 4 June 2009.

[200] Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin Press, 2003), p. 19.

One artist used by Mengele was Dina Gottliebova, painter of the *Disney* murals in the Children's Block, mentioned in the voluntary Images section above. Mengele was informed of her painting skills and ordered her to paint a series of watercolours. These showed Gypsies from different countries of Europe, called in Nazi terminology 'mischlinge' (half-breeds). He asked her to paint a series of watercolour portraits of inmates whose skin tones he said couldn't be accurately captured with his rudimentary colour camera (*Fig. 31*). These portraits, now on permanent display at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, were to be used in the course of attempting to prove Mengele's racial theories, and Gottliebova made a total of about ten such portraits. According to a later *Newsweek* magazine report: 'That meeting with Mengele saved Gottleibova's life.' Over the next month and a half, she painted the portraits of the inmates, all of whom were later gassed.[201]

Gottliebova was not the only artist inmate working to commission for Mengele. Marianne Grant had come to the attention of Mengele after news had spread within the camp of the set of murals that she painted for the Czech family camp. She was ordered 'to draw two girls, twins, who had certain skin markings on their bodies.'[202] Following the acceptance of this drawing, Grant was ordered to perform research in the dwarf camp. 'Afterwards I was called to Mengele again,' Grant wrote, 'in a hut with a Persian carpet on the muddy floor. He handed me an architect's toolset and I had to draw the family tree of one of the Hungarian dwarf families in black ink.'[203]

The purpose of these artworks was at least twofold; firstly, they ingratiated Mengele with Himmler, who took a keen interest in matters of racial research, and secondly they advanced Mengele's ambitions of a professorship in anthropology at Freiburg University, his patronage thus fit a longstanding tradition of reflecting glory on

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[201] Sandy Lawrence Edry with Joanna Kowalska, 'Saved by the Paintings', in *Newsweek* (Society and the Arts section), 16 July 2001, p. 64.
[202] Haase and McAdam (2002), p.5.
[203] Ibid.

the patron. Saul Freidländer notes: 'Mengele was using Auschwitz as a scientific institution which offered exceptional opportunities to study rare individuals.'[204] Thus artists, including women artists, were able to find employment in the service of science at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

The female counterpart to Dr Mengele's role as a patron of the arts in Birkenau was Maria Mandel. Appointed to the camp in October 1942, it was she who founded the inmate women's orchestra, led by the internationally acclaimed violinist Alma Rosé.[205] Mandel commissioned a female inmate, Helen 'Zippi' Spitzer Tichauer, to make a model of the women's camp at Birkenau.[206] This under-researched area of artistic creativity in Birkenau deserves greater examination than it has hitherto been granted. Zippi, as Tichauer was known in the camp, had come to the notice of Mandel for her competence in administrative affairs, and as mandolinist in the women's orchestra.[207] She was also a trained commercial artist. Recognising her talents, Mandel assigned Zippi to the *Zeichenstube* (drawing room), where she produced graphs showing the monthly population changes in the camp. A further commission was for the creation of a miniature model, measuring two metres long and eighty centimetres wide, of the women's camp. Assisted by an unnamed inmate, Zippi spent several months making the model, which did not show the killing facilities, the men's camp, the Gypsy camp or the Theresienstadt family camp. According to Jürgen Matthäus, a historian at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the model may well have 'served as a visual directory to

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[204] Saul Freidländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 202.

[205] For a detailed discussion of the founding and role of the women's orchestra, see Richard Newman with Karen Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz* (Cambridge: Amadeus Press, 2000), pp.226–97. For a general discussion of the orchestra see Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz* (London: Sphere, 1979). Some of the information offered by Fénelon has been questioned by survivors of the orchestra, most notably by Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. See Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth* (London: Giles de la Mare, 1996), pp. 74 – 86.

[206] I refer to her here by the name that she was known by whilst in the camp.

[207] Zippi's first job at Birkenau had been painting stripes on to prisoners' uniforms; see *Voices of the Holocaust*, 'David P. Boder Interviews Helen Tichauer; September 23, 1946; Feldafing, Germany'. Available online at voices.iit.edu/interview?doc=tichauerH&display=tichauerH_en No date given for last update, accessed 15 July 2010. For a discussion of Zippi's involvement in the orchestra see Newman and Kirtley (2000), p. 222. As the last woman to leave Birkenau as part of the Death March, Zippi was given the task of locking the central entrance under the Gate of Death.

assist SS personnel [like the cartoons] and inmate functionaries to find their way around the camp.'[208] Once completed the model was removed from the 'drawing room' and placed in the camp's central office, where presumably it was shown to prominent visitors.

Apart from her activities in the orchestra and the administrative duties undertaken for the SS, Zippi was also given the task of designing a new insignia for the Jews. Following the influx and destruction of the Hungarian Jews in 1944, Birkenau had run out of the material for the yellow star used to identify Jews. Zippi was ordered by Mandel to produce a cheaper version. This she did, using a white six-pointed Star of David with black borders.[209]

Thus, even in Birkenau, art was possessed of the same functions as in Auschwitz. Commissions, as the means by which to support the individual artist's attempts to stay alive; voluntary work, such as the murals of the Gypsy camp and in the kindergarten, can be understood as attempts to transcend the horror, and in the case of the ceiling painting *Königsgraben*, to record and witness the daily torments endured by the inmates. Photography was also – astonishingly – utilised as a means of witnessing and communicating the persecution at stake. Artistic production, including the preparation of a script for the film, *The Last Stage*, was thus a crucial force in the lives of the inmates.

Whilst this chapter has concentrated on art produced at Auschwitz and Birkenau it is known that inmate artists also worked at the small sub-camps. Golleschau, one such camp, contained a series of six murals, of which four now survive in the archives of the State Museum at Auschwitz. Realised in charcoal, and depicting men working in a cement factory, they are believed to be commissioned pieces, painted by the French

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[208] Jürgen Matthäus (ed.), *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 23.
[209] Matthäus (2009), p. 18.

artist Jean Bartichand (*fig. 32, 33*). Unlike the *Königsgraben* image (*fig. 13*), these do not portray the murderous conditions under which the work was carried out. The only hint offered by the images that those represented within them may have been engaged in any kind of forced labour, is realised through the depiction of the workers wearing stripped uniforms, coterminous of the concentration camp itself.

The Jawiszowice sub camp, operational from July 1942 to January 1945, was used to house prisoners who worked in the mines owned by the *Hermann Goering Reich Werke* (the largest German company in the Third Reich, producing ore and steel). Two statues, each realised in concrete, were sited at the entrance to the camp. They are the work of the French sculptor Jacques Markiel,[210] and depict miners; one is seen digging using a shovel whilst the other employs a sledgehammer and wears a miner's lamp (*fig. 34*), in a further example, it might be said, of the trope of the 'worker' mythology. The statues measure two-and-a-half metres in height. According to Igor Bartosik, head of the Collections Department at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 'The SS exempted him [Markiel] from the murderous labour in the coal mine', because 'Markeil made ornamented everyday objects for the officers. He also created various 'ornamental' elements that the Germans saw as decoration for the grounds of the sub-camp.'[211] Apart from his work for the SS, Markeil produced numerous smaller items for his fellow prisoners. These were given to local civilians in appreciation of the help that they offered the inmates, such as the provision of winter clothing, medicine and food.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the wide range of artworks produced by inmate artists. According to individual artists, it was crucial to their survival – or their hope of it – to

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[210] Jacques Markiel, born 20 July 1911, Łodz; died Paris 2008. Prison serial number 126105.
[211] 'Auschwitz Statues Saved From Destruction'. en.Auschwitz.org.pl/m/index.php. ?options=cum_content updated 29 June 2007, accessed 30 June 2007.

create work. Zoran Music, writing in the preface to his book *We Are Not The last*, states: 'For an artist it is impossible not to work, it is like breathing.[…]. Art gave me the force to survive.' Wiktor Siminski, an inmate of both Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen (Berlin), relates illustrating his fellow inmates' letters in return for scraps of bread, whilst Xawery Dunikowski considered that through art 'life once again acquires meaning and purpose.'[212] We may also say that Mieczysław Koscielniak, with the experience of teaching Bronisław Czech to draw, created some semblance of normality through the teacher-pupil relationship. These examples illustrate that there was a rich mesh of artistic functions taking place in Auschwitz. And we might read that mesh as the prisoners' attempts not only to salvage dignity from an impossible situation, but also to bear witness to it.

For those inmates involved with illicit artworks, the main purpose was understood to be as a means of evidence that served to document the tragedy that was taking place around them. For the perpetrators, operating in the role of patron, commissioned art provided a cultural platform that offered completely new experiences. On the one hand they could have keepsakes, such as drawings or paintings of loved ones produced, whilst on the other they entered into ideologically-driven image-agendas through the use of art and objects.

The existing art of Auschwitz also fills an important gap in twentieth-century art history, fleshing out and acting as a counterpoint to the bombastic stereotypes of Nazi propaganda art. Moreover, it shows us the vulnerability of human life in a site of horror and atrocity, but also the tenacity of culture, even in such appalling conditions. This art also functions as a bond and common language, and creates a form of visual communication and understanding that is drawn from and comments on the environment in which it originated.

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[212] Xawery Dunikowski, 'Letter from Auschwitz.' In: *The Last Expression: Art from Auschwitz*, D. Mickenburg, C. Granoff and P. Hayes (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 5.

The following chapter will be concerned with the foundation of the official museum at Auschwitz following the liberation of 1945. We shall see that the inmate artists returned to the site with the intention of narrating the story of the camp for the general public. However, their early attempts were thwarted by Poland's communist administration, acting under orders from Russia. Any efforts to tell the story of the camp had to serve the interests of a more insistent political ideology, whose intention was to use the history of the camp for its own ends.

Chapter 3

The Founding of the Auschwitz Museum 1945 – 1955

Auschwitz was liberated on 27 January 1945, but in the immediate post-war years it did not emerge as the prominent symbol of the Holocaust that it later became. A reason for this was that its geographical position linked it, in the developing consciousness of the former Allied nations, to the Stalinism of the Eastern Bloc. The Western countries claimed Bergen-Belsen (liberated by the British and Canadians, 15 April, 1945) and Buchenwald (liberated by the Americans, 11 April, 1945) as their emblems of Hitlerite atrocity. Bergen-Belsen was the only intact concentration camp to be liberated by the British, whilst Buchenwald was the first camp to be liberated by the Americans. The liberation and subsequent use of both of these camps as a justification for World War II and the carpet-bombing of such cities as Hamburg and Dresden, has been given consideration by a number of historians.[213] Neither of these camps was created as exclusive centres of extermination; that was the function of the camps at Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka,[214] and Chełmno, all of which were razed to the ground by the Germans before the cessation of hostilities.

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[213] For a discussion of how Bergen-Belsen was incorporated into British consciousness see: Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp,* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 50-77. For a study of the challenges that faced the liberators of Bergen-Belsen see: Ben Shephard, *After Daybreak: The Liberation of Bergen-Belsen, 1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

[214] These centres for the extermination of the Jews and others were collectively known as the The *Operation Reinhardt* Camps. They may have been named collectively in honour of Reinhard Heydrich, chief coordinator of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution of the Jewish Question), following his assassination 27 May 1942. He died 8 days later of his injuries. For a detailed discussion see Charles, W., Sydnor, 'Executive Instinct: Reinhard Heydrich and the Planning for the Final Solutiion', in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, *The Holocaust and History: the Known, The Unknown, The Disputed and The Re-examined*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2002), pp. 159-187.

To this latter group we can add Majdanek, situated in the east of Poland,[215] where the retreating German army left partially intact gas chambers and an intact crematorium. Auschwitz II-Birkenau, on the other hand, had its killing facilities destroyed by the SS garrison as they prepared for the wholesale evacuation of the site in January 1945, in an attempt to conceal the true nature of the site. Yet of all of these barbaric and degraded places it was Auschwitz that would (metonymically) come to symbolise the Holocaust.

Auschwitz's position as the 'Golgotha' (Place of the Skull) among the many functioning sites of the Holocaust made it a significant constituent of the historical memory and the communal identity of the war-devastated Polish nation.[216] Auschwitz came to perform a symbolic role that was appropriate to an historical image of Poland as the 'Christ among nations'.[217] This image of suffering was sanctioned by Poland's post-war Stalinist regime, which used both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau as a medium through which to symbolize and unify Polish national identity and nationalism, and the image of Christ suffering was – in the early years particularly – an essential part of the effort to connect the population to a communist political and ideological construction. The twin sites entered the psyche of the Eastern Bloc as essential locations for both the remembrance and the memorialisation of what would eventually become known as the Holocaust. Today Auschwitz is central to the global telling, understanding, knowledge and remembrance of the Nazis' genocidal project, but it has not always been so.

In this chapter I shall discuss the early post-war years of the museum at Auschwitz. I will begin by describing the Allies' knowledge of the camps and the

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[215] Liberated by the Red Army on the night of 22-23 July 1944.

[216] Heinrich Fries, *Fundamental Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1996), p. 264.

[217] Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 185. The idea of Poland as the 'Christ among nations' originated with Adam Mickiewicz's book *Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrims*, published in 1832. He argued that Poland would arise from its tripartite division and become a free nation again. This in turn would free all the countries of Europe from imperialist domination.

British post-liberation reporting of the concentration camps; this will give an understanding of Auschwitz's initial position within the consciousness of West. I then discuss the return of Auschwitz survivors to the camp, and their unformalised attempts to curate a first exhibition at the site in 1945, together with the subsequent additions made to that exhibition in 1946. We shall see that from 1945 to 1947 Auschwitz underwent a period of transformation that marked the change from liberated camp to State Museum. We shall also see that the earliest display, which pre-dated the imposition of Stalinism on Poland, emphasized the difficulties faced by museum staff concerning the idea of Auschwitz as both material site and ideological history. I shall continue by examining two further exhibitions of 1950 and 1955, in which the interpretation of Auschwitz was dominated by Cold War politics.

We shall see that the narratives embarked upon by the museum, and its tactics for telling the story of Auschwitz by visual means, were structured by a framework that was used to establish, organise and communicate particular political meanings at particular times. These were often developed to advance meticulously-prepared, yet politically ideologically-driven arguments, which provided support for the policies that underlined the rhetoric, if not the substance, of Poland's post-war political situation. This discussion will confirm that Auschwitz, from the time of its liberation in January 1945, down to 1955, was far from being the universally understood, monolithic symbol that it has since become.

Indeed, considering the extent to which Auschwitz and its satellite camps had proved successful as a killing machine, Auschwitz was not immediately in the post-war aftermath central to the British telling of that story. Even when such sources as the BBC had information it was deemed too dangerous to pass on before the war was over. A German-language broadcast, made from London on 15 June 1944, began: 'Important News!' and made available detailed information regarding the destruction of the

Theresienstadt Jews at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The report concluded with a warning: 'All those responsible for these mass crimes, both those who gave the orders and those who carried them out, will be made to answer for them.'[218] The truth of the Holocaust had reached the outside world, but it was not fully heard, not least because it was, as in this instance, spoken in German-to-German audiences. This 'News', of June 1944, which was repeated on further occasions, usually in foreign language broadcasts, thus never fully entered the consciousness of the populations of the Allied countries.

The liberation of Auschwitz warranted one sentence in the *Manchester Guardian*, on 29 January 1945, whilst the Daily Express, on 3 February of the same year, had one column on page four with the headline 'Last Word in German Brutality.'[219] In Russia, reporting of the liberation of the camp was so limited as to amount to only one article by Boris Polevoi, published in the State newspaper *Pravda*. Polevoi's article contained misleading information. He claimed that the means of killing was by electrocution:

> They [Nazis] tore up and destroyed the traces of the electric conveyor belt, on which hundreds of people were simultaneously electrocuted, their bodies falling onto the slow moving conveyor belt which carried them to the top of the blast furnace where they fell in, were completely burned, their bones converted to meal in the rolling mills, and then sent to the surrounding fields. [220]

This account of the process of annihilation was never repeated, and one can only speculate as to why Polevoi used it.[221] The British historian and documentary film maker Laurence Rees has suggested that Polevoi wanted to make a clear distinction between the methods of destruction employed at Majdanek, where press reports

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[218] Danuta Czech, 'A Calendar of the Most Important Events in the History of Auschwitz Concentration camp' in Danuta Czech, S. Klodzinski, A. Lasik, A. Strzelecki (eds), *Auschwitz 1940 – 1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp, Vol. V* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 201.

[219] Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretation of the Evidence* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2003), p. 148.

[220] Report by B. Polevoi, 'Kombinat smerti v Osventsime' (trans: Factory of Death in Auschwitz), Pravda, 2 February 1945, p. 4.

[221] Interestingly, the only groups to give any credence to Polvoi's description are Holocaust deniers, who use it to support their argument that there were no gas-chambers at Auschwitz or Birkenau. It is not my intention to give them any presence here. However, should the reader wish to discover their arguments for themselves, these can be found on the internet.

described the use of Zyklon B, the cyanide based pesticide used in to the gas chambers. To tell the same story for Auschwitz might have seemed like a repetition, causing the camp to appear as another Majdanek.[222] The article also hinted at the future Marxian perspective, using such terminology as 'the ultimate capitalist factory where the workers were dispensable.'[223] This kind of language would also be used to frame the exhibitions at the future museum site once they came under the control of the Stalinist regime,[224] a regime which famously opposed Western Capitalist decadence and which used Auschwitz, as we shall see, as a negative example of Capitalist ideology at work.

If the liberation of Auschwitz received scant coverage in the Russian and British media, Bergen-Belsen, liberated by British troops on 15 April 1945 was better publicised.[225] It was with the liberation of Bergen-Belsen that the British public was afforded the opportunity to see the horror of the camps. Pre-war knowledge of the Dachau and Buchenwald camps, understood as places of incarceration for the political opponents of Nazism, the 'work-shy', and anti-social elements, was widely reported in the British press. In Britain, Bergen-Belsen achieved by far the greatest resonance, and the images from newsreels, radio, and newspapers made a profound impact on the nation's psyche. In the words of Brian Foss, it was 'the first important camp to be liberated by the British.'[226]

Commonwealth and British war artists were among the group that went into the camps as they were liberated, sketching what they saw to make rapidly-executed and intense visual memorials. Some used these sketches for later works that have been included in such collections as that of the Imperial War Museum in Britain, for example, Mary Kessell who produced seven sketch of the post-liberation site at Bergen-

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[222] Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution* (London: BBC Books, 2005), p. 265.
[223] Polevoi, quoted in Rees (2005), p. 265.
[224] Polevoi, quoted in Rees (2005), p. 265.
[225] Jean Seaton, 'The BBC and the Holocaust', *European Journal of Communication*, 2:1 (1987), pp. 53-87, at p. 71.
[226] Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2007), p. 144.

Belsen (1945). These are the representations of concentration camps that we remember, not the work of inmate artist at Auschwitz. Auschwitz appears to have been sidelined for the British public, and Bergen-Belsen used as the primary identifier of the horror of Nazism. Yet the work of visiting artists was preceded and supplemented by the visual representations made by inmate artists at Auschwitz and at other camps.

As the war drew to a close Marianne Grant, who as we have seen had been interned at Auschwitz II-Birkenau and then moved to Belsen, made detailed illustrations of the scenes that confronted her. It was at Bergen-Belsen that Anne Frank had died from typhus, and the subsequent publication of her diary drew the world's attention to her final resting place in March 1945. Four notable British war artists witnessed the liberation of the camp: Leslie Cole, Sergeant Eric Taylor, Mary Kessell and Doris Zinkiesen. Mervyn Peake also drew at Belsen, and his work, twenty-seven drawings in total, was made available to the public through the *Leader* magazine (30 July 1945) and in the magazine *Lilliput's* 'Connoisseur' section (January 1950). The Australian war artist Alan Moore accompanied the Welsh Guards as they liberated Belsen on 15 April 1945. He made a number of sketches that he augmented with photographs, recounting on his return to Australia that he was 'advised to do so because nobody would believe the horrors that I had witnessed.'[227] Doris Zinkiesen, who was specifically employed by the War Artists' Advisory Committee, to make drawings for the Red Cross, depicted what was known as the 'Human Laundry' (*fig*. *35*). Her painting of the same title compares the pitiful condition of the newly-liberated inmates with the overtly robust health of the medical employees, who were ex-members of the German nursing staff. Their job was to cut the hair of victims, and clean and delouse them before handing them over to the British Red Cross for further care and hoped-for recuperation.

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[227] http//www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/artwar/artworks/art27620_blind_man_in_belsen_e_shtml

Regarding Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, D. E. Ritchie, director of the European News Department for the BBC, issued a General Directive to the corporation on 19 April 1945, in which he wrote: 'There has never been a greater opportunity than there is now to reveal to the world the essential truth about Nazism – Buchenwald and Belsen.' Ritchie continued: 'All this is not political warfare aimed against Germany; it is something that has to be understood by everybody and which the European Service must talk about in every language that it uses.'[228] This is not to suggest that the allies had no knowledge of the twin sites of Auschwitz and Birkenau before the liberation of the camp. The gas chambers and crematoria, which the Germans had so desperately wanted to keep secret, had become known to the world through the efforts of such men as the Polish diplomat and courier Jan Karski, whose report of November 1942 was at first questioned.[229] This was not a case of implying that Karski had misled his audience, but that the information he offered was so incredible that his audience could not believe him, which is not the same as saying that they did not believe him. This problem is something that the historian Walter Laqueur has highlighted and it touches on a wider cognitive question surrounding what would become known as the Holocaust: 'what is the meaning of 'to know' or 'to believe?'[230]

Karski's report was followed by an account given by the Auschwitz II-Birkenau escapees Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler: their thirty-two-page document, referred to as *The Auschwitz Protocol*, was the first eyewitness report on the mass-murder taking place at the site. Auschwitz became crucial to the Allies' knowledge of the details concerning the Nazis master-plan for the destruction of European Jewry, but this story was not told to the general public, and *The Auschwitz Protocols* were not published for consumption by that public.

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[228] *News Directive on Reporting the Concentration Camps*. BBC Archives, http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/holocaust/5133.shtml. Accessed 19 December 2009.
[229] Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944).
[230] Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution"* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), p.3.

We should also remember that the allies were aware of the fact that many of the German atrocity stories published during the First World War – which included tales of the gassing of civilians, and the mutilation of Allied female nursing staff – had proved to be incorrect. Christopher Dowling points out that the original atrocity stories were given much greater credence than any subsequent denial,[231] whilst the historian Phillip Knightley, discussing the period 1914-1918, concludes that 'more deliberate lies were told [then] than in any other period of history'.[232] The fact of the matter was that the atrocity campaign 'became the model on which Goebbels based that of the Germans some twenty years later.' The London *Zionist Review* Stated on 27 November 1942 that: 'Hitler's devilish plan to exterminate the Jewish population seemed so fantastic that it was difficult to believe its accuracy.' In the same year the *Jewish Chronicle* stated: 'Today the very worst of the reports are confirmed. No one doubts – certainly not in official circles – the reality of the extermination plan, and its progress towards completion.' If there had been tendencies to evaluate information from Europe with a scepticism that leant towards absolution of the Nazis, by the close of 1942 that threshold had been crossed. In the same year the London *Daily Telegraph* was the first newspaper to make a clear distinction between the persecution of the Jews and their subsequent annihilation.[233]

The BBC broadcasts helped to form British national consciousness of the western European camps in the mid-1940s. Thus it was by 1945, following liberation of the camps, that such terms as 'the bitch of Belsen' was used to describe SS guard Irma Grese, and 'the beast of Belsen' to explain the actions of Dr Josef Kramer, both of whom had served at Auschwitz prior to their reassignment to Belsen. Most notable was

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[231] Christopher Dowling, 'Campaign of Hate', in *Purnell's History of the First World War* (London: BPC Publishing, 1971), p. 784.

[232] Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty of War: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 11.

[233] Michael Joseph Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews,* second edition (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 264.

the entry into popular consciousness of the phrase: 'looking like someone out of Belsen', used to describe a thin person.[234]

Regarding Auschwitz, the BBC broadcasted on the subject of the camp in 1945. Victor Klemperer, an eminent German-Jewish diarist of the Nazi period, remarked that in an English-language broadcast given by the writer Thomas Mann, Mann had not only spoken of Auschwitz as a place of incarceration, but had also given the figure of 'one-and-a-half million,' dead. According to Klemperer, 'the figure was given down to the last hundred.'[235] Klemperer is referring to Thomas Mann's broadcast of 14 January 1945. In it, Mann Stated: 'Between 15 April 1942, and 15 April 1944, in these two German establishments [the concentration camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau] alone, 1,715,000 Jews were murdered.' The dates that Mann gives mean that he cannot have included the 450,000 Hungarian Jews killed in the summer of 1944. Klemperer does not mention the broadcast in his diary until 29 January 1945, two days after the liberation of the Auschwitz camp complex, perhaps because during the war years Jews were not allowed to own radios, and had to wait for such information to be passed on to them from other sources.

In the months following the liberation of the camps, when official estimates for the number of deaths began to be published, it was said by Russian sources – which exaggerated the numbers for ideological purposes – that four million Jews had died at the Auschwitz complex. In February 1946, the American Joint Distribution Committee

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[234] Jon Stratton, 'Thinking through the Holocaust: a discussion inspired by Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*', in *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 14:2 (2000), pp. 231-245, at p. 243. Although Stratton is discussing the use of the phrase in America, the present author can recall this phrase being used in England well into the 1970s.

[235] Victor Klemperer, *To The Bitter End: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1942-45,* abridged and trans. Martin Chalmers (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 485. The Ministry of Information argued that, in order to make the anti-Nazi project 'credible' to the British people, it should not be represented as 'too extreme'. See Seaton (1987), pp. 53-87. Anne Karpf, a second-generation survivor, has suggested that the problem may lie in the 'tendency of British officials to disbelieve any but their own sources.' See Anne Karpf, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust* (London: Minerva, 1997), p. 190. It is possible to argue that by 1945 the Allies were more interested in winning the war than in giving further coverage to Russian stories of German atrocities.

for the Aid of Jews stated that a total of 4.4 million Jews had been murdered in all the camps.[236]

Concerning the inflated Russian figures, if four million had died in the Auschwitz complex alone, according to the Russian figures, then this would mean that only 400,000 had died in all of the other camps. This figure is unrealistically low, the figure being closer to 3.4 million. What all of this shows is, [and my point is] that the information about Auschwitz as it emerged post-liberation was muddled. It is not surprising, then, that the memorialisation process, which followed, was far from straightforward and universally understood. Recent scholarship, in particular Franciszek Piper's research at Auschwitz, has reduced the figures for those dying at the camp from four million to 1.1 million. Huener points out that: 'They [the figures] are not precise, and, more importantly, one must bear in mind that an inordinate focus on statistics can easily distract from their larger historical importance and contribute to the already disturbing anonymity of the victims and perpetrators.'[237] In short, according to many, an obsession with the numbers both dishonours the Auschwitz victims and tends to diminish the significance of the crimes against them.

Yet for the purposes of memorialisation, the question of numbers has a particular relevance for a museology grounded in questions of national identity. The numbers question raises issues for histories of memory culture and for an interpretation of the actual forms taken by memorials at the site and those imagined communities, to borrow Benedict Anderson's now famous term, who were to be memorialised.[238] If it is necessary, in the early stages of such a discussion, to consider which groups are memorialised, and for what reasons, then a discussion of the figures can provide an

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[236] Eyewitness account, Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, January 1946.
[237] Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press), 2003, p. 19.
[238] Benedict Andeson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

empirical measure of relative significance. In this instance, it may assist an investigation of how Auschwitz's history was presented at the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau. There, the victims were embodied, not by numbers, but by the modes of representation available to the museum at the time. The questions of numbers and communities did not at that stage predominate. The overriding characteristic of this early memorialisation was its embodiment of victimisation and loss. As we shall see, there was a struggle to transform the death of the inmates into a memorial representing the sorts of universal meanings we now associate with the site.

The Auschwitz Site

In the aftermath of Poland's occupation by the Nazis, and with the country's domestic infrastructure devastated, there survives little visual evidence of how Auschwitz looked at the time of its liberation. Janina Struk has proposed that there are few early images of Auschwitz because 'The publishing industry in Poland was virtually extinct.'[239] 'Images did appear', Struk writes, but 'the quality was often of such a low standard that it is difficult to tell exactly what they depicted, and many were so heavily retouched that they resembled drawings rather than photographs.'[240] There is also the fact, as it is pointed out by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, that many of the surviving images were of incidents restaged after the event. For example, the photograph of men awaiting liberation at the gates of Auschwitz (the Stammlager), was taken a month after the inmates' emancipation (*fig. 36*). This accounts for the appearance of well-being amongst those represented. The cultural theorist John Tagg has described the cultural context, especially regarding the authority of the photograph as eyewitness within, which these images were interpreted:

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[239] Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.148.
[240] Struk (2004), p. 148.

> [T]he trustworthiness and importance of such photographs are largely assured by their articulation within the culturally dominant discourses on history, knowledge, and material reality, and located by statements that substantiate photography's status as document, evidence and knowledge.[241]

So, in a context where photographs were staged, the use of photographs by the museum also becomes consequently problematic.

Photographs enhance the authority of the museum by suggesting a visual link that apparently makes the world of the Holocaust credible to the museum visitor. These photographs may be used by the museum to connect the past to the present through an intrinsic claim of 'having been there.' They are material objects, which claim to offer empirical proof of the catastrophe. As material evidence they bequeath to the museum the power to make these events visible within our public culture. Situated beyond written or oral testimony, the photographs contribute towards the creation of a relationship between the so-called 'real' Auschwitz and the museum's public culture, that we might term secondary witnessing.

Vilem Flusser has argued that black and white photographs bear the claim of authenticity because they generate the illusion that the world, when broken down into black and white, and thus into perfectly opposable elements, 'would be accessible to logical analysis.'[242] However, Flusser's analysis overlooks the fact that black-and-white photography is also composed of many shades of grey. In the context of Holocaust historiography, the promise of total explicability assumes particular importance. The abstractions *true* and *false* and *good* and *evil*, which evidently precede the invention of photography, seem here to overlap. In the first incarnation of the museum the curators were dealing with a codification of memory where text and image were given the same 'truth' value, in this age of 'newsreel' authenticity. It can be argued that evidential

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[241] Jon Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 63.
[242] Vilem Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000), p.42.

testimonial texts do not find an equivalent representational correlation in black-and-white photographs.

The images of restaged events include also such films as Wanda Jakubowska's *Ostatni Etap* [The Last Stage] of 1947, one of the earliest cinematic attempts to describe the Holocaust and Jakubowska's film debut, described in the previous chapter, and which is still quoted extensively by later directors, including Steven Spielberg in *Schindler's List*.[243] The film was partly shot on location at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and is based on Jakubowska's personal experiences as an inmate. As we saw earlier Kakubowska claimed that what helped her to survive Auschwitz was constantly thinking about the documentation of her experiences. There also exist millions of static images taken by SS propaganda units, who roamed throughout occupied Europe, in the performance of their duties recording the implementation of the Final Solution. Then there is the further category of photographs made by amateurs, usually people involved in the genocidal project. These personal mementoes more often than not share the same racial ideologies as the official images. They have been used by the museum as further evidence of Nazi Germany's war crimes, and were presented as documentary proof at the later war crimes trials in Poland and Germany. However, their use in the museum also necessarily differs from their original purposes (documentary evidence) where they were presumably used as proof of the carrying out of the genocidal scheme, and as keepsakes, whereas in the museum their status as reportage, documentation, becomes more problematically neutral.[244]

In the months following the liberation of Auschwitz, the site was used as a camp to house German prisoners of war, and for the internment of Volksdeutsche (a Nazi term that refers to those ethnic Germans who were living outside the Third Reich).

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[243]Hanno Loewy, 'The Mother of all Holocaust Films? Wanda Jakubowska's Auschwitz Trilogy', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 24:2 (2004), pp. 179-204, at p. 199.
[244] For a discussion of the uses of this category of photographs see Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Little, Brown 1997), pp. 245-247, pp. 405-406.

Given the presence in Poland of these two groups' throughout World War II, their imprisonment at Auschwitz and Birkenau did not provoke the same repercussions for the State as did those who found themselves imprisoned at other camps, such as Majdanek, which was used as a site to imprison Poles, whom the Russians believed would be, at the least, an obstacle for the successful imposition of Stalinism upon Poland.[245] There, the authorities reorganized the camp as a place of incarceration for returning members of the Polish Free Army and the Home Guard. At Auschwitz the authorities put the prisoners to work exhuming bodies from mass graves, dismantling machinery from German-owned industrial plants that had been set up in the vicinity of Auschwitz (such as the chemical plant at Monowitz), and clearing the grounds and making structural repairs to the buildings.

Post-liberation, the buildings erected at the *Stammlager* (Auschwitz I) as part of the 1942 extension to the camp, known as the *Lagerweiterung*, (smaller camps that came under the direction of the *Stammlager*) were used as medical facilities for the most gravely ill survivors (*fig. 37*). These required immediate attention. Irene Strzelecka, an historian working at the present day Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, writes that 'In the first months after the liberation the highest priority was caring for over 4,000 bedridden former prisoners.'[246] Of these, 2,200 were inmates of Auschwitz II-Birkenau who required medical attention immediately, whilst the number requiring help at the Auschwitz III-Monowitz site is unrecorded. These patients were gradually transferred to the main camp over the next few weeks. Block 11, known as the Block of Death, was used as a mortuary for some of the 600 inmates who died following the liberation. A ceremonial funeral for victims was held on 28 February 1945, when 470 bodies from Auschwitz II-Birkenau were brought to a grave that had been dug near the *Lagerweiterung* Blocks, the warehouse, just outside the main camp (*fig. 38*). All the

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[245] Huener (2003), p. 61.
[246] Strzelecka (2000), p. 60.

corpses from Block 11 had been placed in the grave beforehand. It is estimated that about 700 Auschwitz victims lie in this common grave. In the immediate post-war period, the Auschwitz site thus came to perform multiple functions before it was a museum: it was a prison, a recovery site, a hospital, and a burial ground.

Although the urgent needs following the liberation were thus medical (and it is a little-acknowledged fact that Sue Ryder, a twenty-four year old Briton and later initiator of the Foundation named after her took part in much of this work), a major drive took place immediately to formalise the enormity of events through the founding of a State museum.[247]

Inmate Survivors Return to the Camp

The State Museum at Auschwitz originated, as we have seen, within the functioning camp as the Lagermuzeum, and was therefore implicitly part of Poland's wartime experience. Former artist inmates such as Franciszek Targosz, Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, Mieczysław Kościelniak and Tadeusz Wąsowicz returned to the site soon after the cessation of hostilities probably around May or June 1945. They wanted to fulfil a proposal, made during the war, to create a permanent exhibition that would communicate internationally their experiences. This idea originated with the inmates themselves, who recognised the need to create a museum to represent the suffering that had taken place at the site. Kazimierz Smoleń, a former prisoner who later became a director of the State Museum, recollects that 'we did not know if we would survive, but one did speak of a memorial site. Some kind of institution. Certainly the idea of creating a *sacrum* out of this place existed already in the camp.'[248] In proposing this, Smoleń was articulating the need to create a sacred space that would bring to public visibility

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[247] Upon Sue Ryder's ennoblement she chose the title Lady Ryder of Warsaw in recognition of the suffering that Poland had endured throughout the Second World War. Hers is the only British title to step outside of the Union.
[248] Huener (2003), p. 59.

the history of the concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Not surprisingly, the ex-inmates of the camp were in the vanguard of the effort to establish a museum at Auschwitz that would narrate their story. The inmates wanted a museum that would be an instrument of the history of both Auschwitz and Birkenau, and of their own history as inmates, as individuals.

Tim Cole has pointed out that in bringing this history to the fore, there was right away an 'early transformation of Auschwitz from a site of history into a site of memory,' and that this 'was about much more than simply recovering the traces of the past.'[249] It was also about projecting something of the past into the present, via functions such as 'historicisation, memorialisation and social transformation.'[250] These strands converge upon the function of the museum in mid-twentieth century culture to influence the public. The culture of museums in the wake of the post-industrial didactic drives of the nineteenth-century, was such that the knowledge and the expertise of the institution, still went largely unquestioned as a site of 'neutral' authority. However, for the Auschwitz museum to work as an active agent for remembrance, its conservation, but more crucially, its interpretation, was required.

At this early stage, in the summer 1945, it was impossible for the recently-arrived members of the fledgling museum to carry out systematic work, because the camp was still in use for a variety of functional purposes, and given the large geographical distance, since the furthest of the sub-camps was 475 kilometres north of the *Stammlager* (Auschwitz I), in Czechoslovakia. For this reason, some of the sub-camps and several of the smaller facilities were abandoned. An example of this can be seen in the post-liberation history of the sub-camp Rajsko, which was originally used as an agricultural centre. At liberation the site was neglected, and later allowed to fall in to

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[249] Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 224.
[250] Vera Frenkel, 'A Place for Uncertainty: Towards a New Kind of Museum', in Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans (eds.), *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p.126.

decay. By contrast, at the much larger camp of Auschwitz III-Monowitz, the Buna Werke site had been taken over by the Polish government, and became the centre of the nation's future chemical industry. Therefore, whilst the concept of remembrance through a museum dedicated to the whole of the Auschwitz complex was being emphasised at Auschwitz I, other sites were abandoned, or as shown in the previous chapter dismantled as at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The materials from the barracks were also pressed into use to rebuild Poland's post-war economy. As is often the case in the founding of museums, what could be conserved to represent Auschwitz was dependent on other, contingent and practical factors, and, of course, the politics surrounding its reclamation.

First Exhibitions at Auschwitz I

Around May 1945, two Blocks at the *Stammlager* were converted into exhibition spaces, Block 11 (the 'Block of Death') and the lower floor of Block 4 (previously used for medical experimentation). The basement of the building was filled with artefacts, creating fields of found objects which were strewn across the floor. These objects had been collected from around the twin sites of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and testified to the genocide that had taken place at the camp (*fig. 39*). However, this display strategy was changed, probably within months. A visitor to this new exhibition, also organised by the inmates, noted the contents of the display: 'In numerous alcoves are revealed the various strata of society that here found their deaths. Thus, a peasant's coat next to a mountaineer's costume; liturgical vestments of all faiths.'[251] This part of the exhibition can be said to mirror the organisation of the display that had taken place in the *Lagermuzeum* of the functioning camp. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the museum was repeating the same techniques and categories of display as the perpetrators

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[251]*Express Wieczorny*, 5 November 1946, cited in Huener (2003), pp. 69-70.

had used. However, the conclusion intended to be drawn by the SS differed immeasurably from the reception intended for post-war audiences, where memorialisation of the suffering of the victims, rather than the triumph of the perpetrators, was paramount. Now a votive nature surrounded the same display of objects. The votive nature of this exhibition implicitly opposed Höss's earlier attempts at museum or memorial-making. Included in the display were 'children's slippers' that according to one museum visitor of the time 'speak for themselves, and next to them the hair of murdered women induces a shudder of horror.'[252] The visitor's reception of the intended narrative of suffering, of martyrdom, depicted in this exhibition was also evident in the closing line of a visitors report: 'For a long time we are unable to depart from this sanctuary of Martyrology – we are moved to the depths of our emotions.'[253]

A small number of images of this second iteration of the early exhibitions exist in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (*fig. 40*, *41*, *42*, *43*).[254] In these illustrations we can see that it had been extended to the upper floors of Block 4 (originally used for housing members of the SS and later for prisoner accommodation) had been divided by barbed wire into sections, each forming an enclosure into which were placed items that had originally been stolen from deportees. These typological displays, whereby groups of objects are presented by kind, demonstrate a development towards a much greater conceptual intervention by the inmate-curators. These displays included the biographical (yet anonymous) signifiers of clothing, prostheses, suitcases, shoes, and human hair. The absence of explanatory texts demonstrates a more emotive than simply documentary purpose: which suggests that the objects alone were intended to evoke an empathy with the victims, and to exemplify an implicit narrative of Auschwitz that all visitors could construct for themselves. At either end of the basement sacred devices were installed. One, an illuminated cross, the other a crown of thorns,

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[252] *Express Wieczorny*, 5 November 1946, cited in Huener, pp. 69-70.
[253] *Express Wieczorny*, 5 November 1946, cited in Huener, pp. 69-70.
[254] The Auschwitz State Museum at Oświęcim (AMPO), Nr. Neg. 3441.

recalling Jesus of Nazareth at his crucifixion. This device was placed in front of an urn containing human ash collected from the site of Auschwitz II-Birkenau (*figs. 44, 45*). These emphasised again the votive nature of the exhibits, but carried further meaning. Huener proposes that the use of such overt symbols suggest that this was 'an obvious appeal to Christian religiosity,' but one that also appealed particularly to the 'sensibilities of Polish national, and therefore Roman Catholic martyrdom [and] also testified to the Polish character of the exhibit.'[255] The iconic role played by these relics of the inmates, especially when placed together with the cross and crown of thorns, further established the votive nature of the exhibition in a Catholic culture.

These initial exhibitions, prior to the foundation of the State Museum in June 1947, were curated in an atmosphere that had recourse to no prior pattern or precedent, as far as the notion of a museum dedicated to telling the story of human suffering on the scale of Auschwitz was concerned. Huener suggests that this absence of any earlier models contributed towards a sense of 'confusion and a lack of direction.'[256] Wincenty Hein, the former prisoner and an early employee of the museum, further explained that the exhibit appeared as it did because 'not one of us had a precise idea how to shape the activities of the newly opened institution.'[257] This remark especially highlights the problems that confronted the museum staff in their attempt to represent Auschwitz by using then traditional methods of museum display which was limited to narratives of triumph rather than of the tragic. The curators evidently believed that the objects could 'speak for themselves,' and the absence of interpretive texts may support this view. The use of a cross and crown of thorns confirms that this was a moment in Poland's history that was not yet subject to Stalinist State-sponsored anti-religious constraints. Neither was there the ecumenical or multi-faith agenda now present at Auschwitz. These would not appear for some decades to come.

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[255] Huener (2003), p. 70.
[256] Huener (2003), p. 69.
[257] Huener (2003), p. 69.

Those who presented the earliest exhibitions at the site were not curating a traditional art museum or beaux-arts gallery; what they were doing was unconsciously enshrining what would later become the now recognisable type of the Holocaust museum, yet without prototype to follow. Thus, the inmate artists responded to the site not so much as inmate artists but as survivors of the camp. It is of interest to note that they did not exhibit examples of their own outworks realised within Auschwitz.

The first post-war call for an official museum at the site came from Alfred Fiderkiewicz, a former inmate of Auschwitz II-Birkenau and delegate of the National Homeland Council, who suggested on 31 December 1945 that a museum and memorials should be placed at Oświęcim and Brzezinka to commemorate both Polish and international martyrdom.[258] On 1 February 1946 a government commission for culture and art approved the recommendation and appointed the former prisoner, Tadeusz Wasowicz, as director of the site.

Even before this, on 29 May 1945, four months after the liberation of the camp and at approximately the moment when the first exhibit was placed on public view, very interestingly Auschwitz received a British delegation, led by the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, Dr Hewlett Johnson. Johnson was often described by the British press as the 'Red Dean' because of his known communist sympathies. The delegation was photographed at the site, and the image was published, being included in the official guidebook to Auschwitz, which suggests that the Polish authorities regarded the visit as important (*fig. 46*).[259] However, in keeping with the earlier point about the lack of full international awareness of Auschwitz no pictures appeared in the British national press, which made no mention of the event.[260]

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[258] The National Homeland Council was provisionally established on 1 January 1944. Its aims were to establish a pro-Soviet 'representative body' in Poland. It was formed without the approval of Stalin.

[259] Kazimierz Smoleń, *KL Auschwitz: Documentary Photographs* (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1946), p. 238.

[260] One reason for this can be found in the MI5 Security Files that were compiled on Hewlett. An investigator wrote: 'The influence of the Dean of Canterbury is probably less felt in Canterbury than anywhere else. The majority of the

Pictured with Dr Johnson is the Polish judge Dr Jan Sehn, who led the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. He examined the sites at Auschwitz and Birkenau, collecting information for the war crimes trials that were to follow in Poland.[261] This was the first formal presentation of information concerning Auschwitz.[262] In it, Sehn outlined what was to become the official Polish narrative concerning Auschwitz. In turn, his interpretation would eventually guide the museum's principles for a prospective museology for the museum at Auschwitz. Sehn's monograph, *Oświęcim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz-Birkenau) Concentration Camp* published in 1946,[263] remained in print for the next two decades, and contributed very substantially to the understanding of Auschwitz in Poland.

Sehn categorised the deportees to Auschwitz by nationality, placing emphasis on the largest groups, those from Poland, Hungary, Germany and Czechoslovakia. This approach left little room for the accommodation of such categories, not derived from Sehn but consistent with his views, as Jews, Sinti or Roma (Gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses and other non-ethnic categories. This strategy was later echoed in the formal decree of the Polish parliament, The Law of 2 July 1947 on the commemoration of the martyrdom of the Polish Nation and other Nations in Oświęcim.[264] This law established a nation-State perspective for the identification of the deportees, which left those without a nation-State scant opportunity for recognition. An example can be found in the discourse that has surrounded the figure of six million Polish war-dead, first

citizens, somewhat apathetic by nature, are prepared to accept him rather in the same spirit as those living opposite a gas works or a sewage farm accept the smell.' The press perhaps shared the view that Hewlett Johnson was not influential at home, but he was free to be so in Europe. www.mi5.gov.uk/.../communists-and-suspected-communists.html/KV 2/2150-2152. Last updated 1 March 2006. Accessed 12 January 2010.

[261] There was a second investigation, concurrent with Sehn's: the Kraków Institute for Forensic Research (Instytut Ekspertyz Sadowych) prepared a report on a forensic investigation of Auschwitz that was submitted in evidence at the 1946 Auschwitz trial in Kraków. Published in German by the Dokumentationszentrum des Österreichischen Widerstandes (Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance) and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and Culture. See: B. Gallanda *et al., Amoklauf gegen die Wirklichkeit* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kultur, 1991), pp. 36-40; the original is in the Auschwitz State Museum.

[262] Herman Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 8.

[263] Jan Sehn, *Obóz koncentracyjny Oświęcim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz-Birkenau), na podstawie dokumentów i źródeł* (Warszawa: Institute of Forensic Research, 1946), p. 28.

[264] *Ustawa z dnia 2 lipca 1947.*

advanced in 1947. Half of this figure can be accounted for by Polish Jews, yet they were not identified as such. Huener points out that 'the precise number of Jewish dead or the proportion of Jews among those dead often remained unspecified.'[265] In the case of categorising the dead at Auschwitz (at that time as we have seen thought to be four million), by nationality, this contributed, according to Huener, to the incorrect supposition that the Nazis had subjected 'Polish Jews, Polish Gentiles, and other prisoners to equal treatment', and this of course was not the case.[266] The Jews, as we know, received disproportionate persecution. In this one can perceive the 'triumphant narrative of national identity.'[267] The tension between Polish-led and Jewish-led stories determined the nature of the curation at the museum, and would continue to do so until after the fall of communism in 1989. The narrative, which begins to emerge at the time, is one that bolsters Polish suffering, for nationalist purposes, whilst masking the extent to which the Jews were the main victim group.

As we have seen, the early curators determined to memorialise the suffering that had taken place at Auschwitz, and set about their task by producing a votive exhibition that commemorated anguish, but had little interpretive intervention. The overtly Christian symbolism adopted in the exhibition showed that the curators were operating before the imposition of Stalinist ideology, which subsequently attempted to link Auschwitz to Polish national martyrdom without recourse to religious forms of representation because the Stalinist ideology replaced it. Following Sehn's report of 1947, and following the imposition of Stalinist thinking, with its emphasis on secularisation, but also on a propagandist narrative told in a documentary style, which also happened in 1947 which would have been unacceptable following the imposition Stalinist ideology in 1947. Following Sehn's report, also of 1947, greater emphasis was

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[265] Huener (2003), pp. 42-43.
[266] Huener (2003), p. 43.
[267] Anna Neill, 'National Culture and the New Museology,' in Anna Smith and Lydia Wevers (eds), *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004), p.183.

placed in the museum on the voice of the inmate, through the use of testimony and photographic imagery. This introduced a narrative into the commemoration. James Young has since famously questioned the objective value of such displays, which as we shall see became an official mainstay of the Holocaust museum type, as identified by Paul Williams.[268] As Young states: 'These artefacts also force us to recall the victims as the Germans have remembered them to us: in the collected debris of a destroyed civilisation.' [269] In short, it might be said that the curators were presenting, if inadvertently, a narrative necessarily conditioned by what was left behind by the Germans.

I have shown that the first exhibition, although small in size (owing to the restricted space available), shows that the museum staff chose to narrate theirs and the site's history in such a way that the viewer would primarily make an emotional or reverential response. The absence of any museological pattern upon which to base their work left the former inmates to strive to illustrate the horrors of the camp with whatever artefacts were accessible to them at the time. However, since these objects had limited educational and instructive value, it was hoped that more would be achieved by the extension of the exhibition. Consequently as we shall see in the following section, a redesign and an official State opening of the museum was planned under the newly elected (January 1947) Stalinist regime.

The Official Museum at Auschwitz, 1947

At the Stammlager (the base camp at Auschwitz I) Blocks 10 (formerly the location for SS Dr Clauberg's medical experiments) and 11 (the camp prison and Gestapo Summary Court), were to be preserved and used as a mausoleum for those who had died in the

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[268] Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), p. 3 and p. 33.
[269] James Young (1993), p. 132.

camp. Three further Blocks were to be used for research into German crimes; a visitors' hostel, and a vocational education facility for post-secondary learning. These uses suggest that the site was at this time conceived of as a place of learning, and not so much as a monument to those that had died there, as Auschwitz later became.

Interestingly, at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, it was intended that a further twenty Blocks were to be used for exhibition purposes, and that this would include histories and narratives from other camps. It is difficult to tell why Auschwitz II-Birkenau, as the largest of the Auschwitz sub-camps, was earmarked for the staging of more exhibitions than the former *Stammlager* and as I show, no such extra or special exhibitions were placed there.

However, the site at Birkenau was largely lost at this time. In July of 1946, eighteen barracks were sold to the local population and divided among five villages. Later in the same year wood from a number of barracks was used for the construction of housing. Eventually the site was destroyed: 'in 1947, barracks from the site were dismantled and shipped to various locations across Poland.'[270]

The official Polish perspective on Auschwitz was fully expressed in The Law of 2 July 1947, mentioned above.[271] This law, which is still in force today, defined the museum's physical boundaries as widely as possible, and established the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Sehn's nation-State categories, such as 'Polish' were endorsed, so that it became possible to refer to the citizens of Poland and other countries, for example Russia, in describing the camp's inmates. This perspective meant that the Jews were not directly defined as the primary constituency. Their presence was subsumed instead as citizens of several nation-States. It was also not possible to speak separately of such groups of Auschwitz victims as the Gypsies, as mentioned previously, or

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[270] Huener, p. 65.

[271] In full and in Polish: *Ustawa z dnia 2 lipca 1947 r. o upamiętnieniu męczeństwa Narodu Polskiego i innych Narodów w Oświęcimiu*. The 'Polish Nation' and 'other Nations' were spelled using capital letters in order to stress their importance, and this format was used in the title and contents of the law.

members of other ethnic groups which did not have their own states at the time the law was enacted, for example, Belarusians and Ukrainians.

The museum continued to be sited at the *Stammlager*, and continued problematically to claim to represent the entirety of the complex of camps. The task for the museum was to make public the multi-valenced voices of the site's past, presenting these as a coherent narrative by which knowledge of Auschwitz-Birkenau was to pass to the public. Indeed the law of 1947 endorsed Auschwitz as Poland's official carrier of memory for the story of the Holocaust.[272] In doing so it served a two–fold function: to establish the collective act of 'remembering' and 'not forgetting'; and to connect information about the site to, and embody it in, the material history of the place. Thus Auschwitz, as a historical museum, acted as a cultural agent that conveyed very particular agendas through its collections and exhibits. The narrative, constituted in this way, legitimated, articulated, and represented politicised knowledge systems that were intended to transmit stories and memories across society from one generation to another.

At Auschwitz, in the context of the Stalinist regime, these now recognisable museological systems were used above all for the production of a Polish national identity. This required that the transmitted messages would resonate across diverse social groups, ranging from peasant farmers to university scholars. For the Polish authorities, it was important to maintain the same political narrative, which was the story of Russia's liberation of Poland from Nazism, so that the museum should enshrine the memory of the people whom it represented with a particular form of historical knowledge, from which visitors could draw lessons that were broadly intended to help make sense of their present politics. Hence, whilst the museum intentionally worked to

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[272] Henry Rousso has identified four forms of collective memory. They are: 'official', which is representative of such phenomena as monuments and ceremonies; 'organisational', the maintaining of a common mode of memory; 'cultural', the individual's perception of the past; and 'scholarly', the work of museums and curators in attempting to illustrate the past at such places as the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

remember, it also strategically obscured the identification of some of those stakeholder groups who should have been included. In this, the museum can be said to have worked hard not to remember, but to forget.

Dominick LaCapra writes that many, especially those who follow a Marxist perspective, have linked capitalism and Auschwitz. He comments: '[C]apitalism has been seen as a direct or indirect cause of the Holocaust, or at least key to its functioning.'[273] This theory was certainly used by Poland's Stalinist administration as part of its justification for choosing Auschwitz as the premier site of Holocaust remembrance in Poland, and as the site for its State Museum. Tim Cole writes: 'Unlike the camps in the west [of Europe] Auschwitz had been the site of mass killings by gas, and thus its gas chambers became the centre of the "Holocaust" world.'[274] In this respect, Auschwitz was different from such camps as Bergen-Belsen, where no gas chambers had been constructed, or Dachau, where a gas chamber was constructed but never put into full-time use.

Cole suggests further reasons for choosing Auschwitz. The *Operation Reinhard* camps Bełżec, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka (noted above), with the exception of Majdanek, were razed to the ground, either when Birkenau began to function as a death camp, or by the retreating Germans as the war drew to a close. However, Auschwitz and Majdanek were liberated in conditions that left the sites mainly intact. So the question is: why Auschwitz and not Majdanek?

There are several possible explanations for this. The city of Lublin, near to which Majdanek is situated, was the seat of the Polish puppet government of 1944, known as the Lublin Committee (or, more formally, as the Polish Committee of National Liberation), which was a USSR-controlled minority government. The river

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[273] Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 195.
[274] Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: how history is bought, packaged and sold* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 101.

Bug, close to Lublin, has a special resonance for the Poles as the site of the lost Kresy, a territory that constituted the Eastern Borderlands, or confines of the Second Polish Republic that lasted from 11 November 1918 to 1 September 1939. It was along this border, at Brest, that Russia and Germany celebrated their speedy success in overrunning Poland and held a joint victory parade on 22 September 1939.[275] Majdanek was liberated and then promptly put into use as a prison camp for returning members of the Free Home Army and the Polish Guard. Tim Cole notes the geographic importance of the location of the camp and the sinister uses to which it was put by the liberating authorities. 'Majdanek faced eastwards and while pointing to Soviet liberation, also pointed towards a darker side of Polish-Soviet relations.'[276] For example, the massacre in 1940, principally at the Katyn forest, of 14,500 Polish army officers by Russian secret service agents, was not something that could comfortably be mentioned in the present politics. Geographically, Auschwitz, in the south of Poland, was thus more uncomplicatedly anti-German on liberation, while Majdanek's history was less unequivocal, being bound up with more ambiguous German-Russian relations. Symbolically Auschwitz could point a metaphorically accusing finger towards both Germany and capitalism, and also reminded the Poles of their historic enemy to the west.[277]

On 25 April 1947, a conference was held in the town of Oświęcim where officials from the Central Commission of Polish Jews (*Centralna Komisja Żydowska Polska*, or CKŻP), and the director of the Central Jewish Historical Commission (Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna or CŻKH), met with the Polish-Jewish historian Natan Blumental, who had been instrumental in the detection, and later the cataloguing of the first part of the Ringelblum Archive, which was a documentary

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[275] For a discussion of these developments, see G. J. Ashworth, *War and The City* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[276] Cole (2000), p. 101.
[277] Some have interpreted Auschwitz not as signalling capitalism, but as marking the end of modernism; see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxv-xxiv.

record of the wartime fate of Polish Jewry. Retrieved after the Second World War from metal boxes and milk churns buried beneath the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto, the *Oyneg Shabes* – Ringelblum Archive – had been clandestinely compiled between 1940 and 1942 under the leadership of historian Emanuel Ringelblum. Members of the secret *Oyneg Shabes* organization gathered thousands of testimonies from natives of Warsaw and refugees from hundreds of other localities. Now housed in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, the archive comprises some 35,000 pages of documents, and materials from the underground press, including photographs, memoirs, and belles-lettres. Blumental's was the first comprehensive description of the archive's contents, and was meticulously indexed to facilitate the location of documents and information.

Thus, in 1947 Blumental was chosen to discuss the role of Jewish institutions in setting up the Museum.[278] The Jewish delegates conferred with Professor Ludwik Rajewski, the head of the Department of Museums and Monuments, which was part of the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art (*Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, MkiS*). Rajewski presented a periodisation of Auschwitz that began with the attempted physical destruction of the Poles, especially the intelligentsia (as noted in chapter 1). This stage, he pointed out, was followed by a second phase, one that was centred upon the annihilation of the Jews. The Polish agenda was therefore as visible at this time as the Jewish history. The Auschwitz museum's director Tadeusz Wąsowicz was also present, having secured funding for the future museum from the Polish government in Warsaw.

Following a detailed inspection of the plans for the exhibition, the Jewish delegates asked for Blocks 4 and 10 to be used for displays that would narrate the Jewish experience at Auschwitz. Although the former was not rich in significance for the Jewish history at the camp, Block 10 was, having provided the accommodation for

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[278] For a full discussion of this archive, see Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epsztein (eds), *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes–Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), especially at, p. 9, footnote 64.

Jewish women slated for medical experimentation. This request was approved and both Blocks were put at the disposal of the CKŻP (Central Jewish Historical Commission). The CKŻP representatives undertook to prepare one of the exhibits in Block 4, with its installation entrusted to Jewish painters and sculptors from the Art Cooperative in Łódź. This organisation was part of an attempt to rehabilitate Jewish survivors through education and training. During the period 1945-1948, the Cooperative supported 60,000 Polish Jews. Of these, 30,000 were former inmates, whilst the numbers of Jews returning from Russia account for the total figure of 66, 000.[279]

The Official Opening of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau

As I have shown there was a dominant characteristic in the early exhibition strategies at Auschwitz, namely that Poles were to view Auschwitz primarily as a site of Polish national sacrifice and suffering. To this two further strands can be added. The first is that the Polish authorities consistently downplayed and neglected the camp's history as a site for the extermination of Jews. The second is that the Polish State was henceforth instrumental in using the site for gaining political advantage. The exhibition of the 1947 opening of the State Museum at Auschwitz can be interpreted as a drawing together of these threads.

Michael Steinlauf, a senior researcher at the YIVO Institute (*Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut*) in New York, has offered a commentary upon the combined effects of these two purposes. Christian Poles interpreted the Jewish presence in Poland as part of the Stalinist attempt to occupy the country, because of the high number of Jewish Poles found to be supporting Communist ideals, so that the saying 'Jews were the government and the government was Jewish,' became, according to Steinlauf,

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[279] Mauricio Olsztajn, *"Lodz": Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), p. 41.

'openly expressed.' [280] The downplaying of Jewish suffering at Auschwitz can be interpreted as part of a coordinated attempt to win over Christian Poles to Stalinism. In this respect, the site became useful for political purposes. Elazar Barkan, Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, describes the context:

> The prevalent view amongst the Poles was that the Jews had joyously welcomed the Soviet invasion of September 1939; in addition, Jews supposedly had played an important role in the local Soviet power apparatus in the subsequent period. [281]

Poland's Jews were therefore linked to the Stalinist occupation of the country. The official opening of the State Museum took place on Saturday 14 June 1947, the seventh anniversary of the first deportations to the camp. Visitors from Poland and abroad gathered at the Stammlager (Auschwitz I) to take part in a religious service, and to hear speeches. [282] This constituted their active participation in the dedication of the State Museum at Auschwitz (Oświęcim). Under a headline that read 'Oswiecim Camp To Be Polish Museum', the Warsaw correspondent of *The Times* (London) described the occasion: 'About 50,000 former political prisoners from various German concentration camps arrived there [Auschwitz camp, not the town of Oświęcim] to attend a ceremony and pay homage to the millions who died there [Birkenau not Auschwitz] by putting up a cross.' [283] The act of homage and the siting of the cross followed speeches made by Polish Catholic and Jewish dignitaries and government officials at the Stammlager. The Vice-Minister for Transportation, Zygmunt Balicki, general secretary of the International Federation of Former Political Prisoners, gave the first speech. Significantly Balicki called for international solidarity among all former prisoners, ie those of all nations and creeds, in the struggle against Hitlerism. Józef Sak, of the

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[280] Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p. 49.

[281] Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole and Kai Struve (eds), *Shared History – Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939-1941* (Leipzig: Simon-Dubnow-Institut für Judische Geschichte und Kultur, 2007), p. 21.

[282] The religious services were: Catholic in the courtyard of Block 11, Jewish in Block 4, and Eastern Orthodox and Lutheran inside Block 11.

[283] Archive.timesonline.co.uk/ *The Times*, Monday June 16 1947. Accessed 8 April 2010. The *New York Times* reported the event in forty words on page 12 of its Sunday edition under the headline 'Nazi Camp Now a Museum.'

Central Committee of Polish Jews, also expressed his hopes for a brotherhood of all nations, a comment which supports the suggestion that the contesting of the site by its former constituents was already at work.

It was during this act of dedication that Stanisław Dybowski, Poland's minister for culture and art, announced the creation of a 'Council for the Protection of Monuments of Struggle and Martyrdom,' this organisation under the direction of the Polish prime minister, emphasised the Stalinist perception of Auschwitz. Finally the Prime Minister, Józef Cyrankiewicz, himself a former inmate of the camp, spoke (*fig. 47*). He began by invoking German acts of wartime brutality that had taken place within and outside the normal confines of war. Speaking directly to those survivors of Auschwitz and other camps, he stated:

> Those of us who remain, who remember the heinous factories of death – we are, for the Polish nation, for Europe, for the entire world not only a document; we must be the conscious, organised vanguard of the struggle, so that the tragedy to which we are witness, of which we are living documents, is never repeated.[284]

The urgency was to establish concrete goals, which would include the reconstruction of Poland after the German invasion, the hope for Poland's future independence, and the creation of a lasting worldwide peace. The survivors, as 'living documents', would represent tangible proofs of man's inhumanity towards man, in essence supplementing the museum site. The site itself, according to Cyrankiewicz, would act as 'an eternal warning and document of unbound German bestiality, and also at the same time proof of man and his fight for freedom.'[285] After Cyrankiewicz closed his speech with the formal dedication of the museum, those present sang the Polish patriotic song 'Rota' (The Oath), which recalled Poland's victory over the Germans at

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[284] Quoted and translated in Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, Vol 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 136.
[285] Heuner (2003), p. 33.

Tannenberg, in 1410. The song can be understood as an unofficial national anthem, especially during the period of occupation. The first and final verses read:

We shall not yield our forebear's land,

Nor see our language muted.

Our nation is Polish, and Polish our folk,

By Piasts constituted.[286]

By cruel oppression we'll not be swayed.

So help us God!

So help us God!

[....]

The German will not spit in our face,

Nor will he Germanise our children,

Our battalion will armed arise,

And the spirit will be our commander.

We will go where the golden horn calls.

So help us God!

So help us God![287]

According to Barbara Tornquist-Plewa, a researcher specialising in the inter-relationship between language and national characteristics in Eastern Central Europe the 'Rota' shows that 'Language, religion and territory are thus viewed as the backbone of Polish national identity.'[288] I would go further and suggest that the singing of the 'Rota' on the occasion of the official opening of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau can

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[286] The Piast dynasty was the first ruling dynasty in tenth-century Poland.
[287] Lyrics by Maria Konopnicka (1908), music by Felix Nowowiesjski (1910). First sung at Kraków in 1910, at the 500th anniversary of the Polish victory over the Germans at the Battle of Grűnewald.
[288] Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, 'Contrasting Ethnic Nationalisms: Eastern Central Europe', in Stephen Barbour and Cathie Carmichael (eds), *Language and Nationalism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 197.

also be interpreted as a form of civil disobedience, aimed at the State. For example, the textile industry strikes, which took place in Łódź in September 1947, began with the singing of this patriotic song. The 'Rota' was, therefore, a form of dissident communication, a view that is supported by Padraic Kenney. [289]

The speeches at Auschwitz were followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Wall of Death in the courtyard between Blocks 10 and 11. The participants then moved on to Auschwitz II-Birkenau, where further acts of commemoration and remembrance took place, notably the placing of a cross on the ruins of one of the crematoria. After a further wreath-laying ceremony the crowd sang the 'Rota' again.

The speeches at the dedication of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum show that the State intended the museum to be a perpetual site of commemoration and remembrance. It was to be an important vehicle for the healing of the Poles, as well as a focus for nationalist identity politics. The site represented a space in which they – the Poles – could honour the memories of those who died, yet this was to be achieved by invoking nation-state identities, which by necessity excluded religious and ethnic individuality. There was also a further exclusion, that of the Jews of Israel, for whom independence from the British Mandate for Palestine was not declared until 14 May 1948. The site also offered the opportunity to validate the recollections of survivors. In addition, it was hoped that a Europe-wide – if not worldwide – scope would be developed at both the museum and its site, and that this would remind all nations of the duty to remember, and the need for vigilance against tyranny. If the memory of the functioning Auschwitz instantiated the circumstances of the inmates' fear, despair and grief at the hands of their incarcerators, the anticipation was that as a museum and memorial site the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum could also be a possible vehicle

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[289] For a full discussion of this subject, see Padraic Kenney, 'Working-class community and resistance in pre-Stalinist Poland: the Poznański textile strike, Lódz, September 1947', in *Social History* 18: 1 (January 1993), pp. 31-51 at p. 40.

for the spread of peace to protect humanity in the future by the adoption of socialist political aims.

Whilst it is difficult to define exactly where the museum curators' political allegiances may have lay at the time of the dedication ceremony, certain factors should be acknowledged. The first concerns the funding for the museum, which was supplied by the State. This would suggest that the curators had to find an accommodation within the views of the government at the time. Namely, that an almost exclusive focus on Polish-catholic suffering would serve a politically expedient purpose for the state, in that it would unite the Poles and draw them closer to Russia as the liberators of the camp and of the country in 1945. Conversely, as I will show, the curators may have adopted a strategy of covert acknowledgement of the Jews by displaying Jewish religious clothing and suitcases which bore Jewish names, as well as such symbols as the Star of David.

The transformation of the post-war site of Auschwitz, from extermination camp into museum, cannot be seen in isolation from the political climate of the Cold War. For Russia, Poland was a gateway through which Germany had twice invaded. As Stalin told the U.S. envoy Harry Hopkins in May 1945: 'Neither the British nor the American people had experienced such German invasions which were horrible to endure. It is therefore in Russia's vital interest that Poland should be strong and friendly.'[290] Thus the organisational schema of the State Museum at Auschwitz, following the Second World War, became entangled with Poland's political climate.

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[290] Quoted in Robert McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 11.

Display Strategies at Auschwitz, 1947

The 1947 reorganisation of the museum can be understood as an attempt to weave together the strands of Polish national identity, Russia's claim on Poland, and the righteousness of Soviet socialism. With more of the site now available to the curators, namely the Blocks 4 and 10, the decision was made to narrate the story of the camp in greater detail, especially through the testimony of former inmates. To achieve these aims two commissions were set up, one 'Historical' and the other 'Artistic'. The former considered the design for the entire exhibition at the Auschwitz I site, whilst the latter was to develop the museum's visual presentation. Both Commissions were still functioning in 1949, but gradually lapsed into inactivity. This was a result of the fact that access to the camp records was limited: the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland controlled the documents. In each successive year, the work of the Main Commission itself was curbed. As a result, the development of the exhibitions was slow.

So in 1947, it was the intention of the curators, many of whom were former inmates, to present the displays as portrayals of the annihilation of the people considered as 'other' by the Nazis, from the viewpoint of those countries that they had occupied. The Polish historian Jacek Lachendro, working at the present day Auschwitz museum, has noted how these displays were to be achieved through 'steering clear of "the macabre" and using only suitable visual elements',[291] by which he means domestic objects chosen by the curators to convey the enormity of the crime through the 'humanising' of their suffering. The items particularly selected by the curators' included: suitcases, hairbrushes and children's clothing, drawn from the stock of material, which had been brought to the camp by the deportees themselves. These objects were also chosen to emphasize that the German atrocities were committed on a

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[291] The Auschwitz State Museum at Oświęcim (AMPO) online

mass scale. The strategy employed by the curators, whereby the showing of multiples of the same kinds of objects highlighted for the viewer – by means of a visual metaphor – the magnitude of the crime that had taken place, was an attempt to create a more historically accurate record in line with the documentary emphasis of the displays. Furthermore, the curators also now intended to show that the Jews were the largest group slated for killing. However, to realize this it was crucial to collaborate with the *Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polska* CKŻP (Central Committee of Jews in Poland). It was hoped that the assistance of the CKŻP would make it possible to establish the number of Jewish victims. However, the idea was then to emphasise not the Jewish story, but the various nations, which had been affected. In this, the museum was keeping to the nation-State categories and ideology that Sehn had used in 1945.

In 1947, there were three elements to the schema, which began with a general introduction, realised through wall-mounted texts, used to emphasise the brutality of the Nazi treatment of the Poles. In the first section the focus was to be upon prisoner narratives from within the camp. The second section considered the international identity of the inmates of the camp, which was to be realized through an account of the wartime situation of the countries whose citizens were deported to Auschwitz. A third section presented other German concentration camps. The exhibits were to be located in twelve Blocks at the site of the main camp, and are here named in the order suggested for visitors to follow.

The first display was sited in Block 15, situated beyond the 'new kitchen', the long low building that had borne the proverbial Statements known as the 'Milestones to Freedom', next to the interior gateway bearing the slogan 'Arbeit Macht Frei.' The subject of the display was to be the complex history of Polish-German relations. This can be read as a further attempt by the Stalinist-led authorities to convince the Poles that it was Germany and not Russia that was Poland's historic enemy. For example, the

display was used to reinforce the argument that the Germans had carried out the massacre of the Polish officer-class at the Katyn Forest, in 1940. However, it is doubtful whether any but the most zealous of Polish supporters of Stalinist ideology would have believed this to be true. The adjacent Block 16 was to be used to explain the structure and nature of the SS, and the origins of the concentration camp system. It would also show the categories of prisoners, and convey something of the attitudes of the SS to the prisoners. The themes of the inmate 'Life', 'Work' and 'Death', were to be situated in Blocks 17 and 18. The destruction of European Jewry, officially named 'The Extermination of Millions,' referred to locally as 'The Jewish Hall', was to be sited in Block 4. Already, the Jewish story desired by many Jewish representatives was problematic, since other groups − the Sinti and Roma (Gypsy) populations − were included here. That said, the overtly Jewish possessions, such as prayer shawls, once belonging to the Jewish victims, were now included in Blocks 5 and 6, under the title 'Material Evidence of Crime'.

The history of the camp and of the resistance movement within the camp, were set aside for the ground floor of Block 7. The upper floor was used to house an extensive exhibit on sanitary conditions, disease, and hospital services. Blocks 8 and 9 were to be retained in their original condition: Block 8 would show living conditions in 1940, when 'prisoners' slept side-by-side on straw mattresses'[292] placed directly on to the floor. This display strategy served to remind the Polish visitors of the situation that the first cohort of deportees to the camp, all of whom were Polish Catholics had been forced to endure. Block 9 was used to recreate the conditions found in Auschwitz in 1944. By this time the installation of three-tier bunk beds and a limited water supply had taken place. As minor as these improvements to the inmates' living conditions may

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[292] Tadeusz Iwaszko, 'The Housing, Clothing and Feeding of the Prisoners' in *Auschwitz 1940 – 1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp, Vol. II: The Prisoners: Their Life and Work*, eds Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 52.

appear, I suggest that visually an implicit suggestion was being advanced, namely that the environment into which the original Polish inmates were thrust was more barren than that in which the Jews were placed in 1944. The emphasis was therefore on particular narratives. Blocks 8 and 9, together with Block 10 (mentioned below), were the only exhibits that attempted any historical reconstruction of existence within the camp, rather than a fully 'curated' story.

The history of medical experiments on prisoners, and the life of women in Auschwitz were shown in Block 10. From December 1942 onwards, Block 10 had been used to house 400 women selected for cheap sterilisation experiments by SS Dr Carl Clauberg. His patients were drawn exclusively from the Jewish and Sinti populations of the camp, yet no mention of their religious or racial identity were provided by the curators. Visitors' to this part of the museum were able to view the gynaecological chair that Clauberg used to carry out his experiments. Further examples of criminal experimentation, this time by SS Dr Emil Kaschub, were also displayed in Block 10 (*fig. 48*). Kaschub had been sent to Auschwitz in an effort to expose the diverse methods of 'malingering' that were being used by German soldiers, especially those on the Eastern Front, in the hope that they would be transferred to less ferocious theatres of European warfare. Kaschub replicated the symptoms that the soldiers presented at battlefield hospitals. Together with his nursing staff he had rubbed and injected toxic substances into the skin of the Jewish female prisoners. The effects were then photographed, and it was these images, which attest the Nazi medical view that Auschwitz could be a site of medical breakthrough, as well as one of destruction, that were shown in a limited number of large-format photographs at the museum. The medical instruments that were used for these experiments were also displayed.

The interior of the 'Death Block' (Block 11) remained, in the most part, as it had upon liberation. There, visitors' were able to view the SS 'summary court', where death

sentences, such as execution by small-carbine [pistol] or starvation was meted out. To assist the visitor's understanding of how the functioning court looked during the war years, the inmate artist Mieczyslaw Koscielniak, whose painting of the interior of the *Lagermuzeum* was discussed in chapter 1, created a cycle of drawings, which were displayed at this location. However, the standing cells, situated in the basement of the Block, which had been dismantled in 1944, under orders issued by Arthur Liebehenschel, who was commandant of the camp from November 1943 to May 1944, were recreated. The adjacent courtyard, where until 1944 the 'Wall of Death' had stood, was to be a mausoleum. Of interest here is the fact that this wall had to be restored, the original having been dismantled in 1944 under the orders given by Arthur Liebehenschel. The 'Wall of Death' had been the site where the SS had carried out the daily executions of Polish nationals convicted of acts of resistance against the German occupiers. For Poland's post-war Catholic population, the number of non-Jewish Poles who had been executed at this site offered an alternative to the gassing facilities at Birkenau. Following the liberation of the camp this location rapidly became the central site of mourning by the Poles. Other Blocks were to be dedicated to those countries whose populations had died in Auschwitz, or were to be used to display information about other Nazi camps. By the time of the opening of the museum in June 1947 not all of the displays were ready, and much that had been planned remained closed to the public.

Picasso Visits Auschwitz

In 1948, the Polish city of Wrocław hosted the Congress of Intellectuals for Peace conference. Picasso was invited to attend and gave the 'sole public speech of his life.'[293] Whilst in Poland Picasso made the journey to Auschwitz, stopping first at Kraków, and

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[293] Pierre Daix, 'Encounters with Picasso: 1945 – 1954', in *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, eds Lynda Morris and Christopher Grunenburg (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), p. 21.

then continuing on to the site. At the museum site Picasso viewed 'execution posts, containers holding piles of pairs of glasses, women's [sic] hair and a young girls' [sic] plaits.' Picasso's travelling-companion, Pierre Daix, a French art historian who held the same communist political beliefs as Picasso, summarised the site as 'A museum of horror.'[294] Daix, aware of the fact that Auschwitz I was not the 'Jewish camp,' that being Auschwitz II-Birkenau, of which he had heard details from evacuees returning to France from Mauthausen concentration camp, 'had to convince the Polish organisers to take us there as there was no road.'[295] This suggests that the Polish authorities wanted to make it as difficult as possible to visit the principal site of European Jewry's destruction.

At Birkenau Picasso viewed the ruins of the crematorium, the wooden barracks, which Daix refers to as disintegrating, and the Judenrampe. Picasso is recorded as saying to Daix: 'You were right. I had to come here.'[296] However, this was not Picasso's first engagement with Auschwitz. Phyllis Tuchman, a distinguished Picasso scholar, has pointed out that Picasso's sculpture of 1943, *Man with a Sheep*, unique in its portrayal of a male in his sculpture, and a work for which Picasso produced over 100 preparatory drawings, may have been executed after the artist had learned of the death of his friend Gaston, brother of the poet and painter Max Jacob, in Auschwitz II-Birkenau, at some time after 11 February 1943 (*fig. 49*).[297] The religious connotations associated with the Christian symbol of the Lamb may suggest a link to the notions of humility, forgiveness and salvation. Tuchman notes that the model for the lamb may well have been taken from the central panel of Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* (*fig.*

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[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.
[297] For a discussion, see Phyllis Tuchman, 'Picasso's Sentinel [Man with a Lamb Possibly a Portrait of M. Jacob]', in *Art in America* 86 (February 1998), pp. 86-95. Max Jacob was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Drancy transit camp. He died there in March 1944.

50), which he may have seen.[298] The cultural commentator Fred Stern has noted how Arno Brekker, Hitler's premier sculptor, supplied the material for this and other sculpture by Picasso at that time.[299] This demonstrates that lines of exchange regarding art and politics during the Second World War were not straight forward, or followed unexpected turns not limited to strict divisions between political sides.

Picasso's 1948 visit to Auschwitz has received little critical attention within the literatures concerning the post-war history of the camp and this may explain why the trip is so little known. However, recent scholarship, most notably that of Lynda Morris and Christoph Grunenberg, writing for the exhibition catalogue *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, have begun to draw attention to this important moment in Picasso's life.[300] The same is true of his sculpted piece *Man with a Sheep*, from around the time of Gaston Jacob's death. Historically, Picasso's wartime oeuvre has been interpreted as being apolitical. For example Ziva Amishai-Maisels has written, 'Picasso had spent the war years concentrating on "innocuous" material culled from his immediate surroundings: portraits, nudes and still lifes, subjects which would not get him into trouble with the Nazis who periodically visited his studio.'[301] Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate his communist sympathies in the light of his acceptance of Nazi materials.

Whilst Picasso's engagement with Auschwitz took the form of an actual visit to the site, other internationally recognised artists sought to reference the site in their work. One such was the American abstract painter Mark Rothko; born Marcus Rothkowitz in Lithuania, Rothko immigrated to America in 1913. Matthew Baigel, an art historian, has argued that Rothko's large rectangular forms reference the open graves and burning pits

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[298] Tuchman (1998), pp. 86-95.
[299] Fred Stern, *Picasso and the War Years*, available at www.artnet.com/magazine/features/stern/stern/2-25-99.asp No date given for last update, accessed 9 September 2008.
[300] Lynda Morris and Christoph Grunenberg (eds), *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* (London: Tate Publishing, 2010).
[301] Amishai-Maisels (1993), p. 57.

of places such as Auschwitz II-Birkenau, which we know that Rothko had seen in photographs following the cessation of hostilities in 1945.[302]

Developments in 1950

In 1950 the museum was extended, and some of its exhibits overhauled. The most noticeable changes took place at Blocks 15, 4 and 5 (in the order they are approached on the visitor route). At Block 15 the exhibition was renamed 'The Source of Genocide', and further developed the story of the historical enmity between Poland and Germany, claiming that the origins of the genocide were rooted in international imperialism. Astonishingly, the date for the beginning of the war was altered, from 1 September 1939 to June 1941, in order to highlight the German invasion of Russia. To use the 1939 invasion would have implicitly indicted Russia as a co-aggressor with Germany. The changing of the date can be understood as another expansion of the Stalinist voice at the museum.

The displays in Block 15 also included photographs illustrating the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, together with the destruction of synagogues and the persecution and extermination of East Galician Jews, the last of which resulted in 434,329 deaths at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. However, no mention was made of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which began on 18 January 1943, with the most intense fighting lasting from 19 April to 16 May of that year. This uprising was the largest act of Jewish self-preservation to take place during the war. However, this revolt, or any other form of Jewish self-defence at other ghettos went unmentioned. It would seem that the museum authorities wanted to portray the Jews as victims and nothing else. These references to the persecution of the Jews continued the already established narrative at the museum,

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[302] Matthew Baigel, *Jewish American Artists and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 17 – 40.

whereby its displays were used to support an image of the Jews as powerless sufferers, incapable of defending themselves against such a dominant force as the Germans. This was in marked contrast to the noble fighting spirit of the Christian Poles, who as a nation had never given up the struggle against the Nazi invader.

The status of the 'Jewish Hall' presented problems to the Polish review commission, which was responsible for the extension of the exhibition. It was felt that it gave too much prominence to Jewish suffering because it was situated at the beginning of the visitor's route.[303] A process of renegotiation had to take place that sought to find a balance between the persecution of the Jews and the martyrdom of the Poles. According to the former inmate Kazimierz Smoleń, it was his fellow inmate Tadeusz Hołuj, a former inmate of Auschwitz and an associate of the museum, who fought against the commission, the commission not wanting to allow the subject of the Jewish genocide to become central to the narrative presented by the museum.[304]

It was not only the politics of the immediate past – the narratives of inmate suffering – that were put to ideological use in the 1947 and 1950 iterations of the Auschwitz museum. Stalinist perspectives on both contemporary politics and the wider imperial past were folded into the narrative. At Block 21, a new title, 'The Struggle for Peace', was stridently ideological, putting across a vehemently Stalinist perspective. The terror wrought by international capitalism, it was said, linked Auschwitz with Hiroshima.[305] These two geographic locations were, according to Stalinist ideology, evidence of the worst outcomes of capitalism and of its ongoing decline. Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz II-Birkenau describes the link, 'Auschwitz implies the past,

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[303] Huener (2003), p. 123.

[304] The present author is indebted to Igor Bartoszik, Keeper of Collections, at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (AMPO) for this information.

[305] For a full discussion of this subject, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War, 1945 – 1990* (London: Routledge, 1993). Nicholas de Lange has considered the link between Auschwitz and Hiroshima, presenting an alternative view to the one put forward at Auschwitz. He writes: 'Like Hiroshima, Auschwitz stands as a boundary stone, marking an end and a beginning, a gruesome monument to the mistakes of the past and perhaps a signpost of a better future.' Cited in Ronnie S. Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 21.

whereas Hiroshima announces the future.'[306] This pairing of Auschwitz with Hiroshima, allowed presentation of a Stalinist argument that framed both events as the greatest acts of genocide in the twentieth-century, thus ignoring the Stalinist purges of the late 1920s and 1930s. Attention was also given to the British treatment of the Boers in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) – especially the founding of concentration camps by the British to house Boer refugees, often in appalling conditions – and this was coupled in the narrative with the conduct of the Americans towards African and American Indian ethnic groups. [307] To further emphasize American aggression and to introduce a contemporary reference, coverage was given to the Korean War (1950-1953), in which Korea's 'claims to be winners [internationally] of the victimisation prize' were advanced.'[308] However, no mention was made of Russia's material aid, including the supply of T-34 tanks and aeroplanes, used by the North Korean People's Army to invade the Republic of Korea, supported by both the United Nations and the U.S.A. This attempt at making the museum's exhibits germane to contemporary political events is further evidence of how the site was used to further both political and ideological Cold War arguments.

Blocks 4 and 5: A case study of the contents of the 1955 displays

Throughout the ten years that had passed from the liberation of Auschwitz and its sub-camps in January 1945, the State Museum had adhered to a strategy for the narration of the camps that had centred primarily on the employment of objects to relate the wartime history of the site. However, the representational strategies employed in the 1955

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[306] Elie Wiesel, trans. Marion Wiesel, *And the Sea is Never Full: Memoirs, 1969* – (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 95.
[307] This was not the first time that the link between the British and concentration camps had been made. For example the 1941 Nazi propaganda film *Ohm Krüger* (Hans Steinhoff, Germany, 1941), associated the British treatment of the Boers with British imperial history, rather than what was then contemporary Nazi practice. The same can be said for Russia's use of Auschwitz as a screen to cover their own system of camps, the Gulags.
[308] William Stueck (ed.), *The Korean War in World History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. 14.

exhibition show a development on from the earlier display. Here I offer a case study of the contents of Block 4, where clandestine meetings of the prisoners' resistance movement, *Auschwitz Fighting Group* had taken place, and Block 5, originally used to house SS guards and later converted to Polish inmate accommodation in the autumn of 1940. In 1955 the museum authorities used these two Blocks to display some of the most disturbing material to be found at the museum. The same team that had undertaken each of the exhibitions from 1946 onwards introduced these changes. The shift shows that the narrative had changed from one that told of a mass of undifferentiated human suffering, to a more personalised, empathetic telling of the story, yet one in which the individual human voice nevertheless remains muted.

Block 4: *The Extermination of Millions*

Block 4 was used by the museum as an exhibition space in 1955 that served to document the extermination process. This exhibition was titled *The Extermination of Millions.* The visitor entering the first room was confronted with a large-format photograph of a mound of corpses, from the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site, and a group of texts drawn from the sentencing of those tried for war crimes at Nürnberg. To balance what could have been a traumatic encounter, the museum authorities placed alongside it an 'urn containing a handful of human ashes, gathered from the territory of Birkenau.' [309] The combined effects of the photograph, texts and memorial, it was hoped, would be one that evoked both horror and reverence. This technique echoed the earlier displays of 1945, 1946, 1947 and 1950; whereby votive and documentary strategies were both in play. The difference between the earlier strategies at the State Museum and the displays in the 1955 exhibition displays lay in the increased use of photography to transmit the horror.

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[309] Kazimierz Smoleń, *Auschwitz Birkenau: Guide Book* (Oświęcim: State Museum in Oswiecim, 1955), p. 6.

In Room Two, a map of Europe, with Auschwitz at its centre, was used to show the centrality of the camp to the Nazi genocidal project, together with figures for those killed at the entire Auschwitz complex. In doing this the museum was presenting Auschwitz I as the central site of trauma. An immediate consequence was to deter visits to other sites, most notably Birkenau. The opportunity to revise the exhibition permitted changes in which the stasis of other sites like Auschwitz II-Birkenau was superseded by the immediacy and invention of the displays at Auschwitz I. This process can be seen at work in the decision to display a substantial quotation from Heinrich Himmler as it was enshrined in Rudolf Höss's memoir:

> 'The existing extermination centres in the East are not sufficient to cope with an operation on such a scale. Therefore I have designated Auschwitz for this purpose, both because of its convenient location as regards communication, and because the area can be easily isolated and camouflaged.'[310]

Himmler was actually talking about the development of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site and not the *Stammlager* (Auschwitz I). Significantly, the words selected for quotation do not include any mention of the Jews. A second opportunity for revision in 1955 lay in the attention paid to the annihilation of the Gypsies, something that had taken place at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Photocopies, but not the originals, of the records relating to the Gypsy camp were placed on display, together with a caption that informed the visitor that these records were 'stolen by prisoners then produced after the war.'[311] The implicit suggestion was that this was further evidence of the work of the camp resistance, which at Auschwitz I had been dominated by Polish nationals, thus further constructing a nationalist heroism for Poland.

The contents of Room Three were framed by the use of a memorial inscription which read: 'Gathered here for extermination were infants, children, the aged, women, men, people of various faiths, political orientations and social origins.' These words established the scope of the genocide, and the opposite wall was adorned with the

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[310] *Auschwitz Birkenau: Guide Book* (Oświęcim: State Museum, 1968).
[311] Smoleń (1955), p. 7.

national flags of the victims.[312] However, they were not displayed according to the number of victims from each nation, but alphabetically. On this basis, it would have been possible for visitors to the exhibition to deduce that the process of deportation possessed an element of randomness. However, the Nazis policy of ghettoisation and the later strategy of Jewish deportation to killing centres, especially that of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, was not a random process at all. If anything it was the deportation of the Polish Christians to the camp that could be said to have a random nature to it, arrested as they were through arbitrary street round ups and at railway stations.

Returning to the display of flags, this method emphasised the diverse nationalities of the deportees, and was also notable for its departure from the earlier methods used for narrating the story of the camp. Then, around 1947 the authorities had exaggerated the image of the deportee as being a combatant, someone who had supported and fought for the same socialist ideals as would be espoused by the post-war Polish political administration. The number of nations identified by national flags may have suggested that not all of those deported to the camp could have been considered as fighters engaged in a battle against National Socialism.

The final part of the Block 4 exhibition showed a large model of Crematorium II at Birkenau. The visitor was shown how it was possible for up to 2,000 people to be killed at any one time within this structure. Once again Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and the experience that that site could have offered to the visitor, had been imported into the space of Auschwitz I. Auschwitz II-Birkenau itself was open to the public and some did undertake the 2 kilometre journey from the *Stammlager* to the site. However, given that Auschwitz II-Birkenau had been constructed primarily as a place for the destruction of European Jewry, and that by 1955 much of the site was derelict; it would have been

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[312] The order of the flags was: American, Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, Dutch, Egyptian, English, French, German, Greek, Gypsy, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Rumanian, Russian, Spanish, Swiss, Turkish, Yugoslav.

difficult to portray that camp as a site of Polish national martyrdom, which was the message that Poland's Stalinist regime was insistent on doing and this, perhaps, suggests why for a large part of the Stalinist period, Auschwitz II-Birkenau did not hold the same emphasis for the visitor in the museum narrative as it does today.

Block 5: *Evidence of Mass Extermination*

The most striking display was housed in Room 5 of Block 5 (*fig. 51*). Here, a series of glass display-cabinets, which have come to symbolise the whole of the museum exhibition strategy at this time, was installed. Two tons of hair that had been shorn from those arriving at Birkenau was displayed within a glass case.[313] By adopting the glass case as a means of display, the museum was marking a clear difference from its earlier strategies, whereby the objects had been corralled behind barbwire. Glass cases (or vitrines) are normally used by museums to display small objects, or ones that are of high financial value, or that require specific environmental temperature control.[314] The glass case thus generates a certain set of value judgements. On the one hand the museum proclaims that the accessioned objects have a uniqueness that must be preserved. Whilst on the other hand, the visitor's acceptance of the museum's values further enhances the importance given to the objects themselves.[315] By not mentioning that the hair, or other artefacts, had been taken from deported Jews, the museum excluded the Jews from the sequence of events that was being narrated.

Nevertheless, these artefacts are attached to histories of the process of deportation. The ladles, hairbrushes, and pans presented the shadows of human communities that had been annihilated. They remind the viewer of the ordinary everyday life of their onetime owners, who, through the strategy of the museum had

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[313] Upon liberation the Russians discovered seven tons of hair.

[314] Paolo Mandrioli et al. (eds), *Cultural Heritage and Aerobiology: Methods and Measurement Techniques for Biodeterioration Monitoring* (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), p. 198.

[315] Elaine Heumann Gurian, 'What Is the Object of This Exercise?' in Gail Anderson (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum: Historical Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift* (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), p. 275.

achieved, in Griselda Pollock's words, 'the reduction of the victim to objects of the voyeuristic gaze of the viewer.'[316] The cultural theorist Deborah Staines situates the objects thus: 'They remain as emblems of the journey of destruction from life-world to death-world.'[317] James Young goes further:

> That a murdered people remains known in Holocaust museums anywhere by their scattered belongings, and not by their spiritual works, that their lives should be recalled primarily through the images of their death, may be the ultimate travesty.[318]

Going further, Ariella Azoulay, discussing the politics of Holocaust museology in Israel, identifies four main themes that may be detected in the operation of display. They are: 'the exhibiting subject, the exhibited subject, the person to whom the display is addressed, and an additional subject, the one who has been excluded.'

Sometimes however, the identity of the victims could be determined on the basis of such signifiers as the Star of David symbol worn on the clothes of the people in the photographs. A further indication could be discerned by the names of the owners of the suitcases. This way of identifying the victims as Jewish was only possible to those who already knew the context. The foreign names and addresses of the owners of the suitcases meant to many Polish visitors to the Museum that the owners had 'come from various countries.' Only in the case of the tallits (prayer shawls) did the museum create any sense of a narrative. This was reinforced by the caption: 'Jewish ritual vestments.' Their traditional religious appearance acted as a memento of the orthodox domain of the cultural life of the Jews of Europe, which had been destroyed in the Holocaust. They may also have hinted at the idea that spiritual resistance took place at the site, in this case through religious observance. S. B. Unsdorfer, author of *The Yellow Star*, quotes a survivor's recollection of the power of clandestine religious observances in Auschwitz:

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[316] Griselda Pollock, 'Holocaust Tourism: Being There, Looking Back and the Ethics of Spatial Memory', in *Visual Culture and Tourism*, eds David Crouch and Nina Lübbren (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 177.

[317] Deborah Staines, 'Museum Auschwitz', in *Space and Culture: International Journal of Social Spaces*, 1:10 (June 2001), pp. 63-90, at p. 79.

[318] James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 133.

> Nothing as soothing and as satisfying as the knowledge that even in this godforsaken death camp—in this dirty little backyard of humanity, where the value of a cigarette was greater than that of a life—that even here, three little matzos had been baked in preparation for the forthcoming Passover Festival.[319]

Although the museum's curators could rightly claim a small victory over the various government commissions with this portrayal of the Jews in Auschwitz during the Holocaust, it was the only overt declaration of Jews having been at the site and was limited to a historical display rather than something larger and more conceptual.

If this were the case for the situation of the object within the museum's strategy, then it is possible to propose that the museum was illustrating lost communities. We may, then, read the incorporation of the tallits within the display as offering the possibility for the viewer to make a subjective personal interpretation of these particular artefacts, rather than relying on the objective explication offered by the museum. I suggest that the museum may have been covertly signalling the meaningfulness of the object, whilst situating it within the historical context of the site.

We may also say that the objects sited in Block 5 have the quality of being indexical in their relationship to the functioning camp. The realist nature of the presentations, which are still in existence today, may offer a documentary quality to some viewers, whilst others will see them as iconic. For example, Oren Baruch Stier, a scholar of religious studies, whose research investigates different venues by and through which the Holocaust is presented, has referred to this section of the Auschwitz museum as an icon. He explains his use of the word:

> I use the word "icon" to evoke the power and mystery of Holocaust symbols and remnants, to suggest the religious aura around them, and to call to mind the memorial roles they play in specific contexts.[320]

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[319] S. B. Unsdorfer, '"Organizing" to Celebrate Passover', in *Witness to the Holocaust*, ed. Azriel Eisenberg (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), pp. 241-47 at p. 245. Such instances of unity, and conventional religious expression helped to fight the dehumanisation of camp life. Other forms of religious observance included women blessing candles made out of potato peelings and margarine for Sabbath, and clandestine prayer services held with other inmates standing guard.

[320] Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), p. 42.

Stier is drawing our attention to the complexities of the strategy within this display. The mute truth of the human remains, and of the artefacts, was supposed to convey to the visitor an unmediated quality – that the objects, as artefacts of atrocity, served as vital testimony, and required no mediation because they were understood to have fundamental qualities that transcended the limitations of language.

So the 1955 emergence of this display extended the earlier votive narration, but combined it with the drive for a historically-driven display on the world stage. However, the votive subject was still firmly placed upon the Poles and their suffering. What resulted was a still-ambiguous voice given to the Jewish story. On the one hand, the museum guidebook offered the mass of shorn locks, suitcases and other objects as physical evidence of the mass extermination that had taken place at the site. Yet as Marek Kucia has noted, these were not yet given the acknowledgement they now have as symbols of Jewish persecution.

The rest of the available space within Block 5 was used to present the mechanics of the extermination process. The visitor was taken along a visual step-by-step path, through the history of ghettoisation, deportation and the final selection at the *Judenrampe* in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. However, the fact that Jews were the main victims in this process was not made clear. The anticipated effect was that the telling of this story would bring the visitor closer to the reality of the Auschwitz death-machine. In practise, the significant development to take place within Blocks 4 and 5 was that tangible steps towards the narrative we now recognise at Auschwitz and other Holocaust museums had been taken.

However, the dominant narrative designated by the State for the telling of the camp's history was one that reflected Stalinist ideology, and it was this that conditioned the institutionalised interpretation of the past by the museum itself. It is possible to argue that the dominant narrative was used as a tool to instantiate Poland's immediate

post-war social and political purposes, which at Auschwitz were resolute in the development of an idiom of Polish national martyrdom, in which the prisoner suffered and died for a higher cause, such as 'the Polish nation, the Catholic faith, or socialism.'[321] The narrative position assumed by the museum was therefore working against the 'more privatised sense of the past which is generated within a lived culture.'[322] All other narratives at the site were acting as counter-narratives to that which was being put forward by the museum, which, as I have shown, was working under the influence of imposed political directives, which required there to be a totalising public narrative.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the earliest attempts by the museum authorities to memorialize the story of Auschwitz through nascent museological strategies. What I have shown is that the returning inmate-survivors wanted to curate an exhibition that would commemorate. The original exhibition of 1946, which predated the imposition of Stalinism in Poland, endeavored to illustrate this story, but without recourse to any previous models, the custodians of the site decided upon a strategy whereby the identity of ethnic groups, such as the Gypsies, or religious groups, and most notably the Jews, was subsumed in an undifferentiated project. However, a small display did acknowledge that Jews had been killed at the site.

The outcome of this can be seen in photographs of the initial exhibition which framed the suffering of all inmates as one coequal mass of suffering. The viewer was presented with Polish Catholic imagery, such as a cross and a crown of thorns, as seen in the first displays at the site, which predated the imposition of Stalinist ideology at the site.

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[321] Huener, p. 29.
[322] Barbara A Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), p. 64.

Stalinist political ideology intervened in 1947, and led to the situation whereby Poland's Jewish and non-Jewish victims were classed as one single group. The Christian symbolism was removed at this time. The liberation of the camp was linked to the ousting of the Germans from Poland, and Auschwitz was correlated with unbridled capitalism. Thus the State's *modus operandi* was established at this time and the politicisation of the site by the State began in earnest.

In the following chapter I will discuss the various attempts to place a suitable memorial to the victims of the camp, at the site, which is complimentary to the culture of the museum at the site. Beginning with a discussion of the earliest known example, a design by the inmate artist Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, I trace the culture of memorial making at the Auschwitz from 1944 to 1957.

Chapter 4

Memorialising Auschwitz 1944-1956

Memorials often signify more than the straightforward moment of commemoration to which they bear witness. The origins of a memorial can frequently be found in a complex index of ethnic, social, religious or political disputes. When (or if) these disputes are formally resolved the attempts at memorialisation may highlight a host of issues that concern the nature of what has taken place, who is to be included within the process of memorialisation, and the suitability of the form to express these concerns. In terms of the interpretation of the memorial this may create a situation whereby the past – the history that the memorial serves to remember – gives way to, or shares space with, the present.

The different perspectives of the viewers affect the reception of the memorial, what knowledge they have of the site's past, and their reasons for visiting the memorial. All these factors may contribute to a diverse set of readings. A memorial may thus continue to develop meanings precisely through these modes of reception that continuously place it in the present. Alternatively monuments and memorials may develop specific functions beyond the initial purpose of explaining, educating or paying homage to a particular group or cause. For example, they may serve to uphold a current political regime, or to denigrate an alternative point of view. With the passing of time, a memorial may even facilitate a situation whereby its audiences turn away from the multiple messages offered by the physical presence of the memorial, choosing instead to forget.

Looking Back from the Twenty-First Century: An Overview of Memorials at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

On Monday 24 March 2003 over three hundred people from seven different countries participated in a poignant act of remembrance for Sephardic Jews (descendants of Jews from the Iberian peninsula) who had died in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. After fifty-seven years, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews were to be memorialised. Survivors of the Holocaust, along with government dignitaries and hundreds of members of the Jewish community, were in attendance when a plaque written in Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) was unveiled and added to the many plaques already situated in front of the memorial. Coincidentally this was the sixtieth anniversary of the arrival at Auschwitz of the second transport of Sephardic Jews from Salonika. Dr Michel Azaria, vice-president of the International Committee for Judeo-Spanish at Auschwitz (JEAA) commented: 'Finally, our brothers were able to receive the deserved recognition in their own language. A language that was unjustifiably missing.'[323] The omission of the Sephardic language had not come to attention until March 2000, when it was noticed by Professor Haim Vidal Sephiha, himself a Sephardic Jew and a Holocaust Survivor. He had returned to Auschwitz, for the first time in fifty-five years, to record a programme for French radio on the subject of the Holocaust.

An international conference on the Judeo-Spanish organized subsequently in Salonika in April 2000, saw survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants unanimously adopt Sephiha's proposal that 'the memory of the Sephardic martyrs be honoured by the addition of Judeo-Spanish to the existing multi-lingual memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.'[324] For over three years the International Committee for Judeo-Spanish at Auschwitz (JEAA) gathered written support from members and agencies of

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[323], 'Sephardic Memorial at Auschwitz,' press release published by *The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture*, New York, 23 March, 2003.
[324] Prof Haim Vidal-Sephiha at www.sepharadshoah.org, last updated 2002, accessed 15 October 2009.

the international Jewish community, and the memorial was put in place with the approval of the International Auschwitz Council (IAC) and the State Museum of Auschwitz. The sequence of events illustrates the continuing development of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau memorial, in this case by the inclusion of a further victim group. As a result the memorial's meaning has been subtly changed. This change speaks to the ongoing debate that will form the subject of this chapter: the process of establishing a memorial monument at Auschwitz which began in 1944, when the camp was still active.

Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) represent another stakeholder group for example. They were not given official recognition at the memorial site until 1997, when they received authorisation for an annual ceremony. This act of memorialisation specifically recalls the night of 2 August 1944, when the remaining gypsies, who were held in the 'family camp,' were sent to the gas-chamber at Crematorium IV.[325] Their memorial is sited in the ruins of Block 28, sector BIIe, at Birkenau. Some commentators have noted that the lack of attention paid to the destruction of this ethnic group represents a 'forgotten Holocaust.'[326] In 1995, an attempt to address the question of inclusion was made when twenty bronze plaques were placed in front of the memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau that is now called *The Monument to the Victims of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp*. In the same year the memorial text at the site of the former

extermination camp at Sobibór was also changed. The original wording, which referred

to 250,000 'Soviet prisoners of war, Jews, Poles and Gypsies,' was replaced by one acknowledging that 'over 250,000 Jews and 1,000 Poles' were murdered there.

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[325] Danuta Czech, 'A Calendar of the Most Important Events in the History of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), William Brand (trans.), *Auschwitz 1940 – 1945: Central Issues In The History Of The Camp*, *Vol. V* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 206, p. 207.
[326] John A. S. Grenville, 'Neglected Holocaust Victims: The Mischlinge, the Jüdischversippte, and the Gypsies,' in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, *The Holocaust and History: The Known, The Unknown, The Disputed and The Re-examined,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2002), pp. 315-326.

The formal frontal presentation of the plaques of 1995, on the Auschwitz II-Birkenau memorial, is in keeping with the ceremonial aesthetic previously established, when that memorial was unveiled in 1967. This was the first memorial at the site to openly acknowledge the diverse nationalities that had been incarcerated Auschwitz and its sub-camps. Now, each plaque is in one of nineteen European languages, recognising the diversity of the victims of Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The new plaques explain that 1.5 million people, 'mainly Jews from various countries of Europe' died at this place.[327] Consequently the memorial, of 1967, if we consider the twists in the journey to arrive at it, attests to the problematic debate over inclusion and the representation of history that has marked the way to this point.

Indeed, the reception of the replacement plaques made an extraordinary impact upon the international community of stakeholders and those with an interest in the site, in 1995. *The New York Times* reported that Kalman Sultanik, the American vice-chairman of the international council set up by the Polish government for the preservation of Auschwitz, announced: 'This is an historic event, not just for Poland, but for the whole world.'[328] To historians, memorialists, and cultural commentators, the substitution of the original 1967 tablets represented a kind of righting of a 'heritage dissonance.'[329] Put plainly, an ideological imbalance that reflected the Soviet interpretation of past events at the site, an interpretation which also affected the founding of the museum, as we have seen previously, had been corrected.[330] We should also consider the fact that the changing of the text was, in part, a declaration of Poland's release from over 45 years of Communist administration.[331] Those that had managed to avoid the death toll at this place, the survivors, understood better than most that in this

[327] Martin Gilbert. *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Harper Collins, 1987), p. 147.
[328] Anon., 'Poland Agrees to Change Auschwitz tablets,', *The New York Times*, 17 June 1992, section A, p. 15.
[329]G. J. Ashworth, 'Holocaust tourism and Jewish culture: the lessons of Krakow-Kazimiersz', in Alan Lew *et al.* (eds), *A Companion to Tourism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), p. 221.
[330] John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: the attraction of death and disaster* (London: Contiuum, 2000), p. 52.
[331] David S. Wyman, *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 144.

act of witnessing, an attempt at some kind of resolution was taking place at one of the most contested memorial sites in the world.

Auschwitz had already been marked out as a particular case. Something of its mixed history regarding the issue of inclusion and commemoration can be seen in the UNESCO decision, in 1979, to add the twin sites of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau to its register of World Heritage Sites. In its report, the committee described the location as 'a unique site', and declared that they intended to 'restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature.'[332] Both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau remain the only such camps to be included on the World Heritage list.

Early Memorials at Auschwitz

In June 1946, and throughout the preceding eighteen months, beginning in February 1945, the communist authorities used parts of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau as a transit camp. It was used to house 110,000 German prisoners of war, a great number of whom were former members of the SS, and 90,000 German speaking Silesian civilians, whose existence in this part of Poland shows that geographically the Silesia sovereignty was still hotly contested by both countries. Some of the detainees recorded their passing through this camp, noting the living and working conditions, which according to accounts did not differ much from those in the slave labour camps of the Auschwitz complex.

From 27 January 1945, the newly-liberated sites of the Auschwitz camps, including the forty sub-camps that made up the entirety of Auschwitz, became the subject of heated debate in the Polish press. Should they be retained as memorials to suffering, or should they be 'ploughed over and destroyed'? These opposing views

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[332] Charlie Hailey, *Camps: A Guide to 21st-Century Space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), p. 289.

meant that the complex of camps faced an uncertain future. Indeed, Auschwitz III-Monowitz, the third-largest of the camps, was entirely lost. Remarkably, however, in 1944, when these camps were still functioning in their roles as factories of death, the idea, like that concerning the foundation of a museum, suggested by the inmates themselves, to create a memorial to the tragedy of Auschwitz first emerged.

This chapter will discuss the attempts at memorialisation, including those that were considered but went unrealised, between 1944 and 1956. All these proposals for memorials were put forward within a highly-charged political situation. I will begin by examining an unrealised memorial design prepared by the Auschwitz inmate Jerzy Adam Brandhuber. This is an inmate design that has received little attention even in the literature of memorialisation. My intention is to flesh out this important part of the narrative of Auschwitz's representation, by offering a detailed study of the neglected subject of Brandhuber's proposal. We shall see that following the cessation of hostilities, this early plan was disregarded, as art became politicised in the cold-war era. A doctrinaire Socialist Realism that reflected the utopian ideal of the 'future-in-the-present' dominated this period on the Soviet side. Conversely, after the death of Stalin in 1953, there occurred a deliberate relaxation of the necessity for a figural element to be included in such memorial sculpture. This lessened the universal claims hitherto made by the communist state. We shall see that the rhetoric of earlier forms of memorialisation was replaced by a greater degree of 'artistic freedom,' yet of course the monument still had to convey a significant political message.

In 1967, the unveiling of the present memorial took place at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. This memorial was then called *The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism*.[333] It was the outcome of an announcement made by the State Museum at

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[333] A year before this, at the site of the former concentration camp called Monowitz, a sub-camp of the Auschwitz complex, a memorial that took the form of four immense concrete stanchions mounted on a base in the shape of a

Oświęcim, in 1957, proposing an international competition to find a suitable form for a new memorial at the site. The physical scale of the monument (which is over forty feet in length and twenty feet in height) was intentional. The museum's initial position paper, released as part of the competition announcement, stated that 'the memorial must be as monumental as the content it is intended to express.'[334] Primo Levi, writing in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, urged that the memorial 'must be a warning dedicated by humanity to itself.'[335] The new monument was therefore intended to bear witness to, and reflect, the magnitude of the tragedy that had unfolded there. It was also hoped that the resulting memorial would serve as a warning to future generations, testifying to what mankind can be capable of.

The Museum's 1957 proposal to find a new form for a memorial replaced an earlier structure of 1955. This construction, known as the *Urn Memorial*, was felt to be an inadequate memorialisation of the history of the Auschwitz complex. The name of the author of this memorial is unrecorded.

In 1952 the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art announced an exclusively Polish competition for a memorial that was to be called *The Monument to the Victory over Fascism*. However, as Jonathan Huener has noted, 'the Ministry of Culture never named a winner for this competition,' and so this 'phase of the monument competition came to a halt.'[336] However, in 1952 visitors to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site would have been able to see a stone base surmounted by an eternal flame, an iconography to which we will return later. This memorial was sited at Crematorium III and may have been intended as part of the projected memorial. Its origins are undocumented. It seems to

triangle was unveiled. This memorial was financed by public donations raised from the inhabitants of the city of Oświęcim in 1966. A little-acknowledged fact is that this was the camp where twelve hundred British POWs were housed from the autumn of 1943 onwards. See Colin Rushton, *Spectator in Hell: A British Soldier's Story of Imprisonment in Auschwitz* (Chichester: Summersdale, 2007).

[334] Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 154-155. Hereafter Huener.

[335] Primo Levi, *The Black Hole of Auschwitz* Marco Belpoliti (ed.), Sharon Wood (trans.), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 57.

[336] Huener, p. 152.

have served as a counter-marker to an earlier memorial, also undocumented, which until this time had been the only permanent intervention to memorialise the genocide enacted at that part of the site.

Two years earlier, in 1950, the laying of a foundation stone took place at the site. The intention was to initiate a planning process for a future memorial that would bear witness to what had taken place. The intended name for this memorial was *The Fallen of Birkenau*. Its positioning, between Crematoria II and III, at the head of the rail spur known as the Judenrampe, recognised in terms of memorialisation the main axial route within the death camp. It established the prime site for all of the later memorials.

This memorial, which, like Brandhuber's design of 1944 went unrealised, was itself intended to replace an earlier one of 1948, the Stone of Martyrdom. According to the Museum authorities, this memorial was removed because of its poor construction and lack of aesthetic impact. It stood in the north yard of Crematorium II. Jacek Lachendro, of the Auschwitz State Museum, has said of it that 'nobody registered such things in the first years of the museum.'[337] This lack of documentation is a problem that any researcher dealing with the subject of memorialisation at Auschwitz II-Birkenau must confront. Many of the details survive only in the recollections of the museum staff, and of people who have been intimately connected with the site.

Earlier still, in 1947, when the Polish Government enacted a law preserving the sites of both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau as permanent memorials in themselves, plans emerged to create a 'mausoleum' at Birkenau. This structure was to have been sited within the ruins of what had been Crematorium III. The changing-room, where those who were about to be gassed would disrobe, and the gas chamber in the building's basement were to be reinstated, and used as a space in which all the deportee

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[337] Private correspondence with Dr Jacek Lachendro, an historian employed by AMPO, 19 August 2009.

groups could be identified. There was, according to Huener, 'even the suggestion that every victim of the camp would be memorialised by the inclusion of their names on each of the bricks used in the recreation of the room.'[338] The crematorium's chimney, destroyed in the closing months of the war, was to be restored, and surmounted by an eternal flame.

Brandhuber's Memorial

The Polish historian, Dr Teresa Świebocka, writes that 'Former prisoners [at Auschwitz] recall that during their time behind the barbed wire, they dreamed not only of survival or liberation, but also of commemorating the scene of crime. They regarded this as a moral duty and the realisation of the last will of those who died.'[339] This indicates that the idea of memorialising Auschwitz predates the liberation of the camps, and confirms that those who endured the squalor of the camps still held artistic, aesthetic, and moral aspirations. At Majdanek extermination camp, the inmate artist Albin Maria Boniecki designed a memorial mausoleum in the form of a column that was realised, using prisoner labour, in May 1943, during the camp's active phase. This piece is surmounted by three eagles, which the German command believed were representative of Nazi ideals. However, according to Boniecki they signified the freedom of Poland, brotherhood and triumph. Placed within the column are ashes from the camp crematorium. Interestingly, the mausoleum was destroyed after the cessation of hostilities, presumably because the Stalinist authorities were able to read Boniecki's inherent Polish nationalist iconography The mausoleum was recreated in 1963 by

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[338] Huener (2003), p. 147.
[339] Teresa Świebocka, *Significance of Memorial Sites – Memories, Commemoration, Determination,* unpublished conference paper, UNITAR Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific, Series on the Management and Conservation of World Heritage Sites, Training Workshop on World Heritage Management: A Value Based Approach. Hiroshima, Japan, 18 April to 21 April 2005. UNITAR is the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

Stanislaw Strzyzynski, by order of the Polish government, but against Boniecki's will.[340]

The first acknowledged design for a monument to the victims of Nazi atrocities at Auschwitz was undertaken in 1944 by the Polish inmate artist Jerzy Adam Brandhuber. Although we cannot be certain of the exact date for the commission, we know that Brandhuber was contacted by Bernard Świerczyna, known by the pseudonym 'Max,' of the Auschwitz Combat Council (a prisoner resistance group) and commissioned to design a memorial for the site. [341] Regarding the date for the commission, an educated guess, following a study of the archives at the State Museum, suggests that the date cannot be after October 1944. Świerczyna was apprehended in an escape attempt, with five other inmates, on 27 October 1944. He was executed in Auschwitz on 30 December 1944, together with the four other escapees. This was the last public execution to take place in the camp. Therefore, the commission could not have been made after 27 October 1944, the date of Świerczyna's attempted escape and his subsequent execution.

Information about the exact details of the process, Brandhuber's working conditions, the sketch, and the reception of the memorial design by the resistance group, is now lost. Given the conditions within the camp this is not surprising. However, we do have a full written description, supplied by Brandhuber to the Polish art historian Janina Jaworska and reproduced in her book *Nie Wszystek Umre: Tworczosc plastyczna Polakow w hitlerowskich wiezieniach I obozach koncentracyjnch 1939-1945* [Not All of Me Will Die: Art Work of Polish Prisoners in Nazi Prison Camps 1939-1945], a survey book of inmate art from a number of different concentration and extermination camps in

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[340] Leszek Kolek, *Polish Culture: An Historical Introduction* (Lublin: Marie Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2002), p. 182.
[341] Bernard Świerczyna (prisoner number 1393), Prior to his confinement in Auschwitz, Świerczyna was a painter, poet, and writer.

Poland. Jaworska doesn't go so far as to offer a reading of the work itself, only of how the work was intended to appear within the setting of Auschwitz II-Birkenau (*fig. 52*). [342]

Brandhuber imagined the site cleared of its wooden and masonry structures, and a column-like structure to be placed in the centre of the former camp. This was to be surmounted by an eternal flame. Thousands of stones were to be positioned at the location, and the perpetrators of the crime, the ex-members of the SS garrison, would be given responsibility for maintaining the site. The memorial was intended to bear witness to the tragedy of Auschwitz and the victory of those who survived the camp, but after the liberation of the camp in January 1945 the monument was not built. My reading of Brandhuber's design will demonstrate that this memorial was intended to articulate the inmates' direct experience of a culture of pain and suffering in the functioning camps of Auschwitz.

Brandhuber commences his description [343] by informing the camp resistance organisation, who commissioned the design, that 'The entire terrain to the west of the camp in Birkenau, beginning with the crematoria is to be levelled.' By doing this, Brandhuber intended to create 'a colossal roll-call square,' a wide-open space in which the memorial would have been located. It should be noted that Brandhuber's proposed intervention within the built environment of Auschwitz II-Birkenau would have resulted in the demolition of some of the major evidence of the machinery of death. This suggests that Brandhuber was not concerned with maintaining the site at Birkenau. Perhaps, given the enormity of the crime that had taken place at the combined camps that came under the heading of Auschwitz, and especially at Birkenau, it was

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[342] It is surprising that the scant information that exists on Jerzy Adam Brandhuber, or his design for a monument at Birkenau, is hardly discussed at all, when not omitted entirely, from the literature on attempts at memorialising the site. See Janina Jaworska, *Nie Wszystek Umre: Tworczosc plastyczna Polakow w hitlerowskich wiezieniach I obozach koncentracyjnch 1939-1945* [Not all of Me Will Die: Art Work of Polish Prisoners in Nazi Prison Camps]. (Warsaw: Ksiazka I Wiedza, 1975), pp. 50-51.

[343] Translation taken from a letter to Janina Jaworska and reproduced in Jaworska (1975), at p. 51.

inconceivable, not only to Brandhuber, but to all those imprisoned in the camp, that the reality of the site's purpose could ever be forgotten or denied. Whatever is the case, it is significant that in Brandhuber's design, we can see a more abstract alternative to the now ubiquitous 'historical reconstruction' display type of the museum space, at work in the culture of memorials.

The need for the inmate to attest to the crime of Auschwitz II-Birkenau has been argued by the Holocaust scholar Martin Gilbert: 'In the concentration camps there had been a slogan, "I am the victim! I am the witness!"'[344] In drawing our attention to this slogan, Gilbert reminds us that the inmates regarded themselves as the primary source for information concerning the camp's activities, and by extension, as witnesses to what had taken place there. A key example of the entreaty 'to remember' can be found in the testimony of the prisoner-physician Jakub Wolman. He states that a prisoner selected for the gas chamber told him, 'If you get out of here, tell about how we are being killed.'[345]

Wolman's recollection is in direct contrast to the observations made by James Young concerning the difficulties that post-war Holocaust memorialists would encounter when they sought to commemorate the sites of destruction. Young asks two fundamental and linked questions: '[H]ow to create a focal point for remembrance among ruins without desecrating the space itself', and '[H]ow to embody remembrance without seeming to displace it?'[346] In answer to both these questions, and in applying them to Brandhuber in particular, it is important that we remain aware of the fact that Brandhuber was designing a memorial within what was then the functioning, intact environment of the participating genocidal Auschwitz complex. At that time there were

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[344] Gilbert (1987), p. 825.

[345] Irene Strzelecka, 'The Hospitals at Auschwitz Concentration Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues In The History of the Camps, Vol II*, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 337.

[346] James E. Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* (New York and Munich: Prestel Verlag 1994), p. 24.

no ruins; the site was teeming with witnesses to what was taking place there and, as already noted by Gilbert, the exhortation to remember and commemorate was still being made by individual victims as well as through the memorial commission from the camp resistance group. Given that this was the situation at Auschwitz II-Birkenau in the final months of its existence, perhaps it is not surprising that Brandhuber broke with the now prevalent idea in memorialisation generally that the integrity of the space should be maintained. The mechanisms of death, what Jonathan Huener terms the material evidence of gas chambers and crematoria,[347] may not have seemed so crucial in Brandhuber's time as part of the memorialisation. It may have seemed an obvious yet unnecessary presence. The possibility also exists that Brandhuber may have been artistically interested in the abstract, or the symbolic.

Brandhuber continues his description: 'In the centre a colossal smokestack, square at its base, like in the crematorium, only several times taller, fifty to sixty metres high.' By espousing this motif of the column, Brandhuber may have been suggesting that it carry the same symbolic function as was sometimes adopted during the Roman period, such as by *Trajan's Column* in Rome. There the form was used to represent the personification of victory over the Barbarians, and later used as a mausoleum for the body of the emperor.[348] This model has been repeated many times in European history; in the early twentieth century Frederick Chapman Clemesha, an English architect who had served with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, put it to spectacular effect at St Julien (Sint Juliaan) in Belgium. There it forms the immense centrepiece for the commemoration of the Canadian war-dead memorial and cemetery of the First World War. Both columns, Trajan's at 29.76 metres and St Julien at 22.12 metres, are symbols of victory on the scale of spectacle. It can therefore be argued that the

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[347] Huener, pp. 60-61.

[348] The literature on this monument and its meaning is extensive and its influence on artists has been noted by many authors. However, there is little printed in the English language that would show its influence on Polish art practice. At the time of writing I am awaiting details that will address this problem.

enormous size of Brandhuber's smokestack, which here I am suggesting be read as a column, is expressive of victory over barbarism (like Trajan's column), and as a moral victory of modern times (as at St Julien).[349] Brandhuber, like Clemesha in relation to the then-recent war of 1914-18, was not working from the mediated experience of the Holocaust as distant memory after all, but through the intimate experience of someone who had been a first-hand witness to the genocide. Although Brandhuber does not inform us of the material from which the column was to be realised, its presence as a smokestack was clearly intended to refer to the architecture of the environment from which it derived. If bricks and mortar were to have been used, they would have become part of the narrative-making of the memorial.

Brandhuber does develop the memorial further, however, by proposing to surmount his proposed column with an 'eternal flame,' and in that way quoting from the established iconography of remembrance, reaching back to at least Jerusalem's First Temple in the first-century BC. This device has therefore, long been understood as a symbol by which the visitor is drawn to acknowledge an internationally significant event, extends the emblematic quality of the monument, and in so doing creates the additional element of a votive offering.

Concerning the concept of the commemoration of conflict in the landscape of post-war pan-European politics, Maria Mälkasoo a principal investigator at the International Centre for Defence Studies (Tallin), describes the broad spectrum of possibilities that could be drawn upon to memorialise the dead. She writes, 'We could distinguish at least four major mnemonic communities in the European memory landscape in relation to World War II: Atlantic-Western European, German, East-Central European and Russian.'[350] Each of these constituent groups chooses to

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[349] Having proposed that the chimneystack represents a column, I shall refer to it as such in the following text.
[350] Maria Mälkasoo, 'The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe,' in *European Journal of International Relations*, 15:4, pp. 653-680 at p. 654.

memorialise events from within their own experiences of the war. For example, Western Europe focused on D-Day, the landing of 160,000 troops on Normandy beaches in 1944, and the subsequent Allied victory in Europe. Germany focused on the trauma of the bombing of its cities, such as Dresden and Hamburg. Whilst in East-Central Europe the memorialisation of the traumatic memory of the Nazi occupation was a major factor. In Russian the human cost of the 'Great Patriotic War' became the central theme of its memorialisation.

To these we may add Omer Bartov's observation of post-1918 war memorialisation. He states: 'In the wake of World War One modes of remembrance [memorial making] and ascribing of meaning to death ['died to keep us free'] were common features of the vast and unprecedented wave of commemoration that swept Europe.'[351] The emphasis was upon glorification of collective death as a national cause, from which a new characteristic emerged, that of 'individual heroism.' Through certain commemorative processes, the First World War ushered in the elevation of the 'rank and file' to heroic status. This increase in the visibility of the subordinate in commemoration reaches a climax in the memorialisation of the victims of the Holocaust, where the majority of those killed were Eastern Europeans and Jews who had played no part in the fighting and substantial numbers of whom were either children or the elderly and women. They were not combatants who had died fighting the Nazis, but were victims of a vast genocidal project.

Brandhuber also intended that from this focal point – the column – the memorial was to expand outwards notionally speaking. For Brandhuber, the extent of the genocide was to be represented by the scale of the memorial outwards as well as upwards. He continues: 'And all around in rows, like blocks [symbolising prisoners] as

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[351] Omer Bartov, '"Fields of Glory": War, Genocide and the Glorification of Violence,' in Moishe Postone and Eric L. Santner (eds), *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 117.

they stood during roll-call, in formation, arranged in sectors.' The stones represent the inmates, as they underwent the morning and evening ritual of the roll-call (which often preceded their own possible deaths within the machinery). The use of a natural material such as stone implies a natural and human condition. The purpose of the roll-call was that the Jews (and other national and ethnic groups), should first be massed at a site, with the camp function requiring that they should be worked to death or murdered in the gas chambers, allowing for the inmates' to disappear completely.

The roll-call has been described by Irena Strzelecka, a survivor of Birkenau, she explains how the inmates had to line up 'in rows of ten, by height – from shortest to the tallest. [...] Regardless of weather, even in severe frost.'[352] It appears that Brandhuber intended the meaning of the monument to include a commemoration of the lived experience of those imprisoned at the camp. Brandhuber adopted a grid-like schema.

Faceless and genderless, and therefore able to communicate that both men and women had been deported to Auschwitz and its many sub-camps, the stones would indicate the nature of the indignities suffered at the site, reminding us that the inmates had been stripped of everything upon entering the camp, including their identities, which had been replaced by the tattooed numbers on their arms. Primo Levi considered the implications of this dehumanising process in his memoir, *Survival in Auschwitz*.[353] For Levi, the induction process, the tattooing, and the roll-call signalled that 'you will never leave here.'[354] He saw these practices, especially the numbering, as necessary for converting as quickly as possible the newly arrived deportee into an inmate who became nothing more than a cipher. David Patterson has described the function of the tattooing

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[352] Irena Strzelecka, Auschwitz 1940-1945, Vol II, 2000, p. 66. Irena Strzelecka, "Experiments," in: *Auschwitz 1940-1945. Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, ed. Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, vol. II   "The Prisoners, Their Life and Work." Oświęcim (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum) 2000, pp. 347-369

[353] Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity,* trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Summit Books, 1988), p.

[354] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (trans) Raymond Rosenthal, trans Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus Books, 1988), p. 65.

of registration numbers: 'Numbers are opposed to being: they are the ciphers of nothingness and the spokesman of indifference.'[355] In their anonymity, Brandhuber's stones seek to engage with a visual language of facelessness, which makes no attempt to speak of individuals, communities, or any form of heroism – such as comradeship or resistance – which may have taken place in the camp. We may say that this ambiguity is representative of 'lost bodies,' or as the historian of Polish cinema, John Orr describes it, 'absent presence.'[356]

A note of caution should be offered here regarding the stones: by assimilating national and ethnic prisoners into the anonymity of the stones it might be thought that Brandhuber was erasing national and ethnic differences. Against this view it is possible to argue that Brandhuber was attempting to rid the site of the rigid system of identification that had been such a prominent feature of the camp's discipline.

Broadening John Orr's concept of 'absent presence', we may also interpret the stones as implying other unarticulated presences. Firstly, our attention is implicitly drawn to the unseen threat of the oppressor and the power source of the roll-call, the SS. Here Brandhuber's stones may be said to perform at least a double signification, whereby an imagined power-relation and exchange is set up between the aggressors and the victim. It is arguable that in its refusal to identify specific individuals, the memorial attempts to commemorate all the 1.5 million deportees who were intended to suffer immediate death in the gas-chambers; yet many of these people did not undergo the process of registration at the camp, or even experience the roll-calls. Brandhuber's memorial design set the memorial in the spatio-temporal Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and by doing so symbolically returns the inmates to the site where they had last been present as

[355] David Patterson, *Sun Turned to Darkness: Memory and Recovery in the Holocaust Memoir* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), p. 164.
[356] John Orr and Elzbieta Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), p. 4.

a community, albeit a controlled and restricted one. In so doing, Brandhuber emphasized the perpetrator-victim dynamic, which I believe to be the institutive meaning of the stone motif.[357] It appears that Brandhuber intended to establish a link between the stone figures, as possibly representing all Auschwitz deportees, and their relationship to the column representing the means of their death.

So far, this discussion has suggested readings of Brandhuber's design, and has offered a reading in particular of the positioning of the stones in a grid-like formation as memorialising more than just the act of the roll-call. Brandhuber is memorializing the ongoing activities of one group of human beings who have set themselves against another.

By positioning the stones in a grid-like formation it is possible that Brandhuber also intended a reference, like the column, to other ancient classical precedents. The grid formation would have created an area that we may describe as a classical precinct, or sacred area. The origins of this device can be found in Roman tomb enclosures, such as those built near Reggio Emilia for the Concordi family. Alan Borg has described the purpose of this Roman practice: 'The central theme being enclosed within a frame of stones, it is therefore separated from its immediate surroundings, thus providing a sanctuary.'[358] At Auschwitz, the proposed grid-like formation echoed this antique device, and thereby marked the area as sacred or special. In this way Auschwitz II-Birkenau was to be converted from a secular site of annihilation to a sacred space of remembrance.

In the light of this suggestion, Brandhuber's further statement that there should be 'all around only a row of fence posts with guns and lamps,' might thus be understood

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[357] For a detailed discussion of these points see Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), especially pp. 261-275. For a refutation of Davidson, see Ralf Stoeker, *Reflecting Davidson: Donald Davidson Responding to an International Forum of Philosophers* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), p.58. Whilst anti-Semitism may be regarded as a state of mind, during the Nazi period anti-Semitism did serve as the engine that drove the 'Final Solution.' As such it represents a primary reason, which in Stoeker's opinion can also serve as an event.
[358] Alan Borg, *War Memorials from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Lee Cooper, 1991), p, 131.

as a further aspect of the concept of the sanctuary. Not only was the memorial intended to be restricted to the original physical enclosure of the camp, Brandhuber's intention was to corral the monument, to hold it within the space in which the genocide was enacted.

Brandhuber's adoption of stones however, should be separated from the history of the use of erratic boulders, the product of glacial movement that transported the rocks, often granite, from one place to another, and which were later used as monuments and war memorials.[359] Julius Langbehn, a German art historian, writing in 1890, eulogized granite as a material suitable for monuments in his book *Rembrandt als Erzieher: von einem Deutschen* [Rembrandt as Educator: From a German]. [360] Langbehn argues: 'The Greeks had a culture of marble, the Germans should have one of granite. Granite is a Nordic and truly Germanic stone.' He continues: '[T]hese are enormous boulders who serve as the political foundation stones of the German Reich.'[361]

To read Brandhuber's stones as 'boulders' which, in this context, conceivably might have linked them to the uses that the German National Socialists party gave them from 1933 onwards where they were use to extol notions of the 'volkisch.' This was a romanticising of Germanic folklore and attached to the organic, seen at such places as the *Sachsenhain* (Saxon Grove, Verden, near Bremen). There, the landscape artist Wilhelm Hubotter, who later designed the memorial grounds for the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, was commissioned by Himmler to design the grove (*fig. 53*). In 1934, Hubotter placed 4,500 monoliths, taken from the same number of villages in the Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony, north-western Germany) to commemorate the 4,500

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[359] Pre-historical such sites as Stonehenge (Britain) and Carnac (Brittany) spring to mind.

[360] Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher: von einem Deutschen* (Weimar: Duncker, 1928, first published 1890).

[361] Cited in Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870 – 1997* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), p. 71.

Saxons beheaded by Charlemagne because they refused to convert to Christianity. For the Nazis, the purpose of the monument was to establish a link to pre-Christian martyrology, and to show that the native German culture was more important and indigenous and predated the later adoption of Judeo-Christian thinking. Bettina Arnold, an archaeologist has argued, 'It [*Sachsenhain*] exemplifies the anti-Christian and neo-pagan elements of the new 'religion' that Himmler hoped to impose on the German people.'[362] A further example can be found at Hosseringen, on the Luneburg heathlands, where the creation of a cultic site, intended for use at the summer and winter solstice, and at other times, was used to re-establish the idea of the Germanic 'Ting,' the governing assembly where free people of the community presided over by lawmakers solved communal disputes and made political decisions. Begun in 1933, this false neo-pagan site, drawn from a *mélange* of Scandinavian and German mythology 'focused on large pageant-rich communal gatherings in open-air theatres.'[363] To employ erratic boulders at Auschwitz would have represented a link to a rampant nationalism that would have been unthinkable to Brandhuber.

To return to the classical model, Brandhuber's stones might be more fruitfully compared with a Greek chorus, if a necessarily plastic, muted one. In this sense the stones 'speak' for the muted victims. In the book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have remarked that: 'Survivors often claim that they experience the feeling of belonging to a "secret order" that is sworn to silence,'[364] and I propose that the stones would have worked also to suggest this kind of silenced 'secret order' as a form of witnessing and testimonial. As Thomas Berger writes in his study of post-1945 German policy-making,

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[362] Bettina Arnold, 'Pseudoarchaeology and Nationalism: Essentialising Difference,' in Garret G. Fagen (ed.), *Archaeological Fantasies:How Pseudoarchaeology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), p. 167.
[363] Arnold (2006), p. 167.
[364] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 82.

'events do not speak for themselves,'[365] and at Birkenau the camp resistance, in commissioning the memorial, intended the voices of the victims and survivors, above all, to be heard. It was the monumentality of the stone structure that was intended to communicate the extent and significance of what had taken place. There is a parallel, albeit an uncomfortable one, with the words of Adolf Hitler regarding memorialisation, which he had learnt from Albert Speer's 'A Theory of Ruin Value.'[366] Hitler stated that: 'When a nation fades away and people are silent, then stones shall speak.'[367] For Hitler, the Third Reich was to last a thousand years, but his architectural legacy was to last an eternity. We do not know whether Brandhuber knew of Speer's 'Theory of Ruin Value,' but the resulting presence of the rubble and ruins that covered Poland during and after World War II would at least have made them more topically current, and reflected Poland's wartime experiences.

We could also speculate that Brandhuber's lack of an inscription upon his proposed memorial design may have been to persuade visitors that an appropriate response would be silence. The intervention of the memorial at the site was intended to silently reclaim the landscape of Birkenau. In this, Brandhuber was attempting the same as the architects of First World War cemeteries, where the horrific nature of war and loss of life was to be memorialised by those who made pilgrimages to the sites, and engaged in silent contemplation there. Those going to the sites of war memorialisation in post-1918 Europe, and those for whom the memorial at Auschwitz was intended as a place of pilgrimage would not have necessarily understood them in terms of the 'historic', but as the rhetorical continuation of current or recent events.[368] As DeCoste

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[365] Thomas Berger, 'The power of memory and memories of power: the cultural parameters of German foreign policy-making since 1945', in Jan-Werner Muller (ed), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 81.

[366] Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (London: Sphere Books Ltd, 1971), p. 97.

[367] Cited in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (ed.), *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), note 24, p. 226.

[368] See Catherine Moriarty, 'Public Grief and Private Remembrance: British First World War Memorials,' in M. Evans and K. Lunn (eds), *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 125.

and Schrawz point out in their study of Holocaust memorialisation: 'Where European memorials are located in situ they often suggest themselves rhetorically as the extension of events they would communicate.'[369]

Brandhuber further defines the stones as being 'like 'urns.' This utilisation of the form of a funerary object long associated with the classical tradition further suggests that Brandhuber was continuing to seek inspiration genealogically, from a set of historically legitimated memorial forms. He had begun the process by giving the central column a central place. The stones may be read as signifying empty tombs, and that if this were so, then this proposed memorial would also have acted as a cenotaph. This interpretation is supported by Brandhuber's parenthetical remark in Jaworska '(not graves for there were none).' The art historian Jochen Spielmann makes the point that a memorial 'symbolically gives them [those remembered] a common grave,'[370] and we can include Brandhuber's proposal amongst other memorials intended to do this. At Auschwitz, as in so many of the camps, the dead were denied an appropriate burial. There, the last remains were taken from the gas chambers, their bodies' plundered, and valuable materials such as gold teeth removed, and subsequently 'Ashes and bones incinerated in the Auschwitz crematoria were crushed with wooden mortars.'[371] These ashes were used as infill and fertiliser or discarded in ponds at the site. After the Harvest Festival [Erntefest] in 1944, the proposed annihilation of Hungarian Jewry began, so great was the quantity of ashes that they were thrown into the nearby Wisła and Soła Rivers.[372]

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[369] F. C. DeCoste and Bernard Schwartz (eds), *The Holocaust's Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics, Law and Education.* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000), p. 49.

[370] Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél' d'Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 36.

[371] Michael Berenbaum and Yisrael Gutman (eds), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998), p. 261.

[372] By 1944, the genocidal role of Auschwitz had expanded, owing to the closure in the preceding year of the extermination camps Chełmno (April, except for a brief three-week period), Bełżec (June), Treblinka (September) and Sobibór (November). For a full discussion see: Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, *The Holocaust and*

As we move towards the close of Brandhuber's text he informs the Resistance Committee of his intentions for the space which would exist amid the stones: 'And between these groupings nothing, no grass, no trees.' This suggests that the landscape in which the memorial would have stood was designed to hold nature at bay, so that any natural indication of the progression of time, which might have been offered by the intrusion of the natural environment, would have been blocked. As we shall see in later designs, the need to develop a visual metaphor for the liminal space between the 'then' and 'now' of the camp becomes a major concern. Brandhuber's memorial would thus have held Auschwitz II-Birkenau firmly and interventionally within its own history as a functioning camp.

Brandhuber finally informs us that the maintenance of the site would be carried out by 'former SS men [who] would weed the grounds to the end of their lives.' Brandhuber's inspired inclusion of the former SS as grounds men employed to weed and maintain the memorial may be interpreted as a further commemoration of the positive (victory of the inmates) over the negative (genocide). For Brandhuber, it seems, the answer to the Nazi ideology of anthropocentric domination, witnessed to terrible effect at Auschwitz, was to recast the SS in their new role as grounds men. In this role they would have served to promote an additional visual exploration of the perpetrator-victim dynamic. To complete this sequence of thinking, the SS would have replaced the survivors as the remnant prisoners within the corralled environment of Birkenau.

In conclusion, Brandhuber's monument, which in my view illustrates the experience of the inmates of Birkenau at either a morning or evening roll call, was intended to root the memorial in the experiences being remembered. The function of the

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History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 375. For the efficiency of the crematoria for body disposal see Franciszek Piper, 'Mass Murder', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues In The History of the Camps, Vol III*, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum 2000), pp. 127, 137, 144, 159, 164, 169, 171, 173, 259.

former camp, and the experience of the inmates, were to be marked. The form of a central column as the memorial's innermost device, surrounded with rows of stones, emphasises the link between the regimented prisoners and the principle means of their annihilation, the gas chambers and crematoria. This is underscored by the tension between the potential materials that were to be used in the memorial. The possibility that the smokestack could have been realised in brick suggests the man-made, the industrial nature of the site, whilst the natural material of the stones, used for the figures, implies a natural and human condition.

As has been noted, Brandhuber's design, with its central column, rows of stones, barbed-wire boundary and the residue of the SS garrison, suggests a narrative that refuses to address any sense of consequent redemption from the wretchedness of Auschwitz. Brandhuber may have wanted to create a situation whereby the immediate post-war visitor to the intended memorial would have perceived that what was being commemorated was not history, but still very much a current event.[373] This was true, after all of the pilgrimages to the battlefields of the Western Front after World War I, and for those who visited the battlefields of Western Europe following D-Day in 1944.

Brandhuber's Design in Context: War Memorialisation in Poland

So far I have offered an interpretation of Brandhuber's memorial design; in it I have shown that Brandhuber may have drawn his inspiration from a repertoire of classical forms of memorialisation common at the time. On the other hand Brandhuber's resistance to such concepts as pedestal, text and heroic figuration exhibits a reworking of the conventional catalogue of visual metaphors employed to promote a sense of

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[373] Danielle Hipkins and Gill Plain, *War-torn Tales: Film and Gender in the Aftermath of World War II* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 13.

triumphalism in war memorialisation. The key to the design is in reading it as a series of symbols that when combined serve to illustrate a narrative of suffering and oppression.

There is, however, a visual legacy here that establishes relationships to preceding models of remembrance. How might these be shown to share commonalities with preceding modes of Polish war commemoration? When Poland finally regained her independence in 1918, after 146 years of tripartite domination by Prussia, Russia and Austria, there was an upsurge in modernist cultural expression throughout the country. Artistic production engaged with, and reflected, the expansion of visual representation across Europe, turning away from old-fashioned history painting in the romantic vein. According to the art historian Marek Bartelik, 'rapid and positive changes occurred.' There were five main artistic trends during Poland's interwar period, occurring across five cities: Expressionism, later renamed Formism (in both Lwów and Poznan, later transferring to Kraków), Futurism (Kraków and Warsaw), the Young Yiddish group (Łódź), and Neo-classicism mixed with Symbolism (Warsaw). These trends represented a protest against the earlier nationalist ideology, which, excepting the Symbolists, were thought to weigh down the growth of Polish art, and which modified the existing 'art paradigms,'[374] that revolved around romantic representations. Brandhuber thus followed a modernist trajectory that was already established.

Pre-1939 Polish war commemoration was equal in scope and size to that realised by such British architects as Sir Reginald Blomfield's *The Menin Gate* at Ypres and Sir Edwin Lutyens's *Memorial to the Missing of the Somme* at Thiepval following the First World War (*fig. 54, 55*).[375] In Poland, the Łyczakowski burial ground at Lwów is comparable in both size and style to war-grave sites in France and Belgium. The two-and-a-half thousand graves form the '*Eaglets*' cemetery, designed by Rudolph Indruch,

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[374] Marek Bartelik, *Early Polish Modern Art: Unity in Multiplicity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[375] Sir Edwin Lutyens, 'Memorial to the Missing of the Somme,' Thiepval, commissioned 1928, unveiled 31 July 1932. Sir Reginald Blomfield, 'The Menin Gate,' Ypres, commissioned 1921, unveiled 24 July 1927.

which acknowledged the deaths of the young soldiers who died in defence of the city of Lwów during the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-1919 (*Fig. 56*). The idea of war commemoration took root and in 1925, the Poles unveiled the *Tomb to the Unknown Soldier*, designed by Ostrowski; it was situated in the linking colonnades of the Saxon Palace, Warsaw. The significance of this building for notions of Polish national identity is marked. When Poland removed her capital from Kraków to Warsaw, the palace became the meeting place for nobility, foreign envoys, diplomats, and the seat of its Kings (*Fig. 57*). This monument thus commemorated not only Poland's major battles of the First World War, but with the addition of bronze plaques, the nation's greatest triumphs too. The memorial contained the body of an anonymous soldier who had died defending Poland against Soviet Russia in 1919. The memorial coupled Poland's perceived culture of martyrology with that of its heroism, exhibited from the battle of Grünwald onwards (1410). In 1947 the *Tomb to the Unknown Soldier* was one of the first formal monuments to be restored in Warsaw (*Fig. 58*). However, it was not until the Polish authorities had removed the tablets etched with the names of the battles of the Polish-Soviet wars (1919-1921), in which the Russians had been routed, thus avoiding scandalizing Moscow, that restoration was felt to be complete.

Brandhuber's proposed memorial at Auschwitz, like those of the First World War, was to be a place of contemplation where the visitor or pilgrim would reflect upon the experiences of the inmates of the camp. Had it been constructed, a visitor to the memorial in the immediate post-war years would have able to identify the stones as being representative of the inmates, in the same way that the World War I cemeteries of both France and Belgium are reminiscent of fallen soldiers. While Brandhuber's memorial would at first appear to have said nothing of what brought Auschwitz into being, or of the perpetrators, the monument's multiple significations would have been recognised within a broader context of memorialisation, and modernist design.

As Krystyna Oleksy, former deputy director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, points out, 'the first visitors to the site, as survivors of State Museum Auschwitz, had an intimate understanding of both the victims and perpetrators', and as such they had a 'broad fund of such knowledge' to draw upon.[376] Added to this, visitors were well-versed in the symbolism of war commemoration.

Memorialisation at Auschwitz 1945 – 1956: 'Form and Function'

The realisation of such a large-scale memorial would have required considerable funding, and Brandhuber believed 'that the entire world would provide funds'; it was his belief that 'there would be [in fact] too much money for its construction and maintenance.'[377] In this Brandhuber was wrong, for post-liberation Auschwitz received very little financial support from Poland's wartime allies, with most funding having to be raised from within the war-devastated nation itself. Brandhuber's memorial went unrealised and there is no available information which explains why this should have been so. However, we may speculate that given the significant intervention that the memorial would have made to the site, and the need to preserve what was left of the machinery of death as evidence for the prosecution of Nazi war crimes, Brandhuber's memorial design would have been considered impossible to implement at that time.

Interestingly, Brandhuber returned to Auschwitz in 1947 and began to work as an historian for the National Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, writing the history of the systematic destruction of the Soviet POWs at the camp. He also completed a number of drawings that depict the inhuman living and working conditions experienced by the

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[376] Krystyna Oleksy, 'The Education Centre at Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum', in Ian Davies (ed.), *Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice* (London: Continuum, 2000), p.79.
[377] Huener (2003), p. 151.

inmates.[378] In his drawing of 1946, '…and thus the camp road was created', (illustrated in Ziva Amishai-Masels, *Depiction and Interpretation*, at fig. 21), which depicts inmates pulling a roller, a feared task within the camp, given the high percentage of deaths that resulted from the SS demand which stated that should an inmate stumble and fall, the Kommando was to carry on pulling the roller, an action which resulted in the crushing to death of the fallen inmate. In Brandhuber's drawing he portrays only the legs of the workers as they pull the massive roller. In doing so, Brandhuber was adopting the same sense of faceless anonymity for the inmates that he intended for the stones in his memorial design.

Memorials Post-Brandhuber's Design

Against the history of pre-liberation concerns of how to memorialise the site of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the actual priority in the camp following liberation was the burying the dead. At the Birkenau site a mass grave was dug, the outer edges of which were marked with small wooden crosses, creating a sacred precinct. At its centre was placed a large wooden cross, the tau, or cross bar was inscribed with the words 'For Remembrance of Our Brothers.'(*Fig. 59*)[379] These makeshift memorials, evoking a deeply Christian idiom, even though the vast majority of the dead were Jewish, were not mirrored at other sites of Nazi trauma. At Buchenwald, for example, according to James Young, the newly liberated inmates erected a wooden obelisk, 'ten days after their liberation', and this was 'one of several temporary monuments built in the surrounding Weimar countryside.'[380] The Russians removed the wooden obelisk after only a few

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[378] Between 1946 and 1953 Brandhuber produced three major series of drawings of Auschwitz recalling its time as a functioning camp: *Quarantine*, *Forgotten Earth* and *The Ramp*.

[379] Jacek Lachendro, *Czy zburzyć i zaorać...?* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2007), p. 142. (Present author's translation). The title translates as 'Tear it down and plough it under?'

[380] Young (1993), p. 75. A competition for a permanent memorial at Buchenwald took place in 1951, with Fritz Cremer as winner.

weeks. No explanation has been offered for this, but we may suppose that the history of obelisks as memorials could have been interpreted by communists as having 'imperialist' or Czarist overtones. Their lack of visibility in post-revolution Russia also attests to this. The case of two now destroyed obelisks may serve to highlight this observation. The first example is the case of the *Liberty Obelisk*, by Dmitrii P. Osipov, erected in Moscow in 1918, and destroyed on Stalin's orders in 1941. The second, the commemorative obelisk erected to the soldiers that fell in the battle of Borodino in 1812 was, according to Timothy Colton, 'stealthily moved' months before Stalin's death in 1953.[381]

Alfred Fiderkiewicz, a former inmate of Birkenau, and member of the National Homeland Council, an organisation provisionally established on 1 January 1944 with the aim of establishing a pro-Soviet 'representative body' in Poland, and formed without the approval of Stalin, was amongst the first to notice that there was no permanent memorial at Auschwitz. On 31 December 1945, eleven months after the liberation of the Auschwitz complex, he suggested that Oświęcim (Auschwitz) and Brzezinka (Birkenau) should be designated as memorial sites to commemorate both Polish and international martyrdom. There were two ways of defining a memorial site at this time. Sybil Milton points out that in assigning memorial status to the grounds of a camp, that site becomes by default a memorial. She writes: 'These memorials preserve the contents of the camps from the time of their active participation in genocide, including electrified fences, barracks, gas chambers and crematoria, gaols and railway tracks among other artefacts.' The 'unintentional' memorial is consequently made up of the remnants of the physical structures of former concentration and extermination camps. There are also explicit memorials, such as those that are actively placed at

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[381] Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 338.

Holocaust sites. Again, according to Milton 'These memorials can be mutually inclusive and may function together with the unintentional memorial at the same location.'[382]

The notion of intentional and unintentional memorials has been discussed elsewhere. Indeed it seems that Milton's observation is at odds with earlier remarks by the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl, who stated that the 'intentional' monument was signified by the determination of the maker, whilst the 'unintentional' monument was a product of later events.[383] As early as 1903, Riegl had proposed that: 'a monument in its oldest and its most original sense is a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events alive in the minds of future generations.'[384] Indeed, the integrity of any monument lies in the confidence that observers can have in its role as a point of contact with the event. It acts as a vessel to focus emotion, or as a medium that creates a bridge with the past. Whilst the shape, tradition and fabric of the monument may be subject to changes in taste and political context, its primary function has been to resolve collective memory in solid form.

Riegl was of course the first and foremost discussing ancient tombs and what they may tell us about the lived experience of the societies that created them. However, at Auschwitz, we might say that the unintentional monument, the site itself as the object of remembrance, was created before the intentional monument took form. In a very real sense, the physical remains of Auschwitz had become linked with an art historical position, in as much as art history chooses what to celebrate and claim as a monument.

In Poland, where six years of war had not only shattered the architectural history of the nation and left six million of its population dead, the debate surrounding memorialisation included political, social, and cultural aspects of Polish life that

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[382] Sybil Milton, *In Fitting Memory: The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p. 11.
[383] Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin (eds), *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 2.
[384] Alois Riegl, *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin* (Cambridge: MIT, 1982), p. 143.

eventually came to redefine nationality and identity. Against this backdrop of upheaval in Poland, the debate was by necessity extended to explore and establish what kind of formal language should be adopted for the country's future pubic memorials. Accordingly, a search was begun for a new vocabulary of architectural response that would best express, and mourn, the industrial-scale killing that had taken place at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

The difficulties inherent in the resolution of memory into form at Auschwitz began to be apparent in February 1946. A government commission for culture and art approved Alfred Fiderkiewicz's recommendation for the creation of a memorial (already noted), and appointed the former prisoner, Tadeusz Wąsowicz (already noted in the previous chapter), as director of both the Auschwitz and Birkenau sites. The problems that would be encountered at Auschwitz in attempting memorialise the enormity of the crimes that had taken place there were in part echoed across Europe at this time. Debates were initiated about what exactly should be preserved from the devastated architectural ruins of Europe. As David Crowley comments: 'Which buildings and monuments should be rebuilt or restored to assume pre-war appearance or what should be forsaken in the name of progress occupied many minds in the first post-war decade.'[385] The trauma generated by the Second World War, and the millions of victims created by it, meant that within the preservation and restoration debate, the question of what kind of formal language should be adopted for the creation of new memorials was one that was brought to the fore.

According to the plan put forward by Auschwitz's returning survivor-curators in 1945, as we have seen in in the previous chapter, the Stammlager (the base camp Auschwitz I) an 'unintentional' memorial, as we might call it, was to be created in the

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[385] David Crowley, 'Europe Reconstructed, Europe Divided', in David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (eds) *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London: V & A Publishing, 2008), p. 46.

form of a museum. Blocks 10 and 11 were to be preserved and used as a mausoleum for those who had died in the camp. Three other Blocks were to be used for research into German crimes, as a visitor's hostel, and as a vocational education facility for postsecondary learning. This would suggest that the site was intended to become a museum first, and only secondly a monument to those that had died there. The same could be said of Birkenau, where twenty Blocks were to be used for exhibition purposes, to include histories and narratives from other camps. Indeed we have seen in the previous chapter how central to Auschwitz's post-liberation life the notion of the museum was.

Beyond Poland survivors of the camp undertook their own initiatives for the creation of 'intentional' memorials. One of the earliest was in France:

> For the first time, an urn containing ashes was buried at Pere Lachaise cemetery upon the initiative of the Amicale d'Auschwitz (Auschwitz Society), on 30 June 1946, in the location of the memorial to the Auschwitz dead. At that time, the Consistoire Central asked the Auschwitz Society how they had managed to gather the ashes and then offered similar urns to the various Jewish communities throughout the country; these urns were to be included in the various memorials to the victims of the Shoah.[386]

There are some important points to be made in relation to the French memorial. The first concerns its location, the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris's XXème arrondissement. To set the memorial within France's national necropolis shows the weight of significance that was beginning to surround the name of Auschwitz, perhaps not yet at the international level that it would later achieve, but at least amongst Holocaust survivors' in Europe and the U.S.A. The monument's location in the 97th Division of the cemetery links it to a history of memorialisation of political struggle, most notably to the Mur des Fédérés (Wall of the Federals). In May 1871, a group of

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[386] Annette Wieviorka, 'Deportation and Memory: Official History and the Rewriting of World War II,' in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 298.

Communards, sensing the imminent end of their power, murdered the Archbishop of Paris, whom they had taken hostage at the beginning of the Commune. They dragged his mutilated corpse to their stronghold in Père Lachaise and tossed it in a ditch. Four days later, the victorious Versaillais found the body. In retaliation, they lined up 147 Fédérés against the cemetery's eastern wall before shooting and burying them on the spot. Since 1871, the Mur des Fédérés has been a rallying point for the French Left, which annually recalls the massacre's anniversary in the last week of May.[387] This site eventually became a place of pilgrimage for left-wing sympathizers from Europe and beyond.

The *Stone of Martyrdom*: The First Permanent Memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

The first stone memorial to actually be erected in commemoration of the destruction of European Jewry at Auschwitz II-Birkenau was the *Stone of Martyrdom* (*fig.60, 61*). This small memorial was unveiled in 1948. It stood in the north yard of Crematorium II, between the incinerator doorway and the northern entrance to the ground floor. The Central Committee of Jews undertook the financing of this monument. The memorial was small and employed the sorts of forms of memorialisation, such as a plinth that we have seen in the *Monument to the Unknown Soldier* in Warsaw. The name of the overall designer of this memorial is unrecorded. However, my own research at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum suggests that the sculptor for the memorial may well have been Sz (Szymon?) Wilkan (Wulkan?) of Bielsko. My opinion is supported by the Polish historian Jacek Lachendro working at the museum.[388] He goes further, suggesting that Sz Wilkan may also have designed the memorial.

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[387] Ilya Repin recorded the scene in 1871 in his painting, *Annual Memorial Meeting at the Wall of the Communards in the Père Lachaise Cemetery*.
[388] Private conversation with Jacek Lachendro, January 2007.

This memorial incorporated texts, in this case in both Polish and Hebrew, and thus did address Jewish loss directly. The text read: 'IN MEMORY OF THE MILLIONS OF JEWISH MARTYRS EXTERMINATED AT AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU BY THE HITLERIAN RACE MURDERERS, 1940-1945.' [389] The Hebrew text bore the same meaning. The bottom corners of the plaque were carved with the seven-branch candelabra, the menorah, thus indicating a further acknowledgement of Jewish suffering. As Alexandra Rahr has observed, the inscriptions on monuments play a significant role in the act of memorialisation, and are often controversial.

We should also consider that this Jewish monument at the Birkenau site may well have been intended to be representative of all the camps that made up the Auschwitz complex. With this in mind, Rahr continues, 'Inscriptions' can 'span not only the gap between architecture and text,' but also between different locations. Ultimately, the text 'serves as interpreter of the monument.'[390]

Further consideration of the text on the first Auschwitz-Birkenau monument might also reflect upon the given dates, 1940-1945, which suggests that this memorial was intended to act as a witness to the atrocities at the Stammlager (Auschwitz I), that were in evidence from the moment that the camp began functioning in 1940. Auschwitz II-Birkenau was in operation from March 1942 and Auschwitz III-Monowitz from October of the same year. With these dates in mind, we can conclude that the memorial was acting as a cenotaph for the whole of the Auschwitz camp complex. This would explain why the given dates (1940-1945) did not specifically refer to Birkenau, and to the period in which the gas chambers and crematoria were functioning, which was not until 1943.

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[389] Jean-Claude Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1989), p. 236.
[390] http://www.eliewieselfoundation.org/CM_Images/uploadedimages/winneressays/AlexandraRahr/AreHolocaustMemorialsEthical/DalhousieUniversityHalifax, NovaScotia. Accessed 19 January 2009.

Away from the actual sites of industrial killing, but still in Poland, the remnants of communities decimated by the Holocaust began to return to their former homes. They too began the process of commemorating their losses. One such project took place at Płock, North West of Warsaw.[391] Benjamin Arie (Lieb) Perelmuter, an architectural engineer, returned home to discover that Płock's Jewish community had been deported to the Częstochowa ghetto on 1 March 1941.[392] Learning of the deaths of so many of his compatriots, Perelmuter undertook what was to become his lifework, 'a monument to the Jews of Plock who had perished in the Holocaust, a symbolic grave to his dearest.'[393] Although not directly related to the destruction of the Jewish community in Plock one is reminded of the Polish poet Antoni Slonimski's epic poem, 'Elegy for the Jewish Villages.' Written and published in the same year that the Płock memorial was begun, the Polish composer Szymon Laks, who had been the conductor of the main inmate orchestra in Auschwitz, set the poem to music.[394]

> Gone now are those little towns where the shoemaker was a poet,
> The watchmaker a philosopher, the barber a troubadour.
> Gone now are those little towns where the wind joined
> Biblical songs with Polish tunes and Slavic rue
> Where old Jews in orchards in the shade of cherry trees
> Lamented for the holy walls of Jerusalem.
> Gone now are those little towns, though the poetic mists,
> The moons, winds, ponds, and stars above them
> Have recorded in the blood of centuries the tragic tales,
> The histories of the two saddest nations on earth.[395]

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[391] There appears to be at least two different spellings for the name of the town. Płock seems to be the Polish-gentile spelling, whilst Płotzk is the Polish-Jewish spelling, possibly Yiddish in origin. The Jewish community appears to have used both spellings

[392] Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Fontana, 1986), p. 142.

[393] Ada Holtzman, *Benjamin Perelmuter and the Destroyed Monument for the Plock Jews*. http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:I_ZXZSOfMh0J:www.zchor.org/perelmut.htm+Benjamin+Ari+Perelmuter&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari Last updated 5 March 2004. Accessed 14 July 2009.

[394] http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:lrasQK7uv9QJ:www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/composer/laks.html+Szymon+Laks&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari

[395] Antoni Słonimski, 'February 6 – Elegy for the Little Jewish Towns', at http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:yu90HaWY8x8J:konicki.com/blog2/2009/02/06/february-6-elegy-for-the-little-jewish-towns-by-antoni-slonimski/+Antoni+Slonimski+epic+poem,+'Elegy+for+the+Jewish+Villages'&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari Trans. Howard Weiner. Dated 1947, punctuation as in the original. Accessed 21 June 2009.

The sad, yet noble-minded folkish simplicity of the poem, contrasts with the notion of the Nazis stridently righteous Minessänger, employed as we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis to reflect the destiny of the German people. The Jewish destiny, as shown in Slonimski's secular lament, was to be far more poignant. In terms of Polish national identity, the romanticised view of a coequal suffering is used to bind both Polish-catholic and Polish-Jewish identities together. Although born a catholic, Slonimski's family origins were Jewish, and in order to escape the Nazis destruction of Poland and the ensuing anti-Semitic onslaught, which he had predicted in his 1937 novel *Dwa Końce świata* (Two Ends of the World), he spent the war in exile, first in Paris and then in London, where he was editor-in-chief of the leftist Polish language poetry journal *Nowa Polska* (New Poland). The publication of this journal was made possible by financial aid from the Polish government-in-exile. A number of Slonimski's relatives were killed during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 as well as at Auschwitz. He returned to Poland in 1951 and was an active anti-Stalinist and a supporter of liberalisation. According to the unnamed writer of Slonimski's obituary, published on 6 July 1976, two days after the poet's death following a car accident,

> For some five years (1951-1956), Slonimski's poems were published here and there, but for all practical purposes he was a literary nonperson. Instead, he was used by the government as a sort of window dressing, being sent abroad to either UNESCO or PEN-Club conferences and meetings.[396]

In an undated photograph we can see that the Płock memorial, which was described in the 1960s as a 'white stone monument erected in the shape of a tent', actually took the form of a modernist mausoleum (*fig. 62*).[397] The work is in two sections, each of which was reached by a continuous flight of steps, which at their lower level were flanked on either side by pedestals that bore the Menorah. This lower area

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[396] Zamorski (no initial or Christian name given), 'Death of Antoni Slonimski, A Polish Poet, Satirist and Dissident', in *Open Society Archives* (Munich, 6 July 1976), available online at www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/.../44-5-83.shtml. No date given for last updated. Accessed 20 December 2010.
[397] I. G. Chanachowicz, 'I Returned Home,' in *Plotzk: A History of an Ancient Jewish Community in Poland*, ed. Eliyahu Eisenberg (Tel-Aviv: Hamenora, 1967), p. 83.

appears to act as a plinth, with the central building raised by the addition of a castellated balustrade enclosing the staircase. The central pavilion carries an inscription, written in Hebrew that reads, 'For these things I weep.'[398] The back of the memorial lists the names of the twenty-five victims, whose bodies were exhumed there from their temporary graves.

The pavilion also houses an urn containing the ashes of a further twenty-five people massacred during the deportation. It is set within an alcove, which straddles a stone plaque. To either side of this plaque is a pair of illustrated metal plaques. In the right-hand panel we see a man raising his arms, perhaps in exultation to God, or in self-defence. In the distance we see the figure of a man who seems to be offering comfort to a child, whilst the ground is covered with bodies, one of whose arms is placed protectively over broken testament stones (*fig. 63*).

According to the scant information available, the monument was unveiled on 23 October 1949, by Gizycki, the mayor of Płock, who stated 'that Jews had lived in Płotzk since 1237 and had always been loyal to the town.'[399] Alfred Blei, the representative of the remnant Jewish community of Płock, and 'a few hundred survivors of the Płotzk Jewish community' attended. Delegates of the Polish army and members of Jewish combat organizations accompanied Dr S. Fiszgrund, of the Central Jewish Committee, and both groups delivered eulogies 'in memory of the victims.'[400] This was something that the local Jewish newspaper found sufficiently important to draw the reader's attention to. Alfred Blei wrote to Perelmuter, the monuments designer, who had been too unwell to attend the unveiling: 'We are very sorry that you were not present at the unveiling of your work of art – The Płock Monument. Everybody liked it very much, especially the experts.' Blie's letter continues in patriotic vein: 'How much work and

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[398] Lamentations 1, 16.
[399] Chanachowicz (1967), p. 83.
[400] Ibid.

effort you dedicated to the building of this monument. Every one of us Jewish brethren is proud of it.'[401]

The building of the monument then, tells us that making of large-scale monuments were not just the preserve of the state. At Płock, one man had undertaken the job of memorialisation from design and making to completion. The use of explicit Jewish symbolism and a Hebrew text reminds us that some memorials at this time were specific about what was being memorialized even if, as we have seen, the commemoration of the Jewish at the Auschwitz museum was still ambiguous. The memorial at Płock is a marker for the beginning of the Polish-Jewish community's engagement with the Holocaust.

At Auschwitz, at the time of the making of the Płock memorial, it was decided that a monument, an 'intentional' memorial should be erected near to the site of Birkenau's crematoria II and III.[402] On 14 November 1950, a cornerstone was laid for a monument to the 'Fallen of Auschwitz' – the favoured term for all early Auschwitz memorials at that time, reflecting traditional war memorials – with the form of the memorial to be decided upon later. The Mexican sculptor and muralist, David Alfaro Siqueiros was considered for the commission on the grounds of his large-scale socialist realist murals in Mexico, but Jakub Berman, head of Poland's security unit and Bolesław Bierut, the Prime Minister of Poland, rejected him owing to his suspected involvement in an assassination attempt on Leon Trotsky.[403] This of course put Siqueiros out of favour with Poland's Communist regime.

With the failure of this early initiative, the Ministry of Culture and Arts began to plan for a future monument, considering how the 'design and construction' of any such

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[401] www.zchor.org/perelmuter.htm.
[402] Huener (2003), p. 62.
[403] Huener (2003), p. 275, n. 14.

monument would be realised.[404] To this end the Ministry of Culture inaugurated a competition for a monument that would be placed at the site. This competition was to be, as the first of the post-war competitions for a permanent memorial to be placed at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, an 'all-Polish affair.'[405] In the light of the nationalist agendas I have described in the dissertation so far, I would suggest that this appears to have been an attempt by the authorities to find an exclusively Polish form for the unfolding memorial culture at the site. The 'Stone of Martyrdom' remained the only 'intentional' memorial at the Birkenau site until 1955 when it was replaced with a larger memorial.

From the photographs taken of the resulting 1955 memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, we can see that a sarcophagus-like structure has been placed between crematoria II and III, at the end of the railway track beyond the Judenrampe (*fig. 64*). This memorial was referred to as the 'Urn Monument.' Its orientation was such that it faced the Gate of Death to the east whilst its western face looked towards the space that had previously been used to hold those destined for the gas-chambers. The alignment of the memorial, at the head of the central artery of the mechanism of death, attested to Birkenau's intrinsic function as a death-camp, and to the entire process of deportation, degradation, and trauma. The Gate, the ramp, the holding area, and the gas chambers became the emblematic framework by which Auschwitz II-Birkenau would be remembered. They have remained the visual symbols by which we recognise the Holocaust.

The *Urn Monument* was approximately three metres in height and the same in width, with the addition of a triangle in its eastern face. At its base it carried the inscription Oświęcim, the Polish name of course for the Germanised 'Auschwitz'. In its proportions the memorial can be said to carry certain affinities with an unrealised

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[404] Huener (2003), p. 152.
[405] Huener (2003), p. 152.

project of Nikolia Kolli of 1918. Kolli's monument, designed to commemorate the Red Army victory over the White Russian counter-revolutionary General Krasnov at Simbirsk, employed a red wedge 'symbolising the unified power of the Bolsheviks, that thrust into the scattered units of the White Russians.'[406] Thus both monuments, the unrealised design of 1918 and the 1955 memorial at Birkenau both employed the figure of a triangle as the signifier for the political character of the individual monuments. Kolli's monument bore minimal text, which reflects the same concerns as Birkenau's *Urn Monument*. Robert Hughes, in his famous *Shock of the New* discussed Kolli's monument, saying raises that it would have been difficult to interpret Kolli's monument had it actually been constructed: 'But what could it have meant if glimpsed in a Russian street – let alone a country village – in 1919? Not much; the language was too new.'[407] This typically triumphalist reading of the 'new' modernism is interesting. I suggest, the *Urn Memorial* was further into the realm of abstraction than Brandhuber's still-figurative 'stones'. This point also applies the 1955 Urn Monument at Birkenau, which occupied an open, elevated, and paved area of sixty by thirty-two metres (*fig. 65*). Like Kolli's earlier design, so at Birkenau, where the adoption of a nominal architectural device (the triangle) and minimal inscription, made it difficult for the pilgrim to Birkenau to know exactly what was being memorialised.

Conclusion

It would seem that the Birkenau memorial was not intended to directly confront the death of European Jews or Polish political prisoners held at the functioning camp. We may interpret the lack of any reference to the Jews, or to Polish political prisoners, as an attempt by the authorities to stop the culture of victimisation at the site. As Lucjan

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[406] Robert Hughes, *Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 38.
[407] Hughes (1991), p. 38.

Motyka has pointed out, 'one did not speak of Jews or Poles – only 6 million citizens of Poland.'[408] It would appear that the museum authorities did not want to subscribe to the principles of Nazi racial laws by adopting the ethnic or religious categorisation of the inmates to be memorialised. In his book Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz, Jan Gross notes that there was a popular feeling amongst Poles that Poland should be a mono-ethnic state. Citing a report of a speech made on 19 August 1945, to a thousand delegates at a conference convened in Kraków by right-wing Poles to discuss the 'Jewish Issue,' the proposition was advanced 'that Jews should be expelled from Poland, and that Hitler ought to be thanked for destroying the Jews.' The author of the original report noted that the audience's reception was 'tumultuous ovation and applause.'[409]

Only two years after the unveiling of the Urn of Martyrdom, in 1957, calls for a more elaborate structure began. Kazimerz Smollen, then Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, suggested that the memorial was poorly built, unattractive and never intended to be permanent. These inadequacies were used to sanction the destruction of the existing memorial. It would seem that the desire for a new memorial would address questions as to the suitability of construction and longevity by means of an aesthetic of clarity. The erection of a new memorial was intended to be more in keeping with the scale of the tragedy that had unfolded at the site. It was also hoped that the range of nationalities who had been incarcerated at the site would finally be commemorated together in one 'intentional' memorial.

In the following chapter I will discuss the international competition to find a more suitable memorial to those who died in the Auschwitz camps. We shall see that

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[408] Huener (2003), pp. 76-77.
[409] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 225-226.

this competition was a drawn-out affair and did not run as smoothly as the State Museum would have hoped.

Chapter 5

The Memorial Competition at Auschwitz: 1956 – 1967

Within this chapter I pay particular attention to designs submitted for the Auschwitz Memorial Competition, which began in 1956. These include for example one by Carel Visser, a Dutch artist. I explore the sources for his design inspiration and the effects of a prolonged examination of Auschwitz and the legacy of the Nazi occupation of Holland. His design proved unsuccessful within the competition, yet interestingly had a life beyond the competition. The main focus, however, will be on the proposal submitted by Oskar Hansen, a Polish architect, whose design eventually won the competition in 1961. However, his design also went unrealised. We shall see that Hansen's design appears at first to be abstract in its treatment of the site and the representation of the memory-stories of former inmates, as did Brandhuber's memorial design of 1944 (Chapter 3). This divided the reception of the memorial between the former inmates. They saw it as being abstract and thus insufficiently readable enough to fully memorialise their suffering. Obviously, the committee felt that the design worked well for the purpose it was intended, hence their decision. However, as I have argued for Brandhuber and will for Hansen, within this conceptualised design we can perceive, through the elements of the abstract design, a stronger element of figuration, which, drawing on other examples of memorial design in Poland and beyond, worked hard precisely to express some sort of narrative meaning. It might be said that there was a disconnect between the modernist position of the committee, which as we shall see included the British sculptor Henry Moore, and the general collective of the former inmates.

The Auschwitz memorial competition was announced on 2 June 1956, by the International Auschwitz Committee (IAC), which was founded in 1952 and based in

Vienna. The membership of the IAC was drawn from survivors of Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau and the many sub-camps. The IAC served two main purposes: first, to let 'the world know what had happened in the Concentration and Extermination Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau', and second 'to look after the interests of the survivors.'[410] One of the primary tasks of the IAC, in their founding year, was to consider carefully the guiding principles for the realization of the memorial which was to be named 'The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism'.[411] The IAC contacted Henry Moore with an invitation for him to act as the committee's chairman, and he accepted the appointment. The competition was to be run in cooperation with the International Union of Architects (UIA), to find a monument that would eternalise the suffering of the victims of Nazi ethnic politics at Auschwitz. The monument was to be sited at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The official advertisement, according to the British artist and architect Paul Manousso,[412] himself a contributor to the competition, was placed in publications, such as the *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal*, as well as in art and architecture schools. The advertisement noted the particular duty of the survivors to perpetuate the memory of those who had died in the camp: 'The International Auschwitz Committee has resolved that in the camp itself an international monument shall immortalise this message.' The announcement continued: 'It shall forever characterize and capture what Auschwitz was and convey this to the world.'[413] Thus, the victims of Auschwitz were to be remembered and, at the same time the survivors were to be enfranchised by any future form the monument might take. What all of this suggests, is that any attempt at memorialisation up to this point had been problematic and contested.

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[410] At http://www.auschwitz.info/e/history.html Accessed 20 March 2009. A further purpose was 'To encourage and support contacts between the national Auschwitz committees' (ibid.).
[411] Stefan Methesius, *Art, Architecture and Design in Poland 1966-1990: An Introduction* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), p. 90.
[412] Private correspondence with Paul Manousso, 12 and 27 February 2008.
[413] Heuner (2003), p.154.

There were no constraints as to the form of the memorial, apart from the indication that the site was a monument in and of itself, and should be kept intact. The winning project was to be located at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, between the ruins of the crematoria II and III. The competition was open to artists from all countries, except those that had collaborated with the Nazis, such as Yugoslavia. This did not represent a deliberate attempt to exclude West German artists from the competition. They were in fact the second most numerous entrants and included Joseph Beuys. Indeed, Beuys explored the subject of Auschwitz and the Holocaust in a number of later works, especially the *Auschwitz Demonstration* vitrine (1956-1964).[414] However, his contribution to the memorial competition proved unsuccessful. From East Germany, the artist Max Lachnit, who had previously won a prize in the international competition for redesigning the space in front of the former League of Nations building in Geneva, entered a proposal, he too was unsuccessful.

The extent of the international response to the call for a memorial is borne out by the number of entries to the competition. Altogether, more than 685 sculptors and architects, all of whom had a creative vision for how the memorialisation of Auschwitz should appear, submitted 465 designs. Contributions came from 36 countries, including Argentina, Ceylon, Finland, Holland, New Zealand, Portugal and America

British Entrants to the Competition

Three British teams, Paul Manousso, Kenneth and Mary Martin with John Weeks, and Benno Schotz, submitted designs for the competition. Each of the proposed memorials was to be sited at the area known as the *Judenrampe*, west of the 'Gate of Death' and

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[414] The pieces in the *Auschwitz Demonstration* vitrine made a year prior to and in the year of the first round of the Auschwitz Memorial competition were: *Fish (*1956), *Cross* (1957), *Sick Girl with Ambulance in the Background* (1957) and *Auschwitz* (1957).

east of the Crematoria. The *Judenrampe*, built in 1944 was the disembarkation point for those deported to the camp, and it was here that the SS doctors undertook selections of those who were to die immediately in the gas chambers, or to be admitted to the camp as slave labourers. As one of the elements of the mechanism of death at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau, it represents an area rich in both historic and emotional meaning.

Paul Manousso, a young architectural student at the Architectural Association in London, [415] supplied a design that was intended to 'inspire compassion for the imprisoned and a feeling of awe for those who perpetuated the idea of "humanity", developed as it was in secret where human life had no value and where resistance was truly gratuitous.' (*fig. 66*).[416] The monument would at first be glimpsed from outside of the camp, framed within the arch created by the 'Gate of Death.' As the pilgrim visitor passed under the gate, the memorial would have appeared to rise up, being accessed by a ramp, which passed over the railway line, thus connecting the 'Gate of Death' with the *Judenrampe*, upon which a large square mausoleum was to have been erected. The interior walls of this building were to have 'large stone spikes' intended to 'symbolise both the number of people murdered and the suffering involved.' The word PEACE was to be inscribed three times on the walls and a low white marble slab, positioned at the end of the room, was to act as a place where flowers could be left. Natural lighting was to be used by means of small lenses of red glass, whilst additional light was to be supplied via a large stained glass window situated in the wall at the west end of the room. At the centre of the mausoleum 'one would look down into a very deep stepped shaft at the bottom of which would burn a large flame.'[417] On leaving the mausoleum, the visitor would descend via a staircase to a triangular viewing platform, 'open to the

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[415] PMO K84-58/333333, and private correspondence with Paul Manousso, 12 and 27 February 2008.
[416] PMO K84-58/333333.
[417] PMO K84-58/333333.

sky on which are three concrete fingers like high, irregular, obelisks.'[418] Manousso's intention was to clad the obelisks in silver glass mosaic; a pair of wings that would rise from the ground and tower above the viewing platform in turn would be suggestive of 'flight and winged Victory.'[419] Upon exiting the viewing platform and mausoleum, the visitor would pass a large square poll of water, 'giving the idea of release to freedom and life.'[420] Realised in concrete, Manousso's memorial design would have employed accepted forms of memorial architecture, stained glass, an eternal flame, obelisks and a pair of wings, symbolic of victory. However, his inclusion of a large rectangular pool, which would have caused a massive intervention within the area of the *Judenrampe*, may have been detrimental to the project.

Kenneth and Mary Martin, together with the architect John Weeks, with whom they had collaborated for the Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition, *This is Tomorrow*, in August 1956,[421] submitted a design for a 101 feet tall concrete tower, in their favoured constructivist style, which they first adopted in 1951. Like Manousso, they positioned the memorial at the *Judenrampe* (*fig. 67*). The tower was to have been accessed by means of a 21½-foot tall entrance, set within an elliptical base, measuring 35 feet by 25 feet. Here, a circular stone slab covered the ashes of those who had been cremated at the functioning camp. The tower was to have 15 differently toned fins, which accentuated the rhythm of the tower, and was intended to be open to the sky. It would have tapered inwards, thus suggesting a funnel, 'which expands slowing upwards.'[422] The intention seems to have been that 'curves and lightness are to be set against the grim rectangularity of the ruined prison.'[423] 'The interior', according to the designers' was 'oppressive and enclosing, representative of captivity, but that the shaft should reach to

[418] PMO K84-58/333333.
[419] PMO K84-58/333333.
[420] PMO K84-58/333333.
[421] PMO K251-58/473353, and private correspondence with Barbara Weeks 27 February 2008.
[422] PMO K251-58/473353.
[423] PMO K251-58/473353.

the sky to give feelings of freedom and hope and thus represent the triumph of the human spirit.'[424] The memorial was to be set within a space of concrete paving slabs, 'similar in extent to the present paved surface, and with curved lines on it.'[425]

The Estonian born Scottish artist, Benno Schotz, at that time Head of Sculpture at the Glasgow School of Art, and from 1960 Sculptor in Ordinary for Scotland, also submitted a design. Unlike the other British entrants to the competition Schotz design called for the starkness of the memorial to remain unchanged (*fig. 68*). 'It should not' he stated, 'be made into a garden of remembrance.' [426] Like Manousso and the Martin/Weeks collaboration, Schotz began by considering how the memorial would appear from a distance, being visible from beyond the 'Gate of Death', the monument would gain in 'intensity as the visitor approached it.'[427] Unlike the other British entrants, and all others who had submitted designs, Schotz wanted to retain the 1955 *Urn Memorial*. According to Schotz, 'The siting of the Urn containing ashes of the martyrs is intuitively correct.'[428] It was his intention to remove the *Urn Memorial* from its stepped base, which according to Schotz, 'weekend the composition.' The paved area surrounding the *Urn Memorial* was to be extended. Once retained, the *Urn Memorial* would become central to his own design. Monolithic stones, reminiscent of Brandhuber's 1944 memorial design, were to be quarried locally and positioned in a triangular formation around the *Urn*. Schotz was of the opinion that, 'the spectator will be drawn in among them [the stones] to contemplate their message, his eye always being directed upwards by the changing dynamics of their outlines.' [429] Unlike Brandhuber's stones, the monoliths surfaces were to be animated with incised inscription, intended to 'resemble scratching's on prison walls', such as 'prayers,

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[424] PMO K251-58/473353.
[425] PMO K251-58/473353.
[426] PMO K210-58/115542.
[427] PMO K210-58/115542.

[428] PMO K210-58/115542.
[429] PMO K210-58/115542.

poetry, a carved initial, a hand clenched in fury, or supplications, a religious symbol, or some figure compositions.' For Schotz, visually the monolith expressed, 'the indomitable spirit of the martyrs which rises aloft and in the end defeats the oppressor.'[430]

Each of the British designs proposed both figurative and abstract options, which were in keeping with the brief produced by the museum. However, none of the designs proved successful. What could the reasons have been for the failure of these designs? Paul Manousso's design may have required too great an intervention at the site, given that he wanted to dig a large rectangular hole and fill it full of water at one of the most sensitive parts of the former camp. In the case of the Martin/Weeks proposal, it is more difficult to tell why this should have proved unsuccessful, but given Moore's contribution to the 1937 publication *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, it would appear that he did not embrace the ideals of constructivism or abstract art.[431] Schotz's memorial design may have been unacceptable to the competition committee because it had the *Urn Memorial* at its centre, and as we have seen, the museum authorities had deemed this monument to be lacking in both form and function.

Carel Visser: The Emotional Effects of Responding to the Memorial Competition

The effects of an extended period of study of Auschwitz and its history upon the artists taking part in the competition is worth considering. The Dutch artist Carel Visser (b. 1928) submitted an unsuccessful design that took its inspiration from two elements found at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The first: the single railway line that constituted the spur, known as the *Judenrampe*. For Visser the railway line represented the 'partial theme of the suicide of mankind.' Using the horizontal axis, which Visser realised using

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[430] PMO K210-58/115542.
[431] Cited in Alan Wilkinson (ed.) *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 20.

steel, Visser created a perspective that worked to draw the observer's eye to the centre of the piece. (*fig. 69*).[432] The second theme: this was realised through the adoption of vertical lines taken from the chimneys of the many deteriorated barrack blocks.[433] Visser intended the sculpture to be 30 metres tall with a spiral staircase that would allow visitors to view the camp from above. In undertaking the competition, Visser explained that he was forced to face the history of the German occupation of Holland, which included the fact that 'the Netherlands had provided an unusually large number of Nazi collaborators and recruits to the SS.'[434] Visser could not face the opportunity offered to him of visiting the site and decided instead to attend a special screening of Alain Resnais's film of 1955, *Night and Fog*. This is a documentary film, featuring the abandoned sites of Auschwitz II-Birkenau and Majdanek, and describes the lives of the prisoners at both of those sites. The competition organisers had suggested that entrants to the competition watch this film.[435] Although Visser's proposal did not win, he continued with the project on a personal level making at least eight versions of the work as well as a number of drawings. The drawings were exhibited at his one-man show in the Dutch Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1968, a year after the unveiling of *The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism* at Auschwitz-Birkenau. He then exhibited the drawings at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels in October – November 1972, and at the Lucy Milton Gallery in London in May – June 1973. One of the sculptures, now simply referred to as *Auschwitz*, was exhibited at Visser's Whitechapel Art Gallery retrospective in 1978 and then toured to the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, and

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[432] The Tate Gallery, *Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions* (London: Tate Gallery Publications Department, 1981), p. 172.

[433] Willem Sandberg, Director of the Stedelijk Museum, coordinated the participation of the Dutch artists in the competition.

[434] The Tate Gallery, *Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions* (London: Tate Gallery Publications Department, 1981), p. 171.

[435] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Oskar Hansen, Henry Moore and the Auschwitz Memorial debates in Poland 1958-1959', in Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell (eds), *Henry Moore: Critical Essays* (Burlington: Ashgate 2003), p. 194.

to the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow in June 1978. In 1979 the artist presented *Auschwitz II* to the Tate Gallery in London.

This brief account of the exhibition history of Visser's memorial design not only illustrates that it was possible for a design, even though that design was unsuccessful within the memorial competition, to take on a life beyond the competition. It is also possible to gain an insight into the psychological stresses that Visser encountered during the competition process. For example, Visser cited issues that concerned the guilt of his fellow countrymen's role in collaboration with the Germans during the war. It also tells us something of the impact of the subject of the concentration camps on post-war cultural production, as well as showing conclusively that it was possible for a failed competition entry to achieve success in European galleries as a separate art object.

Henry Moore, Poland and the Auschwitz Memorial Competition

As noted above, the Auschwitz Memorial Committee had invited Henry Moore to be its chairman. Whilst this encounter between Moore and Poland was the first appearance of the artist on Polish soil, it was not the first time that his work had been seen by a Polish audience. Eight of Moore's Shelter Drawings had been shown in an exhibition curated by John Rothenstein, which had travelled to many of the war-torn cities of Europe, including Warsaw, in the course of 1946 and 1947.[436] It was hoped that the exhibition would reposition British art away from its post-war doldrums, and project it into the heart of Europe's artistic arena. It is of interest to read the reception of this exhibition in the Polish press at the time. Leokadia Bielska-Tworkowska, a Polish practising artist and critic, felt that the exhibition was really an overview of 'European painting of the

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[436] *Tate Gallery Continental Exhibition: Modern British Pictures From The Tate Gallery Exhibited Under The Auspices Of The British Council: Brussels Amsterdam Copenhagen Paris Berne Vienna Prague Warsaw Rome 1946-1947* (London: Tate Gallery 1946).

last fifty years according to English interpretation, told in a dry artistic language, [and] deprived of the richness of immediate spontaneous experience.'[437] However, according to Bielska-Tworkowska, Henry Moore 'stands out against the derivativeness of English art, by drawing not from erudition, but from personal experience.'[438] No doubt this emphasis upon experience was Bielska-Tworkowska's particular concern as a practising artist herself. Nevertheless, this view of Moore can be traced back to such critics as Herbert Read, especially his 1944 volume *Henry Moore*. In this context Moore was interpreted as a humanist artist, by which one might mean that Moore's work displays a concern for human values and by the 1950s this view was explicitly endorsed by the quantity of public commissions he undertook. As Robert Burstow argues: 'the siting of Moore's sculpture in public parks and New Towns from the 1950s was tied into the cult and politics of the open air which gave his sculpture a particular post-war ideological context';[439] by which Burstow means that the Government of the day, together with developers, planners and in the case of Moore, an artist, conspired to create out of nothing, brand new community, based on the latest models of social and economic behaviour, using architecture, urban design and art as symbolic vehicles for the power of the state to build the perfect environment for its citizens. In Moore's case such credentials may not have gone unmissed in Poland.

By the time of Poland's political 'thaw' of 1955, which followed the death of Stalin, Socialist Realism fell from grace, having been recognized as an incompetent medium through which to build socialism. Following this, Poland's artists sought out greater freedoms of artistic expression, notably engaging with the work of Moore. Among them was Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973), a former inmate of Auschwitz II-

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[437] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Dreams of the Sleeping Beauty: Henry Moore in Polish art criticism and media, post-1945', in Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell (eds), *Henry Moore: Critical Essays* (Burlington: Ashgate 2003), p. 200.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Quoted in Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell, 'Introduction', *Henry Moore: Critical Essays* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 6.

Birkenau, whose contribution to the competition was placed seventh. Her sculpture *Exhumed* (1954) displays a close affinity with Moore's *Warrior with a Shield* of 1953-1954. The Moore connection in Szapocznikow's work was achieved through her choice of material. Previously these had been easily destructible, such as resin and gauze, but were replaced by cast iron and concrete. A further comparison between the two works was evident in the choice of pose, which echoed Moore's reclining warrior. Another Polish artist, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz (1919-2005), who later became part of the Hansen team of designers that contributed to the Auschwitz memorial competition, readily connected to a visual language that had been developed by Moore. Like Moore, he fused organic and human subjects, so that his sculpted figures, especially the more abstract examples, have an organic rhythm that surges from within, and is itself suggestive of Moore's attempts to represent a sense of primal life force.

Knowing that his work had gained a positive reception in Poland must have been encouraging to Moore, and he accepted the invitation to chair the Auschwitz Memorial Competition. However, he arrived six days late for the initial round. According to Moore's biographer, Roger Berthoud, 'it was an act of courage and self-sacrifice to take it.'[440] Berthoud does not explain why it should have been so, but we may surmise that visiting such places as Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, at a time when the horrors of the camps were still fresh, may have been a painful experience for Moore.

As chairman of the competition, Moore was able to draw support from an international jury composed of Odette Elina, an artist from France, and Romuald Gutt (1888-1974), an architect from Poland, both of whom were survivors of Auschwitz II-Birkenau and founder members of the IAC. Also included in the jury was the architect Giuseppe Perugini of Milan, who had designed a famous Second World War memorial, the *Mausoleo delle Fosse Ardeatine* (1944-1952) in Rome, where 335 Italians were

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[440] Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 271.

slaughtered by the SS.[441] In designing this memorial, Perugini had given a voice to those massacred at the place it had happened and was consequently the only member of the committee who had actually considered in practice how best to reconcile the complex practice of memorialisation with the forms it should take. Perugini was joined by a fellow architect, the Dutch modernist Jacob Bakema (1914-1981), whose large-scale 'projects, according to a recent commentator, gave visual expression to post-war Rotterdam's dynamic verve.'[442] Bakema had produced monolithic sculpture in Holland, and gained an international reputation with radical public sculpture programmes and housing schemes, such as a project at Hansaviertel, West Berlin (1957-60).[443] Also on the committee was the Polish sculptor and painter August Zamoyski (1893-1970), known for his pre-war use of Cubism. He was a member of the so-called Formist group, a follower of Brancusi, and had exhibited with Ignacy Witkiewicz, known by the pseudonym Witkacy. Following successful pre-war exhibitions in Germany, Zamoyski left Poland, living first in France and later in Brazil; returning to Poland following the Second World War. The final member of the committee was Pierre Courthion (1902-1988), Swiss-born but a naturalized Frenchman by this date; he was an art historian and a member of the International Association of Art Critics.

From the original list of 465 designs the committee chose six, and asked each to make further refinements. The six shortlisted designs – three Polish (Oskar Hansen, Jan Wrobewlski and Alina Szapocznikow, both of whom were unsuccessful in the competition), two Italian (Julio Lafuente a Franco-Spanish architect living and practicing in Rome, Maurizio Vitale one from West Germany (Christof Wolf whose

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[441] Terry Kirk, *The Architecture of Modern Italy, Volume II: Visions of Utopia, 1900-Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural, 2004), p. 148.

[442] Roger Schumacher, 'Karel Appel', in Jan van Adrichem, Jelle Bouwhuis, Mariette Dölle (eds), *Sculpture in Rotterdam* (Rotterdam, Centre for the Arts: 010 Publishers, 2002), p. 124.

[443] The Hansaviertel is a small locality between the Tiergarten Park and the Spree River within the central Mitte borough of Berlin, close to the Soviet Cenotaph. His projects for the town halls of Marl, Westfalen, Germany (1958-62) and Terneuzen (1963-72), the Kennemerland regional plan (1957-59), and the monumental Pampusplan (1965), which attempted to extend the city of Amsterdam by creating seven artificial sand islands that would have provided additional housing for up to 33,000 people. This plan was eventually completed in 1995 by a consortium of Dutch architectural practices.

design eventually proved unsuccessful) – were shown to the public in an exhibition mounted in blocks 16, 17 and 18 of the *Stammlager*.[444]

What, given the political trajectory we have been tracing in this thesis, was the significance of three Polish entries, Szapocznikow, Wrobewlski and Hansen being shortlisted? From 1956-1960, contact and cooperation between Polish and Western artists became part of government policy. Exhibitions, conferences, travel outside the Eastern bloc, and the availability of foreign art journals – all helped to make Polish artists feel more connected to wider developments in the art world. The art historian Joanna Inglot has described this period: 'Occasionally, one could see in Warsaw exhibitions featuring the graphic work of the American Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline (1958), abstract painting by the Italian artist Emilio Vedova (1958), or the work of the British sculptor Henry Moore (1959)'. The inclusion of three Polish teams within the competition's shortlist may have assisted Poland's artistic community to experience a sense of attachment to the process of the competition and artists developments on the international stage, especially following Poland's war-time persecution by the Nazis.

The Committee Choose the Three Most Suitable Designs: 1958

The second stage of the competition in November 1958, took place at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. This was of course the site where Moore's huge Reclining Figure [1957-1958] had recently been placed, again suggesting something of Moore's celebrated status as a living modernist sculptor – and perhaps something of the kind of style the committee hoped to find emulated by entrants to the competition.

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[444] *The Times* (London), 26 May 1958, unsigned article.

At the UNESCO meeting, the jury found three designer teams, those led by Lafuente, Vitale and Hansen, to be the most successful. Lafuente's sculpture depicted twenty-three cattle wagons, echoing the now-identified twenty-three national or ethnic groups confined at the camp. They were to be sited on the railway lines at the *Judenrampe*. The cattle wagons were to be roughly carved from stone, with the couplings linking each waggon made to resemble the forms of barbed wire (*fig. 70*). The task of sculpting was to have been entrusted to Pietro Cascella (1921-2008). Thus, the Auschwitz memorial competition gave Cascella the opportunity to develop an artistic vocabulary that lent itself to other contexts, including sculpture for the headquarters of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg to Independence Park in Tel Aviv. Lafuente's design called for the end of the railway track to be obstructed by a great stone, which would symbolise visually the end of the death machine at Birkenau (*fig. 71*). However, the jury felt that this design was too limited, and did not depict collective suffering, such as starvation or the inhuman living and working conditions that had occurred at the site. In short, the proposed memorial would have taken visitor up to the point of the arrival of the deported to the camp, but not have illustrated the machinery of annihilation or the desperate situation of those incarcerated in the camp.

A second Italian team, led by Maurizio Vitale,[445] proposed a 'gradually sloping road of death', which was to run beside the *Judenrampe*, and employed both figurative and abstract elements to drive its narrative (*fig. 72*). The 'gradually sloping road of death' was to lead to a rectangular basin, cut into the ground, between the crematoria. This part of the memorial would have been blocked to visitors by the discharge of water into canals, which would have surrounded the structure. A relief, or group, of small human figures, realised in defensive positions, would have completed the memorial (*fig. 73*). Moore felt these figures, according to James Young, to be 'too slight to support the

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[445] Other members of the team were Giorgio Simoncini, Tommaso Valle and Pericle Fazzini

burden of memory.'[446] Indeed, Vitale's planned intervention at the site was deemed too invasive by the judging panel, echoing the issues with Brandhuber's design of 1944, which we discussed in the previous chapter. Alina Szapocznikow's design and that of Christof Wolf were removed from the shortlist, both of their designs it was felt were inappropriate for the purpose of memorialisation at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

Oskar Hansen's Winning Design

The Polish team, and the one which would win, led by Oskar Hansen, presented their road-crossing-the-camp concept (*fig. 74*).[447] This was, according Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, a Polish art historian now working at the University of London, and one of the few commentators who has addressed the competition of 1956, a conceptualised memorial. However, we should temper this with a consideration of Hansen's scepticism concerning the conceptual in art, and how these concerns affected his interpretation of the Auschwitz memorial project. His position was that 'Conceptualism results from the slavery of visible things, and what I propose are things that are yet invisible.' By this, Hansen may have meant that the memorial would show a continual development brought about by the intervention of the visitors to the site. For example, visitors may have wanted to leave votive objects as memorial signifiers to the memory of specific people who had died at the camp, thereby adding an organic element to the memorial. This would suggest that Hansen wanted to wrest control from the authority of the museum and the customary aspirations of memorial makers. Hansen described these interventions as 'Open Form.' Defining this concept Hansen stated: 'What I propose in Open Form is something that I cannot ultimately foresee. Open Form trusts man.' According to Hansen, 'My task is to believe in him [the inmate] and reveal him. His

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[446] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 138.
[447] Other members of the team were Zofia Hansen (Oskar Hansen's wife), Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz and Julian Palka.

story will be as he himself is.'[448] This would suggest that Hansen wanted to explore the intersection between the collective memories of the former inmates of Auschwitz, together with the artefacts that remained within the space of the earlier camp. However, this could represent a problem for the continuing importance of the memorial in terms of public significance. As the French philosopher Michel de Certeau has suggested, 'Memory is a sort of anti-museum',[449] and by extension it can be argued that memorials may became the enemy of memory as well, especially if memory is tied to artefacts, and artefacts are what constitute the memorial.

Hansen is recorded in the publication *Documents of Modern Architecture, CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, a book published following a conference of modernist architects, continues his observations on the conceptual by arguing that 'The "art of events", a polemic of visualised individual forms in a set of statements will influence artists' thinking.' Hansen's primary concern, the memorialising of the history of the camp, was intended to allow the voices of those who died in the camp to be heard. This may suggest that the memory of the site was to be collective. Hansen's scepticism towards the purely conceptual may have arisen because it presented problems for the representation of a multi-perspectival interpretation of inmate experience.

Hansen proposed the creation of a granite road that would cross the site of the former extermination camp. James Young and Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius have stated that 'Road' was to be made out of tarmac, or asphalt, implying a significant degree of permanence and distinctiveness. This is not correct, for in fact it was to be realised through the use of granite cobbles, the permanence and distinctiveness cannot be denied. Hansen, writing in catalogue for the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne CIAM '59* – published to accompany the meeting of the modernist architecture

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[448]Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Lechoslaw Rosinski, 'Design for the Auschwitz Memorial', in *Documents of Modern Architecture, CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, ed, O. Newman (London: Alec Tiranti; Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961), p. 193.

[449] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Los Angeles (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 108.

group and from which the catalogue gained its name – clearly states that the material for 'Road' was to be realised in granite. [450]

The monument was therefore to have been constructed from the authentic situation found at the camp at the time of the competition. Consequently 'Road' may have been imbued with a functional duality, the elements of which can be interpreted as acting as ritual path with the ruins of the camp acting as a backdrop. Together they were intended to confirm the preserved historical veracity of the site. In essence, it was to be a memorial that directly exposed the reality of the camp.

According to the Hansen team's rationale, presented as part of the competition bid, the 'Gate of Death', Auschwitz II-Birkenau's main entrance, was to be locked. This would have visually created a symbolic closing-down of Birkenau as a death camp. 'The only remainder being the perspective of the rails.'[451] Hansen intended to move the entrance to the memorial to the north of the gate, where, it would appear as granite 'road', 60 metres wide and one kilometre long, which was to cut diagonally across the entire camp. The choice of the diagonal, according to Hansen allowed for 'showing the mechanism of the camp,' in addition to meaning 'something more – the crossing over of the form, according to the idea of Open Form, the crossing over which creates the climate for reception and participation which visualize the subtext of spatial interactions.' However impenetrable Hansen's language, this notion can be understood as an attempt to evoke emotion in visitors to the site, whilst encouraging their knowledge, associations and memories. In doing this Hansen was allowing a 'cross section' of the camp to be representative of what had taken place there. Hansen's intention was to leave 'protruding stumps of barracks, latrines, [and] chimneys' as remains 'which would be 'framed in stone.' These and the Gate of Death would be the only original vertical markers retained from the functioning camp (*fig. 75*). However,

[450] Young (1993), pp. 128-141, Murwaska-Muthesius (2004), p. 195, see O. Newman (ed), CIAM '59 (Stuttgart, Verlag Stuttgart, 1961).
[451] APMO, 1-48-140.

this presents a problem, because Hansen's moralistic concern to present a historically authentic narration seem to outweigh his concern for the moral burden undertaken by telling it like it was. The intention of 'Road' was to make visitors traverse the camp and in doing so encounter the major elements of the death machine as they moved along the route, from the fence, across the railway lines, towards the gas-chambers and crematorium. Beyond this point the visitor would reach 'the wide stairway', constructed as an exit route away from the camp, 'towards life.' Here, 'Wandering between the tumbling remnants many will want to leave flowers near the inscribed signs erected by the people all over the sites.'[452] According to Hansen, 'The road is the site for spontaneous gestures. If one should wish to leave a note with a name, or a figure of an angel, one could do it by the road.' These commemorative interventions, to be undertaken by visitors to the site should be read as an indication of Hansen's concept of 'Open Form'.[453] They also offer us the opportunity to interpret the monument in terms of its being an organic living memorial. In this theory both art and architecture are liberated from any sort of rigid finality, which would allow the memorial to be opened up to the subjectivity of the viewer. In so doing, the memorial would incorporate notions of personal memorialisation. Physically, the evolution of the memorial would be brought about by the needs of the visitors to leave objects and texts at the site over time. However, one cannot help but notice that there is no information provided within the memorial design, such as a listing of names, nationalities or dates, as one might find on conventional was memorials. In its seeming objectivity, neutrality is being offered. Hansen writes:

> Art in the convention of Open Form consists in shaping the cognitive space, construed as a background highlighting the ever-changing events in the life of nature and man. The idea is to harmoniously integrate Earth's biological life

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[452] Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Lechoslaw Rosinski, 'Design for the Auschwitz Memorial', in *Documents of Modern Architecture, CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, ed, O. Newman (London: Alec Tiranti; Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961), p. 193. Hereafter referred to as *CIAM '59*
[453] The first formal presentation of this idea was at the International Congress of Modern Architects (CIAM) in Otterlo, The Netherlands, in 1959.

forms with the space of human activity. Respecting the recipient's individuality, art in the convention of Open Space creates a spatial atmosphere conducive to reflection, thus opposing the art of a dominant object in space – the cult of dogmatic dictate.[454]

For Hansen, actual space was a language with its own structure that was governed by objective laws. His interpretation of visual structures is as if they were a variety of verbal communication, which represented the possibility for understanding the environment in which the object was to be placed as a space in which a dialogue could be performed.

A demonstration of this concept of 'open form', which may be directly attributable to the ideas of Hansen, can be seen in the work of the Polish sculptor Franciszek Duszeńko (1925-2008) and architect Adam Haupt (1920-2006), who created a symbolic cemetery, *Monument to the Victims of Treblinka*, at the Treblinka memorial site in 1964 (*fig. 76*). The memorial consists of 17,000 granite stones, reminiscent of the Polish artist Jan Wroblewski's unsuccessful design entered for the Auschwitz Memorial competition and Brandhuber's unrealised memorial design of 1944. Seven hundred of the stones at Treblinka are inscribed with the place-names of lost communities, the differing sizes of stones represent the number of people killed, and the size of the communities from which they originated across Europe. The natural rock is scattered in what seems to be a random way, so that small memorial markers representing hamlets and villages are placed next to larger markers representing towns and cities. At the centre, a massively hewn rock stands for the 350,000 people deported from the Warsaw ghetto, all of whom died at the Treblinka extermination camp.[455] Visitors to the memorial increased the visibility of various stones by placing pebbles on to some of the markers, choosing those which for them had greater resonance. In this merging of the visitors' needs to commemorate in a specific way, and the memorial's original scheme,

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[454] *CIAM '59*, p. 193.

[455] Those deported following the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising arrived at Treblinka in June and July of 1943. According to Fritz Stangl 'they were a terrible sight, more dead than alive.' For a full description of the scene see Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder* (London: Pimlico, 1974), p. 231.

the memorial has continued to evolve. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius has pointed out in her study of Hansen's memorial project, 'One might say that the project could be read in post-modern terms, since the post-modern subject is constituted through the mechanism of interactivity'.[456] The continuous development of the memorial, through visitor interaction, illustrates a reaction against what Hansen referred to as 'closed form':

> Monuments [...] are passive towards changes in time. The moment they are born they become antiques [...]. The closed form – [is] the decision taken in my name – I am standing next to the process. One cannot find one's own self there. All these are somebody else's feelings [...]. The open form will awaken the need of existence in every one of us [...] we will walk through it, and not around it.[457]

For Hansen, a memorial was to be more than just a static object, and that is what has happened at Treblinka. Inherent in the design should be a process by which the unconventional involvement of the audience and the effects of time could take place.

This was made clear by Hansen regarding 'The Road.' As a memorial, 'The Road' was intended to act as a petrifying agent testifying to the horror of the crimes committed at the camp. By using the material granite, 'The Road' preserved the major elements of the camp, and by leaving everything else untouched, the former camp would unavoidably surrender to the invasive action of the grass and weeds. 'The process outside the road,' he wrote explicitly, 'was meant to be a biological clock.' Noting the temporal developments that had taken place in the landscape of the site twelve years since the liberation of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Hansen stated: 'Already then trees were growing there, we saw running roe-deer and hares. We wanted to preserve the evidence on the road [...] in the way in which lava preserved Pompeii. Monument – the Road is the exploration of continuity.' Part of the concept of the monument would seem to be about a confrontation between the preserved space of the

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[456] Murwaska-Muthesius (2004), p. 203.
[457] Ibid.

road and the effects of nature on the rest of the site. We might term Hansen's design as a visual discourse on durational time.

It is conceivable that by dividing the site Hansen may also have been referring to the way in which the SS divided time for the inmates. There was no such thing as unscheduled time in the camps: every minute of the day was filled with prescribed activities, in order to remove the possibility of unplanned events. However, the authorities could make interventions within the framework of the day. These might include an unexpected selection process, during which inmates were to remain in their barracks, or the twenty-four hour roll-call in the middle of winter. On top of these possibilities was the threat of danger that penetrated every moment of every day.[458]

For Hansen, 'The Road' departs from life, transgresses death and returns again to another life. 'Life and death are defined through each other.'[459] As if to emphasize this point, Hansen later recommended that visitors to 'The Road' move in one direction only, so that they 'entered from the street, walked along and emotionally absorbed, and left at the end of the camp. One was not to return along it.'[460] This partly resonates with the experience of the deportees, who entered the camp, and moved inexorably towards the gas-chambers (*fig. 77*).

Former Inmates Oppose Hansen's Design

For the cohort of survivors, Hansen's memorial design did not embody a narrative that spoke of their suffering; they felt that as an expression of remembrance it was purely negative. Seweryna Szmaglewska, a former inmate of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau and author of 'Smoke Over Birkenau' in which she described her experiences whilst imprisoned in the camp, received Hansen's design with caution. Szmaglewska

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[458] For a full discussion of the dangers facing Auschwitz inmates, see Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (London: Rider, 2010), first published in 1946.

[459] Czeslaw Bielecki, 'Pragmatyzm utopia, [The Pragmatism of Utopia]: Hansen,' *Architektura,* 31:3, p. 14.

[460] Murwaska-Muthesius (2004), p. 201.

was concerned by the formalism and abstractedness of the proposed memorial. She felt that the design was 'too theoretical' and would hurt the feelings of the former prisoners:

> We cancel the camp with this thick black line. Never again Auschwitz! This is an excellent idea for a poster, illustration, or a book cover. But when this vision is realized, when transferred to the vast territory of the camp as a wide road, when covered with snow, or, during the mass pilgrimages of thousands, when soiled with the Auschwitz mud, with clay, the road might entirely lose its expression.[461]

Whilst Szmaglewska could see a positive side to Hansen's design as a means of introducing the subject of Auschwitz to an audience, it would seem that she could not interpret his plan in terms of her or other survivor's actual experiences. The suitability of 'The Road' for an all weather site, where conditions underfoot could be treacherous, suggests, as Szmaglewska does, that meaning could be lost. This may have arisen, in part, out of the survivors' sense of ownership of the experience they had undergone. For her, consequently, Hansen was truly attempting to wrestle with the complex issues of memorialisation at the site, but he was not memorialising the story as she, and others, wished it to be.

The question of the ownership of the genuine experience of the Holocaust was addressed by Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, when he wrote on this subject:

> You who have not experienced their anguish, you who do not speak their language, you who do not mourn their dead, think before you offend them, before you betray them. Think before you substitute your memory for theirs.[462]

Other survivors expressed the opinion that the abstract composition was at variance with their own experience, which was not abstract at all. It became clear that Hansen's attempts to shape the social space of the memorial, in which the survivors were expected to re-enact, effectively to perform, their personal and collective remembrances, was never going to gain a widespread acceptance. The communal voice

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[461] Murwaska-Muthesius, (2004), p. 203.
[462] Elie Wiesel, *A Jew Today,* trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 238.

of the survivors demanded a memorial that worked within culturally acceptable forms of memorialisation. In the late 1950s public instinct was not ready to accept the idea of what could in later years be interpreted as a kind of counter-monument. The site of Auschwitz II-Birkenau was too emotionally charged for that. The survivors wanted a memorial that insisted upon its own visibility by including a plinth, columns, and text as core indictors of value in the memorial's design. Hansen's proposed encounter between visitor and site did not address effectively enough notions of redemption, and, by the strength of its intervention, ensured that there could be no move towards the restitution of an earlier pre-Holocaust normality. A further criticism of Hansen's design was that it allowed no ritual space for the state to make public commemorations of the victims of Auschwitz.

Contextualising Hansen's Memorial Design Regarding the History of the Site

If we analyse each section of Hansen's memorial we may be able to see beyond the charge of abstractionism made by Szmaglewska and, like Brandhuber's design, read the work as a powerful figurative statement about the camp. In Hansen's defence it can be said that 'The Road' was intended to expose the visitor to the intimate details of the functioning camp. By its concern with detail, the memorial invoked and animated the spirit of those who had suffered and died there.

Beginning with the removal of a section of the boundary wire, Hansen draws attention to the importance of the wire enclosing each of the geometric fields that held the prisoners. 'It [the boundary wire] created a domain of power from which none could leave and into which none could peer.'[463] Hansen's unrealised project proposed that sections of the wire should be removed. It is possible to interpret this as a visual affront to the absolute power that Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau and all of the sub-camps

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[463] Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp,* trans. William Templar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 55.

represented. The boundary was the spatial point where power destroyed freedom. Historically, walls surrounding a community have represented that community's need for cohesion and security, blocking the way of intruders and those wanting to attack. However, at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, as at all other camps, the boundaries sealed off the site, delivering a terse message: their purpose was not to protect inmates from external dangers, but to shield the outside world from the realities of the camp.

Thus, the entrance to the memorial sliced through a space in which previously power had been granted license free from the constraints of civilisation. The visitor would then move across the strip of land known as 'no man's land'. During the regime of the functioning camp this zone was strictly policed, and any inmate found to be trespassing its borders would be immediately shot. The act of walking through this space would have been reclamation of it, as well as an invocation of the memory of those who had been killed there. The act of passing through this space was therefore another challenge to its original purpose, whilst drawing attention to those inmates who had been killed because they strayed in to it.

In his attempt to preserve some of the barracks, Hansen again draws attention to the spatial grid that the camp's geography was created around. Each one of the barracks represented a miniature society and within each of them the only space allocated to the inmate was demarcated by their clothing and skin. According to survivor testimony it was within these densely packed spaces that the alienation of the individual can best be understood. As Arnost Lustig, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau recounts in his memoir: 'everyone in Auschwitz-Birkenau lived and died alone, as if the world were only a sinking ship where everyone hears the echo: Get away if you can, each on his own, after us the deluge.'[464]

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[464] Robert Hauptman and Susan Hubbs Motin (eds), *The Holocaust: Memories, Research, References* (New York: Haworth Press, 1998), p. 10.

Hansen's incorporation of part of 'the Ramp', the most important station of the Nazi's industrialised killing, was an artist's response to the system of maintenance of the number of prisoners held within the camp. It was here that the no longer productive units or slave labourers, exhausted by the inhuman working and living conditions, as well as by the starvation diet, could be replaced with new inmates. By incorporating part of 'the Ramp' into his design, Hansen showed that he recognised the means by which the number of prisoners in the camp was maintained. 'The Ramp' was, in some drastic way, a performance space, in which absolute power was exercised over the arriving deportees. Sofsky makes an important point when he states that the selections at the ramp were one of the few instances where the SS conceived of their victims as individuals, asking them questions about their age, occupation and health, followed by a flick of the wrist to the left or right, thus indicating life or death. The fact that those carrying out the selections were doctors also makes us realise that at Auschwitz-Birkenau 'healing and killing were inextricably linked.'[465]

As 'The Road' crossed 'the Ramp' the visitor would be able to see in the distance the 'Gate of Death'. The gate was the tallest structure in the camp and a prominent point of control. Its symbolic closing, heralding 'no more Auschwitz', draws attention to the fact that gates are normally two-way hinges that connect the inside world to the outside world. At Auschwitz II-Birkenau the gate opened only upon a one-way street, and marked the point where deportation became death. As James Young has proposed:

> The path ['The Road'] would have evoked a symbolic refutation of the camp's past reality, a black scar upon the face of this profaned earth, and a sealing over the camp's landscape to ensure that nothing but memory would grow on the site.[466]

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[465] Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), p. 269.
[466] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 136.

Young is saying that in the process of walking along 'The Road,' firstly encountering the barbed wire, then the prisoners' bleak housing, the *Judenrampe* and finally the gas chambers, any desire for visitors to evade Auschwitz II-Birkenau's ultimate horror would have been denied.

The scale of Hansen's memorial design, at sixty metres wide and a kilometre in length, suggests a comparison with the earlier memorial work of Brancusi, at Tirgu Jiu. Brancusi's sculptural ensemble, completed in 1938, bears witness to nationalist ideals of courage and sacrifice made by Romanian civilians who fought off the German invasion of 1916. The memorial sculpture is composed of three elements, The Table of Silence, The Gate of the Kiss and The Endless Column (*fig. 78, 79, 80*). They lie on an axis 1,275 metres in length and are oriented west to east. In its length this sustains comparison with Hansen's design. Further, Hansen's incorporation of a trio of elements from the once-functioning environment of Birkenau, namely the fence, *Judenrampe* and gas-chambers, can be said to echo the figure of Brancusi's design. However, owing to the geographical positioning of the camp Hansen was forced to implement an altered axial emphasis, whereby the visitor moved from east to west.

The number of different groups for which the eventual memorial was intended to bear witness may have contributed to the complexities involved in finding a universal expression of memorialisation at the site. As existential philosopher Lawrence Vogel observes: 'Auschwitz is the *(*negative*)* sign of speculative discourse, the discourse that resolves conflict into higher unity. The "we" instead of the naming the groups that we are memorialising.'[467] It would appear that at Auschwitz during the 1950s Holocaust memorialisation could not become a unified task. Jews, Poles, Germans, Gypsies, to name only a few of the groups concerned, each interpreted Auschwitz differently, relating the site to their own histories and experiences. Each of these groups adopted a

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[467] Lawrence Vogel, *'The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's "Being and Time."* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1994), p. 65.

different approach. Jews put forward the idea of the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish disaster, and expected all other groups to view and commemorate its universal significance through their lens. The Roma and Sinti have historically refused to discuss their suffering at Auschwitz, or the Holocaust in general, because of their belief that by invoking their dead through conversation there is the likelihood that the spirit of the person being discussed will descend on them and torment them.[468]

Looking back from the twenty-first century to Auschwitz in the 1950s, it seems unthinkable that the museum would not acknowledge the constituent groups incarcerated at the camp, and memorialise them. The truth of the matter is that, as we have seen in the case of the museum, the communist regime wanted to create a memorial which would be first and foremost a sign of Polish national identity, and incorporate a nationalism which would tie it to communist political ideology, thus following the same purpose as the museum was required to do (as discussed in Chapter 2). Consequently, arguments surrounding ownership of the Holocaust, and more particularly of the complex of camps referred to as Auschwitz, abounded from an early stage. Of the eleven million victims of the Holocaust, six million were Jewish by race and five million were Poles and other nationalities, mainly Slavonic and Russian. Gypsies, Christians, political prisoners, and later homosexuals, all wanted to be included within any memorialisation at the site.

It was for this reason that the three shortlisted entries to the competition attempted to accommodate the vast array of identifiable groups that found themselves confined at Auschwitz. Lafuente's cattle wagon memorial appeared to make a comment upon the many nationalities imprisoned at the camp, whilst Vitale's defensive figures drew attention to suffering and fate of the individuals' captive within the camp. Hansen's 'The Road' invited the visitor to contemplate the realities of confinement

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[468] Gary Mundy and Thomas Acton, *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p. 202.

there. However, for Poland's Stalinist administration, Auschwitz, as a public site, was a matter of removing the memorialisation of the individual and replacing it with such blanket categories as 'the political prisoner', and 'mass human suffering'. At Auschwitz, the memorial was to have no plurality of anguish. The intensity of the most personal level of despair had to be removed, and an accommodation with the fact that people typically place memorialisation with the triumphs of the state had to be achieved. The atrocities at the site were to be remembered, but that remembrance was to be enacted on the basis that Auschwitz was, in any final understanding, a product of capitalism. This situation has been summarised by Istvan Rev:

> In the East [of Europe] the Jews, the Holocaust, Auschwitz, and even Nuremburg fell victim to the historiographic and ideological battle between Communists and anti-Communists. The system after 1945 was not legitimised by resistance to Auschwitz, the absolute crime, but by the mythological rhetoric of the continual struggle against anti-Communist fascists.[469]

The Competition Outcome: 1961

It is difficult to establish a clear chronology for the history of the decision in the Auschwitz memorial competition, particularly at a distance of fifty or more years. Information at the archive at Auschwitz is scant. However, using that resource, it would seem that at first the jury voted unanimously for Hansen. Then, under the influence of the reactions exhibited by a number of survivors, the decision of the jury changed. However, it should be borne in mind that part of the 1947 statutes of the museum state that the grounds may not be despoiled, and it was the case that Hansen and Vitale's designs both called for massive interventions in the landscape of the camp. However, the importance of Hansen's design has been commented upon by Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, writing in *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*, published in 1996, they offer a present-day reception of an essentially 'post-modernist' (in the genuine sense of

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[469] Istvan Rev, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2005, p. 237.

periodization) design which did not chime with the committee at the time as much as it might do with present thinking. They suggest that at a time when 'there are no survivors [...] it will be fitting, appropriate and accurate to construct Hansen's vision with its message of desolation and separation.'[470]

Returning to the competition, Moore had to manoeuvre through this conflict, and in a much-publicised statement following the session, he raised the question of how to memorialise murder and horror, and whether a work of art 'can express the emotions engendered by Auschwitz.' He stated his belief that perhaps 'a very great sculptor – a new Michelangelo or Rodin – might have achieved this.' However, the 'probability of such a design turning up among the many maquettes submitted were always enormous. And none did. [...] Nor were any of the purely architectural – or predominantly architectural – projects fully satisfactory.'[471] By naming Michelangelo and Rodin, Moore invoked the tradition of sculptural. To this we may add the twofold antagonism of modernism and realism that confronted each other in the post-war division of Europe, with the West adopting a strategy of abstraction and the East using politically committed figuration. As Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius points out: 'Binary thinking was the "structuring structure" of the post-1945 world order, and it still dominates our mechanisms of perception and self representation.'[472] Both Moore and Murawska-Muthesius make important points. However, the question arises as to whether Auschwitz, and by extension the Holocaust, can ever be fully represented in a manner that would find an accommodation with the many groups which suffered at the camp. Whether figuration, abstraction or social realism had been chosen, all were bound to fail for the simple reason that memorials are created to serve the purpose of memory, and by their very existence recall continuously the memory of the offence; and the offence

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[470] Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 378.
[471] Henry Moore, *The Auschwitz Competition*, APMO. 1964.
[472] Murwaska-Muthesius (2004), p. 193.

cannot be mitigated. As Annie Radzynski puts it: 'Auschwitz is a signifier without the possibility of representation.'[473]

Moore resigned from the chairmanship of the competition for reasons that are not entirely clear. He had informed the museum authorities by letter that he was not well enough to attend, preferring to remain in England. However, according to his friend and travelling companion, the journalist Constantine Fitzgibbon, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 20 May 1959, Moore believed that the Auschwitz memorial had been co-opted by the communist administration of Poland with the backing of Russia. Whilst acknowledging that 'Never Again Auschwitz', by which is meant the ending of State sponsored genocidal projects, was a factor common to both parties, Constantine Fitzgibbon also suggested that 'It may safely be assumed that a vast undertaking of this sort has the backing of Moscow and of International Communism.'[474] Surmising that the competition was being used as device to incite resentment and hatred against the west, especially West Germany, he argued that 'the Auschwitz monument forms only part of a much larger campaign to revive memories of Nazi atrocities.' Fitzgibbon then divided the judging panel into two groups, communist and non-communist respectively. Against this he reminded his readers that 'The Russians, like the Nazis, have practiced genocide, though since their theories are more social than racial they have usually massacred classes rather than races.' Fitzgibbon was suggesting that the Auschwitz monument competition was being used as a smokescreen, by the communist-backed administration in Poland, to cover Russia's use of the Gulags as a means of dealing with those it considered politically dangerous, or simply as 'other.' In addition, he saw a plan to disrupt Britain's strategic alliances. The result 'would give them [Russia] the satisfaction […] to see this country [Britain] distrustful of the United States and of the

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[473] Quoted in Robert Krell & Marc I. Sherman (eds), *Medical and Psychological Effects of Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), p. 243.
[474] Constantine Fitzgibbon, 'Two Motives at Auschwitz', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1959. I am indebted to Michael Phipps for providing me with a copy of the article.

German Federal Republic.' But how would Moore have been employed in this totalitarian scheming? According to Fitzgibbon: 'The formula is simple. They discover what we non-Communists loathe most', in this case concentration camps. 'Then often using perfectly honest and idealistic men' [such as Henry Moore it implied] 'they encourage the launching of a campaign.' In this case the purpose was to destabilise N.A.T.O defences. Although there is nothing to support the idea that Moore resigned the chairmanship owing to Fitzgibbon's article, the strength of the attack contained in it may have prompted Moore's departure. Support for views such as Fitzgibbon's can be detected in much of the media at the time.

It is also interesting that it appears to be the case that Henry Moore never again engaged with the theme of Auschwitz in his own work, or as part of any collaboration. However, there may be at least one instance of a project to which Moore was linked and which apparently alluded to Auschwitz. In 1967 he participated in the design for a production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which made what were understood to be allusions to Auschwitz. The production, at the *Spoleto Festival*, was directed by Gian Carlo Menotti, and the publicity included the words 'Sets by Henry Moore.'[475] A Special Correspondent for the London *Times* reviewed the performance, saying that the production 'turned out to be ugly and perverse.'[476] Commenting on the palette of 'sombre blacks, greys and browns' adopted for the costumes worn by the chorus, the journalist wrote that 'the peasants looked like prisoners out of *Fidelio*, or as some people suggested, out of Auschwitz.' Of Moore's sculptures for the opera, the correspondent said 'that in the most part they were very beautiful.' Nevertheless, the Ballroom scene at the end of the first act was set in what appeared to be a prison courtyard, where snipers, placed high in the scenery, harassed the characters. The use of

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[475] See the publicity leaflet for the *tenth festival of two worlds: spoleto june 30 – july 16, 1967* [*sic*] at http://tinyurl.com/6327od9. Moore also contributed $5,000 to the festival to ensure that the performance took place.
[476] From Our Special Correspondent. 'Don Giovanni with décor by Henry Moore,' *The Times* 56993, 14 July 1967, p. 6, col. D.

a projection of Moore's *Three Seated Figures*, a textile design dating from 1947, shown during the overture, left the reporter wondering exactly what purpose this served for the opera. In an undated letter from Henry Moore to a Mr. Rischbieter, Moore pointed out that he had in fact only designed one costume; Moore does not specify the character. Moore said of the décor: 'The sets and scenery were interpretations of existing sculptures and drawings by me but were not new designs made especially for DON GIOVANNI.'[477] Moore seems to have made little attempt to make clear the fact that he had so little input into the opera, or to have distanced himself from the reading of the costume designs as being representative of the inmates' uniforms at Auschwitz. Thus, Moore's experiences with the Auschwitz Committee and with the subject of Auschwitz itself are ambiguous and unresolved.

Returning to the Auschwitz competition, the jury, now without Moore, decided that all three finalists should be invited to work on a further collaborative memorial design, employing the most inspired elements from their earlier proposals. At this point Hansen also resigned from the competition, leaving the rest of his team to contribute. At a meeting of the jury in Rome, in May 1959, this collaborative effort was considered and a number of modifications were recommended. Subsequent to these changes, the jury approved the design a year later.

In Paris, in 1961, members of the design teams, together with a representative of the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art, Professor Jan Zachwatowicz, told the designers that the approved work was no longer feasible, owing to its cost, and to the potential displacement of newly-restored buildings by the memorial. For the next two years the design teams, formed as a single unit, planned a further memorial design, finally submitting one last model, smaller in scale than previously, and sited exclusively in the location between crematoria IV and V. This design consisted of a line of slabs

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[477] I am indebted to Michael Phipps of the Henry Moore Institute for bringing this letter to my attention.

reminiscent of sarcophagi, elevated by means of a granite plinth, realised through small cobbles, creating a performance space for the enactment of civic rituals such as the memorial's dedication (*fig. 81*). Placed off-centre, slightly to the north, was a tower, its frontage adorned with a cluster of three Cubist forms, suggestive of a family group (*fig. 82*). This design was approved and construction began in 1965.[478] However, it was not the monument that would finally be unveiled in 1967. At some point in the week preceding the dedication of the monument the three figures were removed and placed at the base of the tower. No reason was given for this and no records appear in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum as to whose decision this was.

Four marble panels that created a large square at the most visible point of the memorial, the tower, with a triangle cut in the middle of it, replaced the figures. Rudolf Vrba, co-author, with Alfred Wetzler, of 'The Auschwitz Protocols',[479] a primary source report, written during the war by two escapees from Auschwitz II-Birkenau. They noted the importance of the triangle as part of the uniform of inmates at Auschwitz. 'All prisoners, irrespective of category or nationality, are treated the same. However, to facilitate identification, they are distinguished by various coloured triangles sewn on to the clothing on the left breast under the immatriculation number.' The authors continue: 'the first letter indicates the nationality of the prisoner. This letter (for instance "P" for Poles) appears in the middle of the triangle.' Vrba-Wetzler then named each of the colours that were used to signify the type of crime the inmates was guilty of. For example, a red triangle denoted political prisoners under 'protective custody,' whilst green was given to professional criminals. Black was used to indicate those considered 'workshy' or anti-social, and pink signified those imprisoned for the

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[478] For a good introduction to this part of the competition see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 139.

[479] This report, a hand-written document, is also known as 'The Vrba-Wetzler Report'. The authors escaped from Birkenau on 7 April 1944. They managed to reach Bratislava and made contact with Jewish leaders still remaining there. They wrote a detailed report that was passed on to papal representatives in Slovakia. From there the report was passed to the Allies.

crime of homosexuality. Violet designated members of religious sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses. 'The Auschwitz Protocols' pointed out that 'The Jewish prisoners differ from the Aryan in that their triangle (which in the majority of cases is red [political]) is turned into a David's star by adding a yellow point.'[480] Thus the triangle represented multiple categories beyond the political. However, as James Young points out, 'Although the triangle represents all victims,' for Poland's doctrinaire administration the triangle 'does so in the figure of specifically political inmates.'[481] Thus the most politically charged part of the monument, the tower, seems to have been reserved for the memorialisation of political prisoners at Auschwitz alone. Other prisoners, according to Young, may have been symbolized by 'the different sizes of stones in the initial sculpture', which could have 'suggested children.'[482] However, they 'could not have been killed as political prisoners, but only as Jews.'[483] In the final version, it is the formal contrasts – between horizontal and vertical shapes, smooth surfaces and rough, cyclopean blocks – that give the composition its expressive power. Although there are some anthropomorphic figures, in general it is remarkably abstract, in contrast to the socialist-realist style that was then dominant in Eastern Europe *(fig. 83)*.

The accompanying text, in twenty languages, read: 'Four million people suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers between the years 1940 and 1945.' Although there were tablets in both Yiddish and Hebrew, there was no specific mention of the fact that the greatest number of victims was Jewish. It can be argued that since the only clear information given was to identify the Nazis as murderers and provide the dates, the primary agenda was the denunciation of Nazism by the Polish state.

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[480] Alfred Wetzler, *Escape from Hell: The true story of the Auschwitz Protocol* (New York: Berghahn Books, 200), p. 238. First published in Slovak in 1964.
[481] Young (1993), p. 141.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.

At the dedication of the memorial, which took place on 16 April 1967, 200,000 people attended, with representatives of the Polish government, international delegates of former prisoners' organisations, the Israeli welfare minister, East German and Italian foreign ministers and numerous ambassadors and journalists. The Polish government decided to award the victims of Auschwitz the *Order of the Grunwald Cross*, First Class, the preeminent military honour available to a servant of the Polish nation. The text, together with symbol of the honour, which still exists on the monument, was inscribed on a stone in front of the tower, and reads:

> To the heroes of Auschwitz, who here suffered death in the struggle against Nazi genocide, for freedom and human dignity, for peace and the brotherhood of nations. In homage to their martyrdom and heroism, the Council of State of the People's Republic of Poland awards them the Grunwald Cross, First Class.[484]

What is interesting here is that the two texts on the monument have dual and incompatible meanings: those who suffered are both 'victims' and 'heroes,' people who both fought for the 'brotherhood of nations' and died a martyr's death.

Interestingly, the museum produced a postcard marking the dedication of the memorial. The cover image, by the Polish graphic artist Tadeusz Kinowski, shows the tower of the memorial with the four marble panels and the central figure of the triangle (*fig. 84*). The reverse of the card displays captions in Polish, Russian, English, French, and German, giving the name of the monument as, *The International Monument of the Auschwitz Victims* (*fig. 85*). This of course was not the name by which the Polish government referred to the memorial, which was *The International Monument to the Victims of Auschwitz*. The Polish postal service issued a commemorative stamp, designed by the Polish artist K. Rogaczewska. The stamp displays a more complete image of the memorial; however, it is the central tower that is given the greatest prominence (*fig. 86*).

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[484] Huener (2003), p. 162.

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A Memorial Competition in Western Europe: *The Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner*, Berlin

The combined forces of Poland's Ministry of Culture and Arts, together with the International Auschwitz Committee and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum authorities, sought to find an appropriate form for a memorial at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the Western Bloc had been undertaking its own proposals. In an initiative that originated from members of the Republican political party in the USA, the idea for an international competition for a monument to *The Unknown Political Prisoner*, the competition had the same name, was begun. This competition illustrates the tensions that existed between art, culture and politics in Europe, and in America, during the 1950s.

The purpose of this competition, announced in 1951, was 'to pay tribute to those individuals who, in many countries and diverse political situations had dared to offer their liberty or their lives for the cause of human freedom.' The competition was announced in 1951. Although the project was geographically and politically distant from the Auschwitz competition, and began six years earlier, it nevertheless lasted

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[485] This information was given to the present author by inhabitants of the town whilst he was visiting in April 2005.

approximately the same length of time. It also overlapped in its political dimensions. This competition raises a number of issues regarding political intentions that are comparable to those that have been discussed regarding the Auschwitz competition. It has been argued that the CIA funded the competition, with the intention of showing that Western European modernism was a bastion of liberty, of avant-gardism, of art as an autonomous practice to be funded and promoted against Socialist Realism, which was the art of the Communists.[486] The prize money, £11,500, represented the largest amount ever offered in a competition. Some of this money is now thought to have come from the American philanthropist John 'Jock' Hay Whitney, a long-time trustee of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) who served as its president and chairman of the board. The competition was organised by Anthony Kloman, 'a former US cultural attaché in Stockholm who for a brief period became the Institute's [ICA] Organising Director.'[487] Sir Herbert Read, representing the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, was to act as the competition's chairman. The chosen theme for the monument was 'to pay tribute to those individuals who, in many countries and in diverse political situations, had dared to offer their liberty and their lives in the cause of human freedom.'[488]

Interestingly, and rather unusually for a public sculpture competition (and most certainly differently from the Auschwitz memorial competition), no site was specified for the eventual location of the monument. According to Anthony Kloman, 'the sculpture eventually winning the Grand Prize would be installed on some site of international importance such as a prominent situation in one of the great capitals of the

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[486] For the C.I.A. funding story, first exposed in 1967, see Francis Frascina (ed.), *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999).
[487] *The Tate Gallery 1978-80: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions* (London: Tate Gallery 1988), p. 73.
[488] Ibid.

world, and its execution would be paid for from the Competition funds.'[489] Thus the competition was not tied to a specific event or location. This may have been a way of keeping all options open for the competition organisers, whilst at the same time allowing for a diverse and open stylistic response from the competitors. There can be little doubt that this monument was intended to emphasize the difference between western abstractionism and Eastern bloc Socialist Realism.

As the closing date for the competition was reached on 1 June 1952, 3,500 entries, from 57 countries, had been submitted. This suggests that the theme for the competition was somehow more appealing to the entrants than that of the Auschwitz competition. Nor was the Auschwitz competition associated with such a considerable financial reward. The practicalities of bringing such a large number of maquettes to London for appraisal led to a situation where separate judging panels were set up in 'the more important of the competing countries in the winter of 1952-53.'[490] There were no entrants from the Soviet Union or the Eastern bloc, who may have refused to contribute because of the competition's sensitive theme.

As with the Auschwitz Monument competition, an exhibition of the most successful designs for the monument to *The Unknown Political Prisoner* was mounted. On 14 March 1953, at the Tate Gallery, London, 140 contenders showed their maquettes. The British competitors included Helen Chadwick, Elisabeth Frink, Barbara Hepworth, and Eduardo Paolozzi, but it was Reg Butler who won the competition with a constructivist piece.

Two points should be raised here, the first regarding the competition and second the choice of Berlin as the eventual site for the monument. The former concerns the

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[489] *The Tate Gallery 1984-86: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions Including Supplement to Catalogue of Acquisitions 1982-84* (London: Tate Gallery 1988), pp.165-167.
[490] *The Tate Gallery 1978-80: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions* (London: Tate Gallery 1988), p. 73.

observation made subsequently by Sergiusz Michalski, that 'The competition was conceived as a kind of ideological multi-functional weapon, furthering the ethos but also the forms of the West.'[491] Put simply, this ethos was driven by a C.I.A-funded campaign that would 'culturally' fight communism, whilst the forms to be adopted were unmistakeably those of abstract expressionism. The second point is one raised by Ernest Reuter, Mayor of West Berlin. He spoke in 1952 at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin.[492] He used part of his address, given at the opening of the Congress, to emphasise Berlin's significance as the premier contested cultural site in Europe: 'The word freedom, which seemed to have lost its power, has a unique significance for the person who most recognizes its value – the person who lost it.'[493] Those who had witnessed Nazi power in Germany and beyond during the war and, following the subsequent division of the city into Western and Eastern sectors, would have understood the idea of freedom as being an extremely important one. However, such questions as 'What is freedom for? Who pays for it and, what do they get for their money?' were outside the congress's remit.

Nonetheless, in the Cold War atmosphere of the early 1950s, pro-American propaganda, which may be seen as an extension of World War II by less violent means, still had the intention of making the enemy stop fighting. This time the war was being enacted in the cultural zone, its generals were cultural judges, and its soldiers were artists and writers. It is difficult not to conclude that the monument to *The Unknown Political Prisoner* was intended to emphasize the difference between Western abstractionism and Eastern bloc Socialist Realism.

Socialist Realism was made official as the only formula in art at the Congress of Soviet Writers held in 1943 in Moscow, although it had been canonized as the only

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[491] Michalski (1998), p. 156.
[492] An organisation promoting allegiance to the West amongst European political elites.
[493] Saunders (1999), p. 76.

stylistically acceptable form of artistic creation in 1934, when it was argued to be an 'antiformalist' art that primarily dealt with socialist matters. 'The myth of the innocent avant–garde,' in the opinion of the art critic and theorist Boris Groys, stems from the widespread conviction that the birth of the totalitarian art of Socialist Realism between 1930 and 1940 was the result of a simple reversion to the old, 'a regressive reaction to the new art that was not understandable to the masses.' In such interpretations, Socialist Realism is simply a reflection of the traditionalist tastes of the masses. But it was not created by the masses but was formulated in their name by well-educated and experienced elites who had assimilated the experience of the avant-garde and been brought to Socialist Realism by the internal logic of the avant-garde method itself, which had nothing to do with the actual tastes and demands of the masses.

Andrei Zhdanov, the leading party theoretician on art, urged that socialist realism 'must be able to show our heroes, must be able glimpse our tomorrow,' such that the artist, in Stalin's words, became an 'engineer of the human soul.'[494] Zhdanov explained this to mean 'knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, not to depict it in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as "objective reality," but to depict reality in its revolutionary development.'[495] Thus Socialist Realism, as a tool employed within a pro-Stalinist art movement, was required to illustrate reality, whilst at the same time presenting its revolutionary progress. Stalin is recorded as saying, shortly before his death, 'Soviet culture is the art of the new world gazing boldly in the future.' Brandon Taylor has remarked that whilst this 'lies at the very centre of the Socialist Realist method,' it contained 'not only the kernel of the method's success but the virus that caused its later degeneration and sorry decline.'[496]

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[494] Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing from Wagner to Wilson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 84.
[495] Margaret A. Rose, *Marx's lost aesthetic: Karl Marx and the visual arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 145.
[496] Brandon Taylor, 'Socialist Realism: "To depict reality in its revolutionary development"', in Matthew Beaumont (ed.), *Adventures in Realism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 143.

The combination of Western Abstractionism, especially when seen in the form of a monument such as Butler's, which according to the art theories of Russia as they were then regulated, articulated a language of 'constructivist fetishism', and the fact that the monument was to have been placed at a site that faced straight into what was then the Russian-controlled Eastern Sector of Berlin, dominated by Socialist Realist statuary, offers us the opportunity to read the motives of the competition sponsors and directors as political.

Stalinist-inspired attempts at memorialisation, undertaken throughout the Eastern bloc, confirm Russia's political ideals were in part to be realised through the creation of a visual language, the purpose of which was to remind those countries that they had been liberated by the Soviets. Whilst America's attempts at memorialisation are represented as a combined response to what was then referred to as the 'free world' and its concerns over commemoration and remembrance.

Conclusion

The many attempts at creating a memorial for Auschwitz, started by Brandhuber before the liberation of the camp; the unintentional memorial that the site became in 1946; the two intentional memorials of 1953 and 1955; the competition and the final realised design, shows us that the Auschwitz site was a charged place. The attempts at memorialisation at first failed to present a sharing of remembrance amongst all victim groups. It was the role of the state to establish what form remembrance should take, and the purpose was for a predominant part of the modern post-war period to remind Poles of their martyrdom and of how the Soviet Union had freed them from the yoke of Nazism.

In the next chapter we shall see that the museum, first founded with a Stalinist political message in mind, has faced many of the same questions as that raised by the process of memorialisation at the site in the post-war period. We shall see that the telling of the story of Auschwitz, through the use of artworks, photographs and artefacts, even after the death of Stalin has been anything but a straightforward narrative.

Chapter 6

Auschwitz as a site, 1967 – 1989

This chapter is concerned with the story of the Jewish pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. I begin by discussing the political background in Poland of the State sponsored anti-Semitic campaign, which reached its zenith in 1968. We shall see that the Polish government, alarmed at the international response to the campaign, used the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum as a defensive tool against these accusations. I then discuss the museum's mounting of the first purposeful Jewish exhibition at the site, and the contents of some of the displays. We shall see that the international community, especially Israel, responded well to the museum's efforts, and that, and that the image of the state was enhanced internationally.

The preceding chapters demonstrate that since 1945 the record of the representation of Auschwitz through both its museum and memorialisation has rather surprisingly, in an ideological context of post-war Stalinism, tended to downplay the idea of 'Jewish' suffering as part of a campaign of appropriation of the site for various political uses. This process was initiated by the Nazis, who could only allow Jewish materials in to the nascent museum that denied any possibility of their assimilation into an 'Aryan' society. Subsequent post-war attempts at establishing a full place for the Jews in the history of memorialisation at Auschwitz were masked by the attempt to subsume them into an officially-generated public memory in which all the victims of the camp were defined, by the Polish authorities, as having experienced undifferentiated mass suffering.

Nevertheless, during the 1960s the name of Auschwitz, and its pivotal role in the Nazis' genocidal project, became known to a wider audience. The trial of Adolf Eichmann, which began in Jerusalem on 11 April 1961, and ended on 14 August of the same year, was widely reported in the international press, bringing Nazi atrocities to the forefront of world news. *Time* magazine wrote: 'At Auschwitz, even Eichmann noted that the smell of burning flesh "was not very pleasant."'[497] British Pathé recorded much of the trial and regularly broadcast excerpts as part of their cinema news bulletins. Hannah Arendt reported the trial for *The New Yorker* magazine, later publishing her own influential account, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.[498] In Germany, 'The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial' of mid to lower level members of the former Auschwitz garrison lasted from 1963 until 1965. It served two purposes: the first was to bring participants of every kind to justice; the second to expose the workings of Auschwitz, from both a bureaucratic point of view, and from the experiences of the inmates. The trial received extensive media coverage, and in 1965 became the subject of a play by Peter Weiss, *Die Ermittlung* [The Investigation]. The Royal Shakespeare Company under the direction of Peter Brook first performed this in England in the same year. The trial also generated the first serious historical examination of the SS in Helmut Krausnick's dispassionate analysis of the forces that made the Holocaust possible *Anatomy of the SS State*.[499] The international reporting of Auschwitz also served to bring to the fore the vexed issue of whether Poles and Jews were coequals in suffering; outside of Poland this was the period in which it began to be accepted in popular consciousness that the Jews had suffered to a far greater extent than had the Poles.

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[497] Anon., 'The Man in the Cage' *Time Magazine,* 21 April 1961. At http://tinyurl.com/666hul4. Accessed 15 January 2011.

[498] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

[499] Helmut Krausnick, *et al.*, *Anatomy of the SS State*, trans. Dorothy Long (London: Collins, 1968).

In 1968, the State Museum at Auschwitz opened a pavilion dedicated the *Martyrology and Struggle of the Jews: 1933–1945.* Indeed, this exhibition, often referred to as the 'Jewish pavilion', holds a significant but contentious position in the history of the memorial site. The display opened at the height of Poland's anti-Zionist campaign, when Polish Jews were being accused of undermining the stability of Polish society and the morale of the Polish state. In this chapter I will present a case study of this exhibition. I will begin by establishing the political background and how this affected the status of Jews in Poland at the time. I will then turn to the possible reasons behind the Polish anti-Zionist campaign, and assess some of the international responses to it. We shall see that the international response to Poland's anti-Zionist campaign drew the world's attention not only to Polish anti-Semitism, but also to the site of Auschwitz itself. I shall then discuss the making and contents of the exhibition. This case study will demonstrate clearly the level of state interference that the museum had to deal with during this important period in the history of international relations. The 1960 period, in turn, brings with it its own set of political and ideological issues and tensions.

Political Background

In Poland, during the 1960s the Jewish perspective first emerged in popular consciousness. The 'thaw' that ensued following Stalin's death, allowed Poland's socialism to become more outward-facing, although politically the country was still tied to a Russian ideological agenda, even that had soften from what it had been during the 1940s and 1950s.

In 1966, the new edition of the respected Polish reference work *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* (Great Universal Encyclopaedia) was attacked in the Polish

press for supposed inaccuracies regarding Polish losses during the Second World War. The encyclopaedia included two reference entries – *Obozy koncentracyjne hitlerowskie* ('Hitlerite Concentration Camps') and *Oświęcim. Oświęcim-Brzezinka* ('Auschwitz [and] Auschwitz-Birkenau').[500] The editors of the *Encyklopedia* and the author of the entries, Janusz Gumkowski, offered a perspective on the victims of the concentration camps, particularly Auschwitz, which differed from the official nation-state approach.[501] At issue was the difference between the universal approach – the argument that all victims of the camp be treated as one mass of suffering – and a categorization that developed later, in which the primary terms of separation were ethnicity and race. Gumkowski stressed that the majority of the victims of Auschwitz and other camps were Jewish. According to the Polish historian Marek Kucia, 'The perspective on the Nazi camps and their victims presented in the *Encyklopedia* evoked a sharp counter-reaction from Poland's authorities.'[502] Over the next two years most of Poland's 40,000 remaining Jews – who were mainly assimilated into Polish society – became the victims of a centrally-organised campaign which assumed that all people of Jewish origin had Zionist sympathies and were consequently disloyal to Poland. Czesław Pilichowski, the former head of the Polish State Commission for the Prosecution of Nazi Crimes, became the editor of the *Encyklopedia* and published two articles that revised Gumkowski's arguments. He also supplied a 'corrected' commentary that was added to the volume already published. The point of this was to denounce the 'idea that [there was] any distinction amongst Nazi camps'. Going further, the article 'affirmed that they [the camps] were all intended to exterminate everyone who passed through their gates,

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[500] *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* Vol. 8 (Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966), pp. 87–89.
[501] Gumkowski was a noted scholar who had served as director of the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. He had also co-written *Poland Under Nazi Occupation* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1961).
[502] Marek Kucia, '"Jews" – the Absence and Presence of a Category in the Representations of Auschwitz in Poland, 1945-1985', *Studia Judaica* 9:2 (2006), 323-348, at p. 345.

be they Poles or Jews'.[503] For Christian Poles this argument worked to negate any allegations that the Nazis may have enjoyed support from among the Polish population.

On 9 June 1967, in the wake of Israel's victory over the Russian-backed Arab forces in the Six Day War, the States' which were part of (or party to) the Warsaw Pact, with the exception of Romania, decided to end diplomatic relations with Israel. The Middle Eastern conflict has until recently been interpreted as the pretext for unleashing state-sponsored anti-Semitic smears and vendettas in Poland.[504] This undoubtedly contributed to the atmosphere of suspicion and denunciation that swept across the country. However, the interrogative investigation of such authors as Jonathan Frankel and Dziewanowski shows a parallel development between Eastern European anti-Zionist campaigns and the growth of the Jewish national movement in Russia and Poland at the time.[505]

It was in November 1967 that Kazimierz Rusinek, the vice-minister of culture and head of the ZboWiD (Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy), made the first direct attack, as distinct from the implied criticism already mentioned, against the *Encyklopedia*, and its Jewish authors. He argued that it was misleading to differentiate between concentration camps and extermination camps, as the articles had done. It was felt that this result led to confusion in the reader, and gave an unwarranted emphasis upon the Jewish perspective. As Huener has pointed out: 'Poles had never been encouraged to focus on Jews as victims of Nazi persecution.'[506] To construe the 1966 publication of the encyclopaedia as a major revision of Poland's official historical role would be wrong. It is likely that the revisions belonged to a wider political context, by

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[503] Michael C. Steinlauf, 'Poland' in Davis S. Wyman (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 123.

[504] This is the standard argument advanced to explain Poland's anti-Zionist campaign. For a discussion, see M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 299-301.

[505] For a discussion, see Jonathan Frankel, 'The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism: An Analysis' in *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union,* eds Yaacov Ro'i and Avi Becker (New York: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 330-332, at p. 331.

[506] Huener (2003), p. 174.

which it became possible for the authorities to point to the superseded articles as evidence of a Jewish inclination to denigrate ethnic Poles. However, it can be understood as an attempt to renegotiate Polish reflections on the Holocaust. In an effort to tackle this issue, the Polish state embarked upon a strategy whereby the Jews were depicted as behaving in an unpatriotic manner during the occupation, and later as working to undermine 'Poland's particular road to Socialism'.[507]

Poland's so called 'anti-Zionist campaign', in reality a poorly-disguised and shamelessly anti-Semitic national policy, was an attempt by the state to remove Jews from both the ranks of power within the Polish state, and to break down their influence within Polish society itself. According to the historian Jan T. Gross, these policies can be interpreted as a continuation of Poland's efforts to maintain the Nazi strategy of making Poland *Judenrein* (Jew-free). Gross begins by discussing the pogrom at Kielce that took place in July 1946, and shows that this was followed by two waves of Jewish emigration, both of which were 'induced by the Communist authorities in 1956–1957 and in 1968–1969'.[508] Of course all this would naturally affect how the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum conducted its business during the period.

The anti-Zionist campaign was directed from above, but found a receptive audience throughout Poland. On 19 March 1968, the First Secretary of the Polish Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka, delivered a speech to party activists in which he divided Polish Jews into three categories: 'patriotic Jews', those who worked for the good of Poland, and 'Zionists'. This last term signified both Jews, and persons who were not Jewish, but who supported Jewish interests or such successes as Israel's victory in the Six-Day War. This distinction requires some contextualisation. The Israeli

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[507] Cited in Paul G. Lewis, *Political Authority and Party Secretaries in Poland, 1975–1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 14.

[508] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 243. Andrzej Szczypiorski, *The Polish Ordeal: The View from Within*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 77.

victory in the Six-Day War promoted a sense of jubilation in many because a number of the Israeli military commanders were of Polish origin; they were Poland's Israelis. Andrzej Szczepiorski has drawn attention to one military consequence of this: 'The large majority of Poles were elated by the Israeli successes in the middle East. After all, Israeli commanders apparently spoke to one another in Polish.' Jerzy Eisler has noted that: 'the Israeli embassy in Warsaw received many telegrams and letters from Christians expressing sympathy and friendship'.[509] It would appear that the Poles considered the Israeli successes as proxy Polish victories.

Gomułka's final observation concerned those who were neither Jews nor Poles but 'rootless' and 'cosmopolitan'. This was a coded way of saying that there was an element in Polish society whose loyalty wavered between Poland and Israel.[510] This allegation had problematic overtones, since it echoed the earlier Nazi allegations that the Jews were homeless wanderers.[511]

The effect of such statements upon Poland's remaining Jewish community was understandably negative, and led to a wave of Jewish emigration.[512] The authorities actively encouraged this, and the leadership made the decision to 'let the Zionists go'.[513] Between 1968 and 1970, 13,000 Jews left Poland, with Israel their destination. As a joke circulating in Warsaw in 1969 put it: 'How does a wise Jew talk to a stupid one? By telephone from the West'.[514] As we shall see, the international response to Poland's treatment of Polish-Jewry would force the state to rethink how the established

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[509] Jerzy Eisler, 'March 1968 in Poland', in *1968: The World Transformed*, eds Carol Fink *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 239.

[510] Dariusz Stola, *The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2000), p. 2.

[511] For example see Josef Goebbels's speech, *Communism Without A Mask* (Berlin: M. Mueller, 1935), in which he referred to the Jews as a 'rootless and nomadic international clique of conspirators'. Perhaps the most telling comparison between Nazi anti-Semitism and Polish anti-Zionism can be found in Gomułka's binary descriptions of the Jews as both 'nationalist' and 'cosmopolitan', 'Stalinist' and 'agents of American imperialism'. See Robert Blobaum (ed.), *Antisemitism* [sic] *and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 15.

[512] Poland's pre-war Jewish community, which numbered 3,500,000, had fallen to between 25,000 and 40,000 by 1968.

[513] Dariusz Stola, 'Fighting against the Shadows: The *Anti-Zionist Campaign* of 1968' in Blobaum (2005), p. 298.

[514] Ibid.

nationalist narrative at Auschwitz could be altered to accommodate a Jewish telling of that locations story.

Indeed, space does not allow me to rehearse the complex arguments that have been advanced to explain Poland's anti-Zionist campaign, but an overview is necessary.[515] This is because the subject resonates with earlier concerns that appeared in Poland between 1957 and 1967, at the time when the competition to find a suitable form for the memorial at Birkenau was taking place.

In March 1968, a year after the unveiling of the *International Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, the students of Warsaw and other Polish cities demonstrated in the streets, demanding freedom of expression and democracy. The banning of a production of Adam Mickiewicz's 1831 anti-Russian play *The Forefathers* compounded the situation.[516] The Communist authorities, under Gomułka, reacted with a vicious anti-liberal clampdown, which was followed by a sustained anti-Zionist campaign. This was nothing more than a euphemism for an anti-Semitic campaign, which exploited the fact that many student leaders were Jewish; though in practice some were children of members of the Communist elite itself. Kemp-Welch describes the reaction of an ordinary Pole to the student unrest, quoting a farmer from the Kraków region: 'What is going on? Young people today have good [living] conditions, halls of residence, stipends and all they need for studying. Why are they making so much trouble?'[517] The students to whom the farmer refers numbered no more than three per cent of the population, but the media had portrayed them as ungrateful beneficiaries of state largesse. Michael D. Kennedy points out that the Polish press used the phrase 'ringleaders of the disorder', and went as far as naming the 'Zionists in league with

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[515] For a detailed study of the subject, see Arthur J. Wolak, *Forced Out: The Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland* (Tucson: Fenestra Books, 2004), pp. 57–74.

[516] Tom Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace: 1945–2000* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), p. 157.

[517] Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 157.

West Germany'.[518] Jews were expelled from their positions and jobs, students were expelled from universities. The government-controlled media preached hatred, and acted in a way that 'was without parallel in post-war Europe'.[519] Intellectuals in general, not only Jews, were targeted. According to Arthur J. Wolak, an authority on 'Poland '68', as it is now known, 'The Polish government's strategy of oppression – including arrest on trumped-up charges, intimidation by the secret police, and public and closed-door trials, is reminiscent of Stalin's purges.'[520] As a result, thousands of Jews, almost all of them assimilated and considering themselves Poles – the last remnants of an original community of 3.5 million destroyed in the Holocaust – left the country over the next two years, stripped of their citizenship and of most belongings. Though cultural elites and Church leaders protested against the campaign and the purges, albeit with rather a delayed response by the bishops, many ordinary Poles were pleased by what they saw as the elimination of 'Jew-Communists' whom they blamed for the viciousness of Stalinist oppression.[521] Many others, however, were dismayed by a resurgence of racism, this time with a Communist face. Within the Communist party itself, the purge opened possibilities for advancement for younger, ethnically Polish apparatchiks, and enabled the forging of an alliance with pre-war ultra-nationalist elements; this almost brought interior minister General Moczar, the main instigator of the campaign, to power. The departure of leading academic and cultural figures left a gap in Polish intellectual life, and the entire campaign reinforced Poland's reputation overseas for being endemically anti-Semitic.

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[518] Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 30.

[519] Stanislaw Krajewski, 'The Impact of the Shoah on the Thinking of Contemporary Polish Jewry: A Personal Account', in Joshua D. Zimmerman (ed.), *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

[520] Wolak (2004), p. 90.

[521] For a full discussion of the Bishops' response see Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), pp. 129-153, especially pp. 138-143.

The Anti-Zionist Campaign and Auschwitz

The International Auschwitz Committee was of course affected by the anti-Zionist campaign. Of particular interest was the shift in power from the International Auschwitz Committee to the 'Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy' [ZboWiD].[522] This organisation, formed of veterans' associations, especially the Soviet-sponsored Polish People's Army, joined with communist partisans and former concentration camp survivors. Combined, these groups held a powerful position in Polish society. Following the International Auschwitz Committee's renunciation of control over the construction of the Birkenau monument to the 'Polish Council for the Protection of Monuments to Struggle and Martyrdom' in 1964, the International Auschwitz Committee slowly became dependent on the 'Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy' for its annual grant of one million złoty. The International Auschwitz Committee's loss of independence and the anti-Zionist measures being undertaken in Poland, led to Professor Robert Waitz, a former inmate of Auschwitz III-Monowitz and chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee, to tender his resignation on 6 May 1968.[523] In his letter of resignation Waitz wrote:

> In recent weeks, particularly during the commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and during the opening of the Jewish block at the Auschwitz Museum, numerous Polish leaders have not ceased opposing Jews and Zionists to justify their position against Israel and the measures that they have taken against Jews in Poland.[524]

As I have shown, Poland's political elites were indeed complicit in an organised attack on the Jews. Waitz's reference to the Warsaw Ghetto commemoration concerns the reprinting of a pamphlet written by Wacław Poterański and sponsored by Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy'. It was, according to Dawidowicz, 'An

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[522] In Polish, Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację.

[523] Waitz's letter of resignation was reprinted in *Tribune Juive* (Strasbourg), 20 October 1968, pp. 28-29.

[524] This, and the following quotations from Waitz's letter of resignation are taken from the translation by Rosenfeld. See Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust After Half a Century* (Bloomington: Indiana State University Press, 1997), p. 286.

exceptional exercise in historical falsification.'[525] Published in English and other European languages – which suggests distribution outside Poland was intended – pre-war Polish Jews were described as separatist, bourgeois, and reactionary, whilst their behaviour during the occupation was depicted as both passive and collaborationist. It was proposed that the suffering of the Poles during the war eclipsed that of the persecution of the Jews. Waitz continues:

> These leaders, and among them Vice-Minister Rusinek, secretary-general of the ZboWiD [Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy], are against anti-Semitism when it relates to the millions of victims of Hitlerite racism, but they are against Israel, the refuge of several thousand Auschwitz survivors. They use the dead against the living.

Waitz's final sentence refers to the position taken by the Polish historian Eugeniusz Duraczynski, who developed the idea that 'the Jews having been primarily artisans, tradesmen and professionals in pre-war Poland' consequently could only be considered as opponents of communism'. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the Jews, as minor capitalists, could not have played a significant role in the resistance movement, which was the exclusive province of the Communist-led proletariat. Concerning the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Duraczynski wrote: 'The Jewish population, first imprisoned in ghettos and later exterminated in a body, neither participated in principle in the Polish resistance nor organized a resistance movement of its own'. Going further, Duraczynski judged the uprising as the 'exploit of barely a few hundred Jewish combatants armed and supported by the Polish resistance'.[526]

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[525] Dawidowicz (1983), p. 115.
[526] Dawidowicz (1983), p. 118.

The International Response

Poland's anti-Zionist campaign did not go unnoticed by the international community. The Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* offered a succinct summary, in reference to the struggle against the falsification of the historical truth of Auschwitz. Its report opened by noting that the cleansing of public memory by the Polish government began with the absence of any form of symbolic accretions to the *International Monument to the Victims of Fascism* at Birkenau. It continued:

> [T]he international committee for the commemoration of the Auschwitz victims turned to the State of Israel, among others, requesting that it contribute its share in the establishment of the monument.[527]

As I have shown, the international response to the funding of the monument was minimal. As was the case with the maintenance of the site, Poland had been left to carry the financial burden. It was suggested that a special loan fund be founded in Israel, and this was achieved. However, many camp survivors took part in the defence of Israel during the Six-Day War. As Benjamin B. Ferencz, a Romanian born lawyer and investigator of Nazi war crimes points out, 'When they returned they would need small loans to get started again. The Israel Advisory Committee asked that the funds earmarked for the Auschwitz Pavilion be transferred to Israel'.[528]

The article continued:

> To begin with, a struggle took place about the inclusion of a Jewish pavilion in conjunction with the other national pavilions that were put up in Auschwitz housing various exhibits and documentary material that displayed the suffering of the prisoners of Auschwitz from all the European countries.

From 1967, the Auschwitz State Museum did present the suffering of individual nations at the camp. However, as it has been noted, the Poles were continuously positioned as

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[527] The following quotations are taken from the *Yizkor Book Project* at jewishgen.org/yizkor. Updated 20 Nov 2001. Accessed 1 July 2010.

[528] Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Less than Slaves: Jewish Forced Labor and the Quest for Compensation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press and the United Stares Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2002), p. 65.

the premier national group, so that in this way their suffering at the hands of the Nazis was made equal to, if it did not exceed, that of the Jews.

The museum authorities, together with 'Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy' [ZboWiD], argued that there was no reason for the inclusion of an Israeli pavilion, since the State of Israel had not been in existence during the years of the Holocaust. However, replying to the argument in the name of the State of Israel, the unnamed author pointed out that 'East Germany, too, had not been a state during those years, and nevertheless a separate East German pavilion had been built at Auschwitz.' The museum authorities argued that 'the Jews murdered at Auschwitz had not been the citizens of Israel, and that the State of Israel had no right to represent the Jewish nation, or those Jews who are citizens of other nations.'[529]

The East German pavilion had opened in 1961, and like other nation-state pavilions it not only spoke for that nation's suffering, but for all nations that had endured Nazi occupation. These additions to the museological narrative reflected a growing openness to other nation-state memorial accounts at Auschwitz. In this they began to compete with the dominant Polish-national commemorative agenda at the site during this crucial period of the late 1960s.

The Creation of a Jewish Pavilion at Auschwitz

Official proposals for a Jewish Pavilion were first put forward in 1963, four years before the collapse of Polish-Israeli relations. For several reasons, the scheme lacked impetus. The growing anti-Zionism of Polish society may have contributed to the slow start. To this we may add the fear in government and in museums that an exhibition organised with the assistance of the Israelis might place too great an emphasis on Jewish resistance and heroism. As we have seen, at Auschwitz these qualities were

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[529] Huener (2003), p. 178.

always advanced as characterising Polish or communist activities. A further difficulty could have been that the Israelis might have wanted to draw attention to the fact that the Nazi persecution of the Jews was more extensive than was told by the museum's adopted narrative. Any or all of these reasons would explain why the Polish wanted to retain control over any future Jewish exhibition at Auschwitz. Kazimierz Rusinek made it clear that 'the Jewish block should have as its main theme, first and foremost, Polish Jews.'[530] The museum intended to tell the story of a Polish wartime tragedy to which the annihilation of Europe's Jews would not be assimilated. They chose instead to tell of a restricted and simplified Jewish martyrdom, within a Polish context. This approach freed the exhibition from any need to confront such complex issues as Nazi racial ideology and the trans-national reality of Auschwitz's multi-ethnic prisoner population. In short, the most obvious complexities inherent in the remembering of events at the camp were set aside. Any line of approach that shed an unfavourable light on the Polish actions, or any interpretation that threatened a particular Polish understanding of the camp, was unlikely to be followed through. It appears that the museum at Auschwitz would have had to accommodate parallel histories by instituting a Jewish pavilion, or assimilate the Jews to a Polish agenda. The museum chose to do the latter.

In October 1967 Tadeusz Hołuj, former inmate of Auschwitz and secretary-general of the International Auschwitz Committee, prepared a preliminary draft of the exhibition, which was then presented to the museum's review committee. The draft was approved and passed for editing to Jan Zaborowski, a Polish journalist, and Andrzej Szczpiorski, a noted author and former inmate of Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The exhibition was programmatic in structure. The history of Jewish suffering, beginning in 1933, was to be explained in three sections. Part one would 'show the fate

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[530] Huener (2003), p. 178.

of Jews and those designated by Hitlerism as Jews.'[531] Part two was to show 'the common fate of Jews and German democrats during the development of the Third Reich'. The purpose here was to show how the people of Europe were united against a common enemy. This solidarity was to be given prominence when it was used to relate 'struggle, suffering and persecution [of the Jews] on Polish territory', to that of the Poles in the same place. In doing this the museum conflated the Jews, the Poles and the conduct of home defence, as well as the perpetration of war crimes. The final part of the exhibition paid homage to the five million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Their defenders, mostly Poles, were also to be acknowledged, as was the Poles' suffering and struggle.

A Description of the Contents of the Exhibition Display of 1968

The available published material that discusses this exhibition is scant. Even at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, much of the information is found in the museum's visual sources, mainly in photographs. My intention is therefore to use the descriptions of the exhibition offered by Jonathan Huener.[532] Consequently, I shall develop his observations in order to emphasise the contingent politics inherent in the concept of the exhibition.

Photographs of the exhibition show that a darkened corridor led the visitor to a stone bearing a quotation from Genesis: 'Cain, what have you done with your brother Abel?'(*fig. 88*).[533] The exhibition then set out to answer this provocative question. A selection of quotations taken from the early nineteenth-century German nationalist philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte and the later German Nationalist political writer and

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[531] Details concerning the scenario for the Jewish Pavilion are taken from the archive at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, AMPO, syg.: S./zbiorowy.
[532] Huener (2003), pp. 178 – 181.
[533] Genesis 4:9, King James Version.

philosopher Heinrich von Tritschke were used to illustrate the origins of National Socialist racial ideology. Further quotations were used when an echo of these earlier authors could be found in the writings of Adolf Hitler and other advocates of National Socialism. This device allowed the exhibit to demonstrate the origins, progression and historical continuity of German anti-Semitism. They can also be said to reflect the use of slogans and statements that could be found in the earlier camp.

The second hall of the pavilion was used to show the 'Construction of the Third Reich'. Documentary photographs were used to illustrate how finance capital funded the Nazi party, the military, terror, concentration camps, and propaganda, as it developed in Germany between 1933 and 1945. The indifference shown by European countries and the United States to the plight of Germany's Jews was given prominence, as was the proposition that Poland had been active in providing a secure place for the Jews to go to.

The third hall considered the early years of the occupation. The extent of Germany's Blitzkrieg against Poland in September 1939, and the fact that its victims were linked, regardless of their religious beliefs, was given a prominence that had not been seen hitherto in the museum's strategies. Thus the unity of Jewish and Polish suffering was given consideration. Epigraphs were used to stress the equal suffering of both groups. 'Jews to the ghettos – Poles to the Prisons', was a slogan invented by the museum's curators to emphasize their shared predicament. The Israeli historian and Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer has commented on this epigraph pointing out that 'German policy in Poland was radically genocidal, also aiming at the elimination of the Polish nation as such.'[534] Whilst agreeing with much of Bauer's statement, it should be understood that all Polish Jews were targeted for eradication, whilst only the Polish gentile elites were slated for destruction. Until 1942, the majority of inmates at

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[534] Quoted in Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930 – 1965* (Bloomington: Indiana State University, 2001), p. 21.

Auschwitz were gentile Poles, because Jews were deported first to ghettos and then to labour camps, such as Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Mauthausen in Austria. However, the epigraph does much to gloss over such shameful incidents as the work of the Polish-gentile blackmailers, known as the *schmaltzovniks*, who made considerable sums out of those Jews who had managed to hide in 'Aryan' localities.[535]

A further epigraph, this one surrounded by barbed wire, informed the visitor that 'Poland was conquered, but still maintained the heroic fight'. Indeed this is true, for Polish resistance started on 1 September 1939 and carried on until the war was over; nor did Poland ever sign a peace treaty with Germany. However, in this struggle, fundamental differences separated Poles and Jews. Poland had a government in exile, which for the subjugated nation meant that it still had a voice within the international community. The Polish resistance fighters, although pitifully armed, were armed nonetheless. Resistance in the ghetto was a different matter. The Jews did not represent an oppressed nation; they were the victims of a Nazi policy, the end result of which was their total annihilation. Even before the deportations to death camps began they were subject to slow elimination by hunger, cold and epidemics. Out of this context they maintained an heroic fight. Resistance and sabotage did take place. Emmanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler and diarist of the Warsaw ghetto describes one instance:

> The English communiqués have recently been full of descriptions of sab[otage] in various countries occupied by the German army. There is no large [munitions] factory in the ghetto, but the Jewish tailors working in the German commissary shops, wishing to do their part for the sab[otage], have sent off a transport of military uniforms with trousers sewn together, buttons on backwards, sleeves reversed (the left sleeve were the right should be). The transport was returned from Berlin, and now the production department is all-agog. There are threats of drastic punishment.[536]

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[535] The word originates from the Polish 'schmaletz', which means fat. These *schmaltzovniks* would often begin any conversation with a person they suspected of being Jewish with the phrase 'give me your fat'. For a discussion, see Bernhard Goldstein and Leonard Shatzkin, *Five Years in the Warsaw Ghetto: The Star Bears Witness* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), p. 179.
[536] Cited in Enzo Traverso, *Understanding the Nazi Genocide: Marxism after Auschwitz* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p. 81.

Whilst the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto are rightly remembered for their heroism during the uprising, the story of the heroism of the ghetto tailors has been forgotten, and with that forgetting any recognition of such an act of defiance. Yet in terms of continuing the heroic fight against the all-encompassing terror of the Nazi occupation, this example serves as an important instance of the different types of acts of defiance that took place throughout the war.

The nationwide persecution of the Jews was the next theme to be encountered by visitors. A reconstruction of a portion of the Warsaw ghetto wall blocked the view into the room. Within, documents announcing terror, hunger, epidemics and death, illustrated the plight of the Jews. A reproduction of a German proclamation imposing the death sentence on anyone found to be aiding the Jews was used to emphasise Polish-Jewish solidarity in suffering (*fig. 89*). These were placed next to images that highlighted the lack of interest in the Jews' plight amongst the nations that were free from Nazi occupation. The exhibition also criticised the World Jewish Congress and other Jewish aid organisations for their lack of assistance. These attacks can be understood as part of the continuing anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. The message to be drawn from this was that whilst the world stood by and refused to help the Jews, Poland was alone in offering assistance. As if to endorse this point, a further epigraph stated: 'All Poland suffered; all Poland fought; all Poland wanted victory'. This attempt to unite the two groups in equal suffering and heroism endeavoured to revive the historic notion of Polish-Jewish solidarity. The wider purpose was thus to counter claims that Poland was historically an anti-Semitic nation. A reporter from the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, who was at Auschwitz to cover the visit of the German foreign minister, Walter Scheel, raised the following point:

> The shameful fact is that the German foreign minister, Herr Walter Scheel, who visited Auschwitz this week, was extremely careful not to break the Polish conspiracy of silence with reference to the Shoah of the Jews. [537]

Going further, the author wrote:

> Precisely because he is the German foreign minister, he was duty-bound to speak about the Jews at Auschwitz – even if this would not have met with Polish approval.

No doubt the anonymous Israeli journalist was in fact voicing the concerns of many people at that time.

The penultimate room of the exhibition concerned the extermination of the Jews. Here the museum authorities strove to avoid any duplication of the earlier display in Block 4, 'Extermination of Millions', which had narrated the story of the gas chambers and crematoria at Birkenau. In Block 27 connections were made to other camps – Bełżec, Treblinka, and Sobibór – and other means of annihilation, such as mass executions by shooting, and the use of gas vans. The bureaucracy of the Third Reich was shown through the Wannsee Conference, which had decided the fate of the Jews on 20 January 1942.[538]

The didactic nature of the exhibition was put to one side as the visitor entered the final room, entitled 'Hall of Memory'. There, a votive atmosphere was attempted instead. In the centre of the room stood a glass column that resembled a plume of smoke, or perhaps of gas, which was intended to evoke either the crematoria or gas chambers. This had at its base a projection of a photographic slide showing the label from a can of Zyklon-B. The message was unmistakeable: the visitor was being asked to confront the means of murder and destruction that had taken place at Auschwitz II-

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[537] The following quotations are taken from the *Yizkor Book Project* at jewishgen.org/yizkor. Updated 20 Nov 2001. Accessed 1 July 2010.

[538] For a discussion of this meeting see: Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the lake, the meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

Birkenau (*fig. 90*), but in such a way that had echoes of earlier displays at Auschwitz where a form of memorialisation shared space with the historical.

The main theme of the exhibition was the notion that Poles and Jews underwent a shared history during the war. That history was one of shared suffering and struggle. However, it was Andrzej Szczypiorski, one of the exhibition's early curators, who questioned the historical accuracy of the display: 'However', he writes 'the planned industrialised murder on a mass scale in the gas chambers did not embrace the Poles'.[539] It is significant that Szczypiorski resigned from the exhibitions review commission in 1968 because of its failure to recognise the 'completely different ways the Nazis treated Jews and Poles'.[540]

The Opening of the Exhibition

On 21 April 1968 the Polish government inaugurated the exhibition *The Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews, 1933–1945* at Auschwitz I.[541] According to *The New York Times* 'only one foreign Jew, a Mexican citizen, was present to hear the speeches condemning Zionism, Israel and American aggression'. [542] Kazimierz Rusinek, Secretary General of Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy [ZboWiD] and Deputy Minister of Culture, used the event as a stage from which to attack 'Jewish organisations outside of Poland for having failed to come to the aid of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto'.[543] Whilst this uprising was confined within the walls of the ghetto, its impact was felt throughout Europe, not least by the German command. Poland's

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[539] Charles Hoffman, *Gray Dawn: The Jews of Eastern Europe in the Post-Communist Era* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), p. 284. Huener (2003), p. 181.
[540] Huener (2003), p. 181.
[541] There is much confusion within scholarly writing concerning the date of the opening of this pavilion. Some authors have stated that the exhibition was inaugurated in 1978. For example see Penkower (1994), p. 312. The same error is repeated by Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), p. 153. The present author's mother clearly remembers the pavilion being open in 1968 when she made her first visit to the site.
[542] Ferencz (2002), p. 65.
[543] Dawidowicz (1983), p. 112.

resistance fighters acknowledged the courage of the uprising, and beyond Europe public opinion recognised the bravery of the battle. Gerhard L. Weinberg has shown that Jewish groups outside of Europe faced a genuine problem when attempting to offer aid to Warsaw's Jewish community. He states:

> Jewish organisations and prominent individuals who were horrified by what was going on made a number of attempts to rouse public opinion and thereby, it was hoped, put pressure on the governments of both Britain and the United States, but with little effect.[544]

Europe's ghettoised Jews also communicated with their associates in Istanbul, Geneva, New York and London. Their hope was that the Allies would act on the information they were offered, but little happened. Once again we see how Auschwitz becomes a platform for discussions concerning the Allies and their lack of help towards the Jews of Europe.

Yisrael Gutman recollects a comment made to him at the opening of the exhibition, which shows that the validity of a Jewish pavilion, as part of the narrative of the State Museum, was still being questioned on the day of its inauguration: 'They said to me, "Why do you need a Jewish pavilion? You all came from different countries anyway".'[545] This question highlights the fact that for some, the Holocaust in the Polish popular consciousness was still not being viewed as a Nazis genocidal project which aimed to entirely eradicate Europe's Jews, but instead was still being seen as a Polish story. However, in terms of a progressive identity-making, which the creation of a specifically Jewish pavilion at the site can be said to be part of, the possibility that the Poles were being given the opportunity to question the established museological agenda which had hitherto existed at the museum, is unmistakeable. The outcome of this was the prospect of the potential for the development of a critique of the prevailing Polish-

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[544] Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 243.
[545] Amiram Barkat and Ha'aretz Correspondent, 'Israel wants responsibility over Jewish pavilion at Auschwitz museum', in *Ha'aretz* Saturday, 24 January 2006, online edition at Ha'aretz.com, accessed 24 July 2010.

national idiom that had been the backbone of the existing strategies employed at the site.

Of Poland's former Jewish population, only six returned to attend the opening ceremony. The reason for this seems to lie in the date chosen for the inauguration. 21 April 1968 fell on the last day of the Passover festival; in accordance with their tradition, observant Jews, in practice, use most of the rules that are normally applied to the Sabbath, which – significantly – includes a prohibition on travel. The choice of date therefore precluded observant Jews from attending. If the authorities had hoped for a Jewish presence, however limited, during the event their choice of date could not have been more wrong. Yet, as far as the Polish authorities were concerned, the existence of the Jewish pavilion at Auschwitz demonstrated that the international accusations relating to Poland's anti-Semitism and anti-Zionist campaign were unwarranted. The state could point to its new exhibition, which not only documented Jewish suffering, but also communality of courage during the occupation. In this it sought to exhibit the historical solidarity between Poles and Jews. The historian Yitskhak Schipper told Alexander Donat, and indeed both had been inmates of Auschwitz, that 'everything depends on who transmits our testament to future generations'.[546]

Visitor Numbers at Block 27

According to Ewa Pasternack and Igor Bartoszik, both of whom are historians working at the contemporary Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum today, throughout the first ten years of the existence of the exhibition *The Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews*,

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[546] Zachary M. Baker et al, *From a Ruined Garden: the Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 17.

approximately eighty thousand visitors passed through Block 27.[547] This means that the observation made by a number of scholars, that as soon as the exhibition opened the state closed it, is incorrect.[548] The usual story is that the state made the changes to appease Jewish calls for a pavilion, but kept it closed to protect the Polish State position; this story suits recent critiques of the museum, but is more complex.

From 1971–1975 the museum's records show that 35,903 visitors attended the exhibition.[549] Michael Steinlauf has stated that the 'Jewish pavilion was often locked and opened only on special occasions.'[550] If access to the display was severely curtailed, as Steinlauf suggests, then the visitor numbers, as a proportion of those attending the museum as a whole symbolize a significant percentage. It was not until 1977, following a review of the exhibition by the Ministry of Culture and Art, that a call was made for the closure of the Jewish pavilion.

The Jewish Pavilion 1978

The re-dedication of the now inclusive and internationally outward-facing pavilion took place on 17 April 1978, launching a series of events to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Unlike the 1968 dedication, where only one person represented a non-Polish Jewish presence at the ceremony, this time delegates from Yad Vashem, the World Jewish Congress, the International Auschwitz Committee, and the

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[547] This information was gleaned during private conversations with both of the named historians during a research trip in 2005.

[548] For example see American Jewish Committee, *Commentary 66* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978), p. 66. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: the Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), pp. 154-155. Monty Naom Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 310. In 2003 Kalman Sultanik wrote that 'the Jewish Pavilion at Auschwitz-Birkenau was closed after the Six-Day War in 1967, at the height of the anti-Jewish purges of the Polish government at that time, ostensibly for renovations.' See Kalman Sultanik, 'Auschwitz-Birkenau: a sacred zone of inviolability' in *Midstream*, 1 November 2003. Available online at www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-111163673.html, accessed 9 August 2010. Sultanik is Chairman, World Zionist Organization, American Section, and a member of the International Auschwitz Council and Chairman of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Budget and Finance Committee.

[549] Comparisons with attendance figures at other pavilions at the site show these figures to be low. For example, in 1973 approximately 7, 800 visited Block 27, whilst 55, 000 visited the Soviet Union's pavilion.

[550] Steinlauf (2006), p. 70.

World Organization of Jewish Fighters, Partisans, and Camp Prisoners attended. One of the revisions to the exhibition concerned the downplaying of Polish-Jewish solidarity during the war, which as we have seen had been such a significant feature of the earlier exhibition. According to Lawrence Baron, Professor of Modern Jewish history at San Diego University, this downplaying was a product of Poland's anti-Zionist campaign and that the Polish government pandered to local prejudices, claiming that reform movements challenged its authority, blaming Jewish subversives from Israel and the United States.[551] Nevertheless, commonalities of suffering, sacrifice and struggle were not ignored. This was apparent from the speech delivered by Janusz Wieczorek, Director of the Council for the Protection of Monuments of Struggle and Martyrdom at the re-dedication of the Jewish pavilion:

> Many of them were Jewish. For us they were Poles; they thought and felt in Polish; they were the co-authors of our material and spiritual culture. We never separated them, and their loss is for us as irreparable as for the Jewish nation.[552]

These references to Poland's wartime losses were used by the authorities to address what was for Poland, the injustices of the still fresh memory of the international response to the earlier anti-Zionist campaign. For Poles, the accusations of anti-Zionism were still viewed as anti-Polish propaganda. The speech can be interpreted as an attempt to display Polish tolerance and assimilationist ideals, even though these qualities were framed by the usual concepts of citizenship and national identity.

The reorganisation of the exhibition did much to remove the earlier propagandist nature of the display, however, certain themes continued. The examples of Nazi anti-Jewish policies from 1933 onwards were retained, as was evidence of their implementation in occupied countries. Ghettoisation and the 'Final Solution' held the same (understandable) prominence, as did acts of resistance and aid from Poles to Jews.

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[551] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 79.
[552] Huener (2003), p. 197.

However, the final 'Hall of Memory' was adapted. The earlier accusation, 'Where is Abel your Brother?'[553] A lament replaced a quote that means in essence, you murdered your brother. Instead the quotation 'And the Lord said to Cain, "The blood of your brother Abel cries to me from the ground" ' was chosen.[554] It might be said that the changing of the quotations is a clear indication of the softening of the State's view of the Jews.

Israeli Responses to the Exhibition

Changes such as the quotation did not go unnoticed by Israel. The number of Jewish organisations, especially those from Israel, invited to the re-dedication ceremony was seen as an important step in improving Polish-Israeli relations, which helped develop a subsequent dialogue between the two countries. The positive nature that this engendered is best seen in newspaper reports published at the time. An editorial in the *Jerusalem Post* considered the event 'a bit of a thaw in the frost that has covered Polish relations with the Jewish people since 1967'.[555] Alexander Zvielli, who came to Poland with the delegation following thirty-nine years of absence, recalled his experience:

> In our six days here, we have observed a different world, and we leave it with a feeling that there is some new hope for an improvement in Polish-Israeli relations. It is inconceivable that the connection between our two peoples, which lasted more than a millennium, can remain severed forever.[556]

Going further, Gideon Hauser director of Yad Vashem remarked that 'The whole world has forgotten about the Holocaust, except the Poles and the Jews'.[557] Following such comments the Polish Government issued statements of goodwill towards Israel and granted visas to Israeli journalists wishing to visit Poland. At a reciprocal ceremony in

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[553] Genesis 4:9.
[554] Genesis 4:10.
[555] Cited in Huener (2003), p. 197.
[556] Alexander Zvelli, 'A Haunted Land', *Jerusalem Post*, 5 May 1978.
[557] Cited in Jacob Abadi, 'The Road to the Israeli-Polish Rapprochement', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41:6, 863-886, at p. 875.

Poland, twenty-two Righteous Gentile medals, the highest honour the state of Israel can give to a non-Jew, were awarded to Poles who had saved Jews during the Holocaust.

Political Elites Contribute to the Growing Internationalisation of Auschwitz

Throughout the 1970s the museum and memorial site played host to a number of important international figures. The West German foreign minister Walter Scheel visited in November 1970, heralding, according to the International Auschwitz Committee, 'a new era of East-West détente.'[558] This was followed by a further high-profile delegation in 1971, when the West German Social Democrats, led by Herbert Wehner, visited the site. In July of the following year the United Nations secretary-general Kurt Waldheim, an Austrian with a chequered past, visited the site. His visit outraged many; not least because Waldheim's signature was found on a document that clearly showed him to be complicit in the deportation of 2,000 Greek Jews to Auschwitz in 1944.[559] In 1975, the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and the U.S. President Gerald Ford both visited to pay their respective honours to the victims of Auschwitz. The mounting significance that Auschwitz derived from these visits, at both a European and an international level, meant that the position of Auschwitz as a place of remembrance for Polish national suffering alone was no longer sustainable. At this point, after establishing a number of pavilions dedicated to different nationalities – and particularly that for the Jewish people – the museum prepared itself for the ambitious task of applying for the status of a World Heritage site.

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[558] International Auschwitz Committee, *Information Bulletin* no. 12:121 (December 1970).
[559] William Frankel, *Survey of Jewish Affairs* (Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), p. 197.

Auschwitz-Birkenau becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Following the success of the rededication ceremony, the State Museum sought to develop its achievement by applying, in 1978, to the United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in order to become included on their register of World Heritage sites.[560] The application included the statement: 'By virtue of its activities the Museum makes an important contribution to the struggle for world peace and security.'[561] Whilst not wanting to over-interpret this statement, it is possible to read in it overtones of earlier Stalinist-inspired declarations concerning the role of the museum. For UNESCO, the inscription of the Auschwitz complex on its list served to enforce the twin sites of Auschwitz and Birkenau as places that symbolised 'the cruelty of man to his fellow-men in the twentieth-century'.[562] That the complex of camps found inclusion on the register could possibly be interpreted as surprising, given that until then most World Heritage sites had had positive associations. However, it is clear that some people did see the importance of including such a place as Auschwitz amongst the list of World Heritage sites. Olwen Beazley, a Senior Heritage Officer for UNESCO, wrote in 2005:

> The committee deliberated over this when it was first presented, stating that the World Heritage Convention (WHC), was conceived in such a way as to reflect the 'heights of human achievement' and not such places as Auschwitz-Birkenau.[563]

The crux of the matter, whether or not Auschwitz was to be included lay in application of article vi of the World Heritage Convention guidelines concerning inclusion. This

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[560] The date most usually given for the submission of the nomination form to the WHO is 1979, which was in point of fact the approval date. The application as received by UNESCO is clearly dated as 6.6.'78. See appendix for a copy of this document.

[561] 'Auschwitz Concentration Camp', World Heritage List nomination dossier no. 31, submitted by the government of the People's Republic of Poland, inscribed on the World Heritage Committee at its third session, Luxor, Egypt (22–26 October 1979), collection of UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, France.

[562] Harriet Deacon *et al*, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage* (Cape Town: HSRC Publishers, 2004), p. 15.

[563] Olwen Beazley, 'Drawing a Line around a Shadow? Persevering Intangible Cultural Heritage Value Through the World Heritage Convention', *Historic Environment* 19:1 (2005), pp. 25–29, at p. 26.

criterion stated that places 'most importantly associated with ideas or beliefs, with events or persons, of historical importance or significance' be included on the list.[564]

This was the first of many debates within the convention relating to article vi, which, according to Beazley and Deacon, delayed the inscription of Auschwitz-Birkenau for a year. However, the more likely reason for the delay – and one that bears scrutiny – can be found in the fact that Poland had not only submitted Auschwitz-Birkenau for inclusion, but also Kraków's historic centre and the Wieliczka salt mine. The committee reminded the Polish delegates that only two nominations per country were possible annually. However, the committee recommended that 'It would, therefore, appear justified that the nomination of Auschwitz be referred to the second session of the Bureau with a favourable recommendation.'[565]

The committee adopted a favourable position on Auschwitz, with positive approval being given in the following year. It should be remembered that 1979 was the thirtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent occupation of Poland, as well as being the year in which Pope John-Paul II would make his historic papal visit to Poland and to Auschwitz (*fig. 91*). However, the granting of the inclusion did have a proviso attached that is worth discussing. The committee did not want to create a precedent for the inscription of places of negativity or horror upon the list, with the consequence that – as Robert Milne, a member of the U.S. World Heritage Committee noted – 'the committee decided to enter Auschwitz concentration camp on the list as a unique site and to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature.'[566] The effect of the inclusion of Auschwitz, together with the award of unique

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[564] Olwen Beazley and Harriet Deacon, 'Safeguarding Intangible Heritage Values Under the World Heritage Convention: Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Robben Island', in Janet Blake (ed.), *Safeguarding Intangible Heritage: Challenges and Approaches* (Powys: Institute of Art and Law, 1995), p. 95.

[565] UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE, Second Session, Washington, D.C. (USA) 5 to 8 September 1978, Final Report, p. 9, para 45. CC-78/CONF.010/10 Rev. Paris, 9 October 1978. Original: English. Online whc.unesco.org/archive/repcom78.htm Accessed 10 August 2010.

[566] Quoted in Blake (1995), p. 97.

site status, was to further consolidate the international importance of the site. The committee recommended that the Auschwitz site should 'stand alone among cultural properties as bearing witness to the depth of horror and suffering and the height of heroism, and that all other sites of the same nature be symbolised through it.'[567] Further, the decision to limit the inscription of such sites, whether associated with the Holocaust or any other place of genocide, elevated Auschwitz to the position of premier representative for human suffering. According to the committee's recommendation, the site was an 'irrefutable and concrete witness to one of the greatest crimes which has been perpetrated against humanity.'[568] This suggests that the exceptional nature of the site was used to endorse the idea that Auschwitz could be a unique symbol that had the capacity to stand for a whole series of similar events.

It was thus in this way that the State Museum, as custodian of the historic site, steered Auschwitz through the international media catastrophe caused by the Polish anti-Zionist campaign of the late 1960s. Auschwitz, by the establishment of its Jewish pavilion in 1968, became a political tool to address complaints of Polish anti-Semitism. The re-dedication of the pavilion in 1978 was met with approval by Israel and the inclusion of the site on UNESCO's World Heritage Convention list confirmed the museum' international visibility. In the year following inscription, there occurred a further opportunity for the museum to develop its newly-confirmed worldwide prominence. In June 1979, Pope John-Paul II 'the Polish Pope' known for his compassionate attitude towards Jews in war-time Poland and afterwards, made his first visit to the site.

Whilst it is not my intention to rehearse the arguments that surround the visit of Pope John-Paul II, I will discuss some issues that concern the furthering of the visibility

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[567] Ibid.
[568] World Heritage Committee, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee* (Luxor, Egypt, 22 – 26 October 1979), UNESCO Doc. CC-79/CONF.003/13.

of Auschwitz in an international context.[569] Tom Lawson has described Pope John-Paul II as 'a Pope more concerned than many of his predecessors by Christian-Jewish relations.'[570] In June 1979 the Pope undertook a visit to the state museum, where he knelt in prayer in front of the Wall of Death at Auschwitz and said mass, for 500,000 pilgrim-visitors, at the *Judenrampe* in Birkenau, where an 8.6 metre tall cross was placed, surmounted with a crown of thorns fashioned from barbed wire

. It was during this mass that the Pope referred to Auschwitz as the twentieth-century's Golgotha. Much was made of the Holy Father's use of such a word at a site where 1.4 million Jews had died. However, it is worth noting that the Liberal Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum had used this same word in 1965, when he said: 'The Golgotha of modern mankind is Auschwitz. The cross, the Roman gallows, was replaced by the gas chamber.'[571] Strangely, those who criticised the Pope were silent on Maybaum's use of the word.

This mass was dedicated to the beatified former inmate of Auschwitz I, Father Maksymilian Kolbe. He had offered himself as a substitute for one of ten fellow inmates condemned to die by starvation in the basement of Block 13 as a reprisal for an earlier escape. Marek Skwarnicki, writing for the Polish national newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny* described the importance of the elevation of Kolbe, 'for it gives a name among millions of anonymous other victims.'[572] It would seem that through this public act Auschwitz gained its first publicly named non-socialist martyr. For the Poles, the story of Father Maksymilian Kolbe presented an ideal image, one that was embedded in concepts of Poland's national war-time struggle. Kolbe's aid to Polish Jewry from September 1939 until his arrest in 1941, and the selflessness of his death, placed him

[569] For a discussion of the Pope's visit to Auschwitz and Birkenau see David G. Dalin and Matthew Levering, *John-Paul II and the Jewish People: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), pp. 15–60. John M. Osterreicher, *Martyrs of the Decalogue: Reflections on Pope John-Paul's Pilgrimage to Auschwitz* (Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies: Seaton Hall University, 1984).
[570] Tim Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 23.
[571] Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God After Auschwitz* (Amsterdam: Polak and van Gennep, 1965), p. 80.
[572] Marek Skwarnicki, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 June 1979.

within the highest values of the Polish Catholic church. This was a new development, and very different from the communist-inspired valorisation of the Political Prisoner as national symbol.

The second inmate to be venerated by His Holiness was the Carmelite Nun Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross-, previously known as Edith Stein.[573] Her name was invoked during the homily as one who had gained victory through the salvation of faith. The fact that Sister Teresa Benedicta, formerly a Jew, who together with her sister had converted to Christianity and was subsequently arrested, as part of the Nazi reprisals for the public statement issued by Dutch Bishops' conference which condemned Nazi racism, led to her deportation to Birkenau. There she and her sister were gassed immediately upon arrival.[574] For the Pope to cite Edith Stein, as one who died for her faith at Birkenau, may be understood as in keeping with the Catholic church's theology; it can also be interpreted as an attempt by the Pope to pursue Christian-Jewish dialogue. Indeed he did remark that Stein was from a Jewish family. Nevertheless, Stein was not killed for her faith, but because of the classification that the Germans had used to define her as being a Jew.[575] This was not the only reference the Pope made to the Jews as he read out the Hebrew text on the Birkenau monument.

Whilst both the Vatican and the Polish state portrayed the papal visit to Poland as a non-political act, it is difficult to not to interpret his appearance at Auschwitz-Birkenau in any other way. By giving such prominence to the life and death of

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[573] For a discussion of the life and death of Maksymilian Kolbe see Elaine Murray Stone and Patrick Kelly, *Maximilian Kolbe: Saint of Auschwitz* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997). It is important to realise that Kolbe has taken on a cult status amongst Poles. To a far lesser degree Edith Stein has also achieved a significant position in Polish spiritual life, especially for her mystic writing. Both saints are considered to be the most controversial of John-Paul II's beatifications. For a discussion of Edith Stein see Maria Ruiz Scaperlander, *Edith Stein: St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross* (Huntingdon: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001).

[574] Sister Teresa Benedicta was beatified on 1 May 1987 and canonized 11 October 1998, both by John-Paul II.

[575] The Anti-Defamation League challenges the beatification of Edith Stein as a martyr, stating Stein was killed for her Jewish nationality rather than for her faith, and that the misappropriation and Christianization of an event that targeted Jews diminishes the memory of the Holocaust. The position of the Catholic Church hierarchy is that Edith Stein also died because of the Dutch hierarchy's public condemnation of Nazi racism in 1942; in other words, that she died to uphold the moral position of the Church, and is thus a true martyr. See Frank J. Copper, *The Papacy, the Jews and the Holocaust* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), pp. 255 – 295.

Maksymilian Kolbe, he offered the Poles a new image for Polish national martyrdom at the site. Furthermore, by citing Edith Stein, he drew attention to Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Polish relations. In doing so the Pope may have been attempting to introduce the subject of the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy to the Poles. If John-Paul II's words and actions at the site marked a new stage in the development of the memorial idiom, so long dominated by communist practices, they also offered a foretaste of the possible conflicts that the site would encounter in the future.

Conclusion

Historical museums tell a story of memory, and it is in the telling of this story that we see the diverse interest groups attempting to either control or to enter into the telling of the story. The existence of a Jewish pavilion at Auschwitz meant that it had become unfeasible for the Poles to leave unvoiced the Jewish presence that had once existed within the Auschwitz camp. As I have argued, the pavilion was put to political use by the Warsaw government at the pinnacle of the 'anti-Zionist campaign.' The 1968 exhibition was employed as an antidote to the international condemnation that Poland had received during the campaign. The reordering of the pavilion in 1978 attempted to address a general shift in Poland's attitude towards Israel to be a more inclusive one, a view that is supported by the invitation to Israeli representatives to attend the rededication of the new exhibition. Given the large visitor numbers to the Jewish pavilion since 1978, it is possible to argue that this part of the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum's representation of the crimes of the Holocaust can be seen as one of the most successful and international-facing endeavours undertaken at the site.

Chapter 7

Auschwitz from1990 to the Present

By way of conclusion, this final section of the thesis will consider the position of art, memorialisation and commemoration at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum from 1990 to the present day. As we have seen in the thesis – Auschwitz has been a contested site, in its representation from 1940 onwards and I show that this is still the case.

The fall of communism in Poland in 1989 gave the Auschwitz museum authorities the opportunity to begin to address the historical imbalance that had arisen within the constructed narrative employed to tell the story of the camp. This imbalance was caused by the imposition of political meanings upon the site by the country's former political administrations through the processes of art, memorialisation and commemoration that I have described. From this date forward, these could at last be addressed in a more formal manner. Nevertheless, the effort to correct past wrongs has perhaps inevitably resulted in the development of further areas of contestation.

The Use and Display of the Art Collection

The dedicated art gallery at Auschwitz, which has its direct forebear in the one established soon after the museum came into being in 1947, not only displays a selection of the work made by inmates at the time of their incarceration, but also works produced after the war. It also contains a print made by Picasso, from a series that he produced for a number of concentration camps, Dachau among them.

The museum has recently developed plans however, to transform the former Kitchen Block at Auschwitz I into a public gallery. Whilst a dedicated gallery would bring a focus to the inmate artists that has, until now, been lacking, this plan does trigger an immediate problem for the museum. How will the curators introduce the idea that it was possible to create art at Auschwitz to visitors, and at what point on a tour of the historic camp should those visitors enter the gallery and view its contents? Krystyna Oleksy, Director for Education, is of the opinion that without the proper educational preparation, which leads to an understanding of the multiple reasons why inmates created art within the camp, some visitors might be lead to believe that Auschwitz was not such a bad place.[576]

We might say, at present, then, the primary audience for this restricted gallery are scholars and researchers rather than the public. However, the museum does lend its pictures and artefacts to other museums, both in Poland and beyond. For example, in 1971 the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem displayed Dinah Gottliebova-Babbitt's seven watercolour portraits of Gypsies. (These are discussed in chapter two.) The Imperial War Museum in London has been the recipient of the loan of artefacts (such as shoes), and a dissection table once used by Dr Mengele when he undertook his experiments at Birkenau (*fig. 92*).

By far the largest loan of art was made to the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin in 2005, which worked in cooperation with Stiftung Neue Synagoge (New Foundation Synagogue), over a two-year period. During that time the Berlin curators chose one hundred and fifty works that they felt would be representative of 'Art in Auschwitz 1940 – 1945.' The critical reception of the exhibition was positive, with the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder stating:

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[576] Conversation with Krystyna Oleksy, August 2005.

> This exhibition gives visitors a very personal perspective of one aspect of the Auschwitz extermination camp. It challenges visitors by way of the physical and temporal proximity of horrendous mass murder on one hand and art on the other.[577]

For the majority of those visiting the exhibition it was probably the first opportunity that they would have had to view such work. Michael Schornstheimer, presenter of Deutschlandradio's 'Kultur' programme described the display thus:

> The Centrum Judaicum has given these works, displayed for the first time as works of art, a fitting architectural setting. The walls are painted grey, with minimal lighting and text, while their intricate perpendicular arrangement adds a labyrinth-like quality.

Stephen C. Feinstein, Director of the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota, considers that the lending of Holocaust-era artworks to museums allows for a discussion of the question 'Who owns the Holocaust?' It is his belief that the physical transmission of the work to new locations, however temporary their display at those locations might be, allows the works to be viewed by new audiences, and in so doing creates fertile ground for the initiation of a global culture in which an understanding and appreciation of the work as belonging to a larger community than the State Museum at Auschwitz can begin.[578]

The idea of the inherent value of Holocaust artworks, as evidence that can be displayed in galleries away from the actual sites of trauma, thereby contracts the geographic space between Europe and United States, for example, and creates a conception of the global. Comparing museums at the actual sites of atrocity with museums constructed later, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), in Washington D.C., Krystyna Oleksy said that whilst the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was not a centre of Holocaust memory,

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[577] Excerpt from the opening speech, 22 May, 2005.
[578] Stephen C. Feinstein, 'What are the Results? Reflections on Working in Holocaust Education', in Samuel Totten *et al.*(eds), *Teaching about the Holocaust: Essays by College and University Teachers* (London: Praeger, 2004), p. 58.

> [I]t is an extension of the fabric of the centre: the original sites. The museum could connect to the centre through the artefacts. This was the way that America could "touch" the reality of the Holocaust through a museum whose artefacts would shrink the geographical distance between Poland and America and make permeable the boundaries between Holocaust and American space.[579]

It seems that Oleksy is suggesting that the USHMM can never quite achieve the distinguished position that an actual Holocaust site can attain. However, many people never visit an actual site of Holocaust, preferring to view artworks and artefacts through the World Wide Web. To enhance its global reach, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum has adopted the Internet in order to display its collection. Auschwitz's web address, like any other, is not limited by national boundaries, whilst access to its electronic interface is not restricted to geographical space. In many ways this would seem to echo Jean Baudrillard's 1993 description of a postmodern society, characterised by the compression of time and space within an economy of simulation. The actual or real is copied and it is from those simulacra that our knowledge is increasingly constructed.[580] The museum's online facilities could be understood as part of a postmodern world of simulacra.

One phenomenon faced by the museum in recent years is the issue of reclamation. Just as families are requesting the return of Old Master artworks looted by the Nazis during the course of the Second World War. In the same way, the museum's ownership of the objects has been challenged in the recent past as I discuss in the following case study. The museum has in recent years found that former inmates, or their families, have begun to request the return of objects held in the museum's collections. The case of Dinah Gottliebova-Babbitt will suffice. I will show that the case elucidates certain moral questions that concern the museum and rights of ownership in the twenty-first century.

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[579] David Chidester, *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 253.
[580] Jean Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, Mike Gain (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 177.

As it has already been noted, Gottliebova was commissioned by Mengele to paint watercolour portraits of Gypsies as part of his case notes for the Racial Hygiene Institute, Berlin; he hoped later to publish his findings in book form (see Chapter 1). The post-war history of these watercolours and the museum's defence of its refusal to return them to the artist demonstrate that Auschwitz is still a contested site.

The museum considers the portraits to be its property rather than Babbitt's 'personal artistic creation because they were "documentary work done under the direct orders of Dr Mengele and carried out by the artist to ensure her survival."'[581] According to the museum, they are therefore the product of slave labour. The museum appeared to be putting the rights of Dr Mengele before that of a survivor. Understandably Gottliebova-Babbitt did not see it in quite the same way. She made an impassioned, if perhaps emotionally excessive claim for the artworks:

> Every single thing was taken away from us. And now finally, something is found that I created, that belongs to me. And they refuse to give it to me. This is why I feel as helpless as I did then.[582]

Dinah Gottliebova-Babbitt had left six paintings with a fellow inmate when she and her mother were forced to depart the camp as part of the death marches in January 1945. This would suggest that her actions were made under duress, and it is likely that under less difficult conditions she would not have made this choice. In 1963, the museum purchased the watercolours from the former inmate. In 1973 the museum contacted Gottliebova-Babbitt, then living in the U.S.A., after Tadeusz Szymanski, a senior curator at the museum, had discovered a potential link between the signatures on the Gypsy portraits, 'Dinah '44', with a similar one on a wall mural depicting a Swiss mountainside with the figures of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, from the Walt Disney motion picture, which she had painted in the children's barracks at Birkenau in

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[581] Roberta Rosenthal Kwall, *The Soul of Creativity: forging a moral rights law for the United States* (Stanford: Stanford Law Books, 2010), p. 101.
[582] Ibid.

1944. Other wall paintings in the barracks were realised by the children themselves and included 'Eskimos, Indians and Africans, each figure against a background of its native surroundings.'[583] According to Shimon Adler, these additions to the windowless accommodation greatly improved the living conditions of the inmates.

In 1993 Gottliebova-Babbitt travelled to Auschwitz to authenticate the work and to give her testimony regarding her imprisonment in the camp and the making of the pictures. According to the museum, this was the only contact Mrs Gottliebova-Babbitt had with the museum until the mid 1990s.[584] It was her mistaken belief that the museum intended to use the occasion to return the Roma pictures to her. However, the directors would not allow it, stating that the historical and educational value of the work superseded her right of ownership. There then began a protracted battle between Gottliebova-Babbitt and the museum concerning ownership rights; it came to resemble instances of the 'state vs. the individual'.

In relation to this case Sybil Milton has written:

> I sympathize with her, but you're choosing between two moral choices. One is the original artist's desire to have her own work back. On the other hand, one of the countervailing factors is that the Poles preserved the works and used them appropriately. And the work is part of a very important story at Auschwitz that would otherwise remain untold – that of the Gypsies.[585]

Milton is thus arguing that this is really a matter of deciding between two ethical positions, the first, to return the work to Gottliebova, whilst the second would allow the museum to retain works that have a greater 'moral' purpose in witnessing history. As the situation developed, Gottliebova-Babbitt gathered support; it was reported that

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[583] Shimon Adler, 'Block 31: The Children's Block in the Family Camp at Birkenau', in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 24 (1994), p. 290.
[584] The precise wording is: 'It was the first and the only Mrs Gottliebova's contact with the museum until the second half of the nineties [*sic*].' www.auschwitz.org.pl. http://en.auschwitz.org.pl/m/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=57&Itemid=8
[585] Cited in Dora Apel, 'The Auschwitz Museum and the Case of the Gypsy Portraits', in *Other Voices*, 2:2 (March 2002), available online at www.othervoices.org/2.2/apel/-, unpaginated, no date given for last updated, accessed 31 October 2010.

'Diplomatic discussions have been initiated at the State Department'[586] and '450 artists have signed a petition on her behalf, as have sixty lawyers.'[587] To this list it is possible to add support from art dealers, museum curators and a former executive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The covering letter stated, 'Reuniting Mrs Babbitt with her paintings would be a sign of the museum's dedication not only to history but also to humanity.'[588] It is reputed that Gottliebova-Babbitt also feels that part of her soul is imprisoned at Auschwitz, as long as her work remains there. Given that the other work at the museum attributed to her is a wall mural, which would be far more difficult to repatriate than seven works on paper, and that Gottliebova-Babbitt was not asking for its return, one wonders if the spiritually absent part of her soul could ever truly find a homecoming. Also of importance is the fact that Gottliebova-Babbitt did not want to keep the watercolours in her own private collection, but to place them in a public museum in the United States. This is in contrast to the view held by the museum, as the journalist Christine Spolar has written: 'Auschwitz officials say they believe Gottliebova-Babbitt wants the art for private use', and that the museum has 'no record of her claim on file.'[589]

For the museum, the maintenance and ownership of authentic works assists in counteracting anti-Semitism, or – in the case of the Gottliebova-Babbitt's watercolours – anti-Roma sentiment, which is considered to still be a potent force in Poland. These images, which can be interpreted as being a kind of *memento mori* that represent an almost annihilated community, are also a defence against Holocaust denial, which also remains a globally potent force. The museum also claims to have the support of the

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[586] 'Senate Concurrent Resolution 49 – Urging the Return of Paintings by Dinah Babbitt During Her Internment in Auschwitz That Are Now In The Possession The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum', in Article 8, Resolution 49, p. 10867, 14 June 2001.
[587] Kristen J. Messer, 'Two Sides of the Same Coin: The Memory of the Holocaust at War With a Survivor', *Northern Kentucky Law Review*, 35 N. Ky. L. Rev. 19 (2008).
[588] Cited in Steven Friess, 'A survivor's artwork, but whose to claim?', in Art and Leisure section, *International Herald Tribune*, 30 August 2006. At http://tinyurl.com/3nwxb7.
[589] Christine Spolar, 'Auschwitz Artist Fights Museum For Her Portraits: Survivor Painted Prisoners As Ordered by Nazi Mengele', *Washington Post,* 5 July 1997. At http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-739231.html

Roma and Sinti communities in Poland. However, Ian F. Hancock of the United Nations Presidium for the International Romani Union issued an official statement: 'The International Romani Union supports the effort of Miss Dinah Babbitt née Gottlieb to retrieve her paintings currently in the possession of the museum of Auschwitz.'[590] The museum made no comment, instead citing the work-for-hire copyright law, which places Dr Mengele, or his descendants, as the rightful owners of the work, owing to Mengele's role as the commissioning patron.[591] If this is the case, then the work becomes excluded from consideration as some form of looted art at the museum, but it is the result of slave labour. If this is the case, then the museum could have taken the opportunity to offer compensation to Gottliebova-Babbitt as recompense for her work. However, the museum did not take such a course.

The case continued and in 1997, under increased pressure from the more concerted campaign described above, the then Deputy Director Krystyna Oleksy said that the museum did not have plans 'to pull them off the wall and give them back. Our duty is to keep everything about the camp, because we think it is so important.'[592] Under further pressure, the museum proposed that the only authority that could decide the fate of the paintings was the Polish Minister for Arts and Culture. The minister told the museum that they had to make a decision first; if they decided to release the paintings, the matter would then be referred to the Minister. Those who were advising Gottliebova-Babbitt interpreted this as nothing more than delaying tactics: 'they are waiting for her to die.'[593] Dinah Gottliebova-Babbitt died on 29 July 2009, having never regained ownership of her work. Five months before her death, the final edition of Marvel comics *X-Men: Magneto Testament* included an additional graphic strip,

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[590] Apel (2002), unpaginated.
[591] The museum took the trouble to inform Gottliebova-Babbitt that they did not believe that Dr Mengele was likely to pursue his claim in this respect. Ron Grossman, Artwork Saved Her From Death in the Holocaust, *Chicago Tribune*, 22 October, 2006, at C4.
[592] Apel (2002), unpaginated.
[593] Cited in Apel (2002), unpaginated.

entitled 'The Last Outrage', which recounted her story of imprisonment in Birkenau and her later attempts to retrieve her art work (*fig. 93*).[594] Dr Rafael Medoff, director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, contributed to the narrative of the story and commented: 'The fight for justice can be fought on many fronts, including through the medium of comic books. Marvel comics have generously provided an international forum for this important issue.'[595]

The museum feared that releasing the watercolours from their collection and in to Gottliebova-Babbitt's care would have devalued the pictures' established use as a pedagogic tool. However, the arguments advanced by the museum seem to suggest that Gottliebova-Babbitt was an employee of Dr Mengele, and this position is one that demeans all Holocaust survivors as well as undermining the declared goals of the museum, which are to teach the world about Nazi brutality, and not to support the legal rights of the perpetrators. The inflexibility of both parties was a contributing factor in the failure to reach an accord and is in marked contrast to the attitude of the many Holocaust survivors who work for redemption and forgiveness. If the situation were to arise now, the museum would be bound by international and European Community law, specifically Resolution 1205 of the Council of Europe and the Washington Conference Principles of 3 December 1998, both of which deal with looted art of the Nazi period. However, the museum seems to have set aside the fact that Poland, along with all other European Community member states, ratified the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1993), which hold that all people have the right to peaceful enjoyment of their property and should not be deprived of this property. Until the situation arises again it is impossible to tell how the museum would proceed, or what chances of success any claimant might have.

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[594] *X-Men: Magneto Testament* 5: 4 February 2009.
[595] Nissan Ratzlav-Katz, 'New Marvel Comic Fights for Holocaust Era Artist', in *Arutz Sheva,* at www.IsraelNationalNews.com 10 March 2009; accessed 31 October 2010.

Gottliebova-Babbitt's attempts to reclaim her artworks from the museum are, of course, not the only way of pulling together, for the purpose of this conclusion, the category of 'art' in the present day museum. However, this recent case highlights further aspects of contestation in the museum's history.

Memorials – Monuments at the Site

An example of one of the results of Poland's regime change which, allowed for scholarly research, was undertaken by Franciszek Piper, Director of the Historical Research Department at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, who re-evaluated the figure of 4 million to somewhere around 1.1 to 1.5 million victims at the site. This created the situation whereby it was felt that the memorial's text had to be changed.

The new inscription reads:

> FOREVER LET THIS PLACE BE A / CRY OF DESPAIR AND A WARNING TO HUMANITY / WHERE THE NAZIS MURDERED / ONE AND A HALF MILLION / MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN / MAINLY JEWS / FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES / OF EUROPE. / AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU / 1940 – 1945.

The wording of this new dedication develops the meaning of the memorial into a lament, as the words 'Forever let this place be a cry of despair' suggest. This also acts to move the memorial in a further direction, that of the German *Mahnmal,* a warning monument. The text's purpose is to request the visitor to nurture memory in order that that memory may endure. By calling the visitor's attention to 'men, women and children', the text is attempting to move away from its earlier political factionism, seen most overtly in the use of the symbol of the triangle, used by the Nazis to define the political prisoner. The function of this emblem created the impression that all victims of the camp were engaged in political struggle against their Nazi opponents. This worked

to exclude a great many of the victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau, including the Jewish contingent.

The 1995 text ends with an acknowledgement of the diversity of the inmate population of the former camp, as being 'from various countries of Europe.' This we may understand as an attempt at closing down the pro-nationalist sentiment that dominated the museum during the communist era, as well as emphasising the international importance of the memorial.

The new statement involved a revision of the numbers of dead at Auschwitz-Birkenau. While it served to rectify the earlier inflation, it also caused the number of Polish victims to be reduced to one thousand. This caused Poles raised during the communist era to feel that their country's suffering has been diminished. Geneviève Zubrzycki relates the reaction of some Poles to a tour guide who attempted to give the revised figures:

> When I started working here in 1991 I started as a guide, and often we stand by the urn, you know the exhibit, and I give the number of victims there, often people were indignant. "How's that, 90 per cent of the victims were Jews! What about Poles? What are you talking about? What 70,000?" And I had to explain to that person. "Well Sir, please imagine what it means, 70,000 people. Its a town and not so small at that." Poles felt we were taking their holiness away.[596]

The number of Polish deaths, now approximated at 70-75,000, is shockingly low for those who were socialised into a narrative of millions.

If the Poles found the new figures difficult to understand, not all of the stakeholder groups found acknowledgment within the series of new symbolic accretions to the monument. One such group was the Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) community. Their official recognition at the memorial site did not occur until 1997, when they received

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[596] Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), p. 117.

authorisation for an annual ceremony. This act of memorialisation specifically recalls the night of 2 August 1944, when the remaining Gypsies, who were held in the 'family camp', were sent to the gas-chamber at Crematorium IV.[597] Whilst the Sephardic community may have had a memorial at the Birkenau site, they were excluded from any acknowledgement on the main monument. Their memorial is located in the ruins of Block 28, sector BIIe, at Birkenau, the place of their final living accommodation prior to their extermination. Some commentators, for example Simon Wiesenthal, writing in 1986, have drawn attention to the lack of attention paid to the destruction of this ethnic group, stating that it represents a 'forgotten Holocaust.'[598]

A further group who have battled to gain recognition for their suffering at Auschwitz is the gay community. There is no specific memorial marking the deaths of the fifty-four known homosexuals imprisoned in the camp from 1940-1945, which is all the more surprising given that the museum declared on 20 July 2000 that it had become the recipient of the Orfeo Iris-2000 Human Rights Prize. The International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network stated that the award was made:

> in honour of those homosexual prisoners who perished in Auschwitz. [...] and for your museum's printed information mentioning the imprisonment of homosexuals in the Nazi camps [...] your displaying the prisoner uniform's pink triangles used by the Nazis to identify homosexuals.[599]

It is of interest to note that five years later on 27 January 2005, the only group of mourners not to be invited to take part in the annual memorial ceremonies to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz were the European gay community. According to the Polish journalist Tomek Kitlinski:

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[597] Danuta Czech, 'A Calendar of the Most Important Events in the History of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp', in Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper (eds), *Auschwitz 1940 – 1945: Central Issues In The History Of The Camp*, volume V, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 206, p. 207.
[598] John A.S. Grenville, 'Neglected Holocaust Victims: The Mischlinge, the Jüdischversippte, and the Gypsies', in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, *The Holocaust and history: the known, the unknown, the disputed, and the re-examined* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp 315-326.
[599] Press release 20 July, 2000, *The Museum Receives the Orfeo Iris-2000 Award*. At www.auschwitz.org.pl

> The director of the Museum of the Former Camp of Auschwitz did not reply to a request from Poland's gay activist NGO Campaign against Homophobia to lay a wreath to the gay victims. Neither was the Campaign's delegation officially admitted to the ceremony of commemoration.[600]

Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland's largest circulation newspaper, reported the situation: 'Homosexuals are the only group murdered at Auschwitz whose representatives were not invited to the ceremony of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camp'.

The problem has its roots in the latent homophobia of much of the Polish catholic population. On International Holocaust Memorial Day, the European Parliament stood in silence for a minute to remember the victims of Nazi genocide. Afterwards they passed a resolution condemning anti-Semitism, racism and homophobia. The draft resolution said:

> The death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma, homosexuals, Poles and other prisoners of various nationalities were murdered, is not only a major occasion for European citizens to remember and condemn the enormous horror and tragedy of the Holocaust, but also for addressing the disturbing rise in anti-Semitism, and especially anti-Semitic incidents, in Europe, and for learning anew the wider lessons about the dangers of victimizing people on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion, politics, or sexual orientation.[601]

Wojciech Roszkowski, of the Polish nationalist Law and Justice (UEN) Party took offence at the inclusion of homosexuals in the list of Auschwitz's victims. He stated: 'The life of every human is equally important, but when we speak of big numbers, putting the Jewish, Roma, homosexual and Polish victims together borders on the absurd.'[602] In an echo of the ordering of the plaques on the 1967 monument at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, in which Jews were the last group to be memorialised, the final text of the resolution that was approved by the European Parliament placed homosexual victims at the end of the list. The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum has since worked

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[600]Tomek Kitlinski, 'Gays Excluded from Auschwitz Commemoration: The only victims not to be remembered – or invited', *The Gully online magazine*, 3 February 2005. At http://www.thegully.com/essays/gaymundo/www.thegully.com. Accessed 29 October 2010.
[601] Ibid.
[602] Ibid.

to include histories of gay former inmates in its publication *Pro Memoria* and on its website. This is a small advance, but it does at least broach what is clearly at present a difficult subject for Poland and the museum.

A number of memorial sites have fully acknowledged the roles that the camps they now memorialise once had in imprisoning homosexual men and women. In part this was caused by a policy of guerrilla wreath-laying by gay activist groups. In 1985, spurred on by such activity, the authorities at the former concentration camp at Mauthausen, Austria, 'allowed a gay organisation to place a plaque specifically memorialising the homosexual victims of Nazism – [the form of the memorial was] a pink triangle.[603] Two other memorial sites, Neuengamme (1985) and Sachsenhausen (1999), followed suit. The story of the monument for Dachau is worth rehearsing, as it tells us of the difficulties faced by the petitioners for such a memorial and how those difficulties were overcome.

The West German Protestant group 'Action Reconciliation / Service for Peace' (ARSP; in German Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste) was founded in 1958 by Dr Lothar Kreyssig, a German High Court judge who during the Nazi period had attempted to challenge the euthanasia programme Action T4, an intervention that cost him his job. The movement, he declared, had the specific purpose 'not to "make good" wrong which has been done, that is impossible, rather it is an attempt to atone for those wrongs.'[604] As an organisation, ARSP had sponsored volunteering initiatives at Dachau, where in December 1984 they curated an exhibition entitled: 'Homosexuality and Politics Since 1900'. Encouraged by the positive attitude of the museum authorities towards the exhibition, in early 1985 the Munich branch of Homosexuals and the Church contacted

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[603] Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality and German Fascism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 336.
[604] Gene Knudsen Hoffman, 'On Preventing Future Holocausts', in Dennis Rivers (ed.), *Compassionate Listening: An Exploratory Sourcebook About Conflict Transformation* (Pendle Hill: Pendle Hill Pamphlet, January 2008). At http://www.newconversations.net/gkh_essay07.htm Last updated January 2008; accessed 30 October 2010.

the Comité International de Dachau (CID), an umbrella organisation representing survivors of the camp, with the intention of placing a permanent memorial to the homosexual victims of the former camp. They were told that a full meeting of the CID would be required to bring about any changes to the memorial site. According to Harold Marcuse, 'This time they were put off.'[605] However, four other gay activist groups, garnering support from an organisation of Belgian Homosexual Holocaust Survivors and from the West German politician Otto Schily, himself a founder member of the Green Party, joined them. Despite vigorous campaigning the CID placed a memorial at the site. This resulted in a standoff between the lobbying groups and the CID with the result that 'For a number of years the granite slab was displayed in the semi-private space of the Protestant Church of Reconciliation's meeting room.'[606] However, since 1990 the memorial has been permanently located in the museum's hall of commemoration. There it sits amongst ribbons and plaques taken from the many commemorative wreaths that have been left at the site (*fig. 94*).

This brief case study, concerning the struggle that gay groups have encountered when attempting to memorialise their fallen brethren at the former Dachau camp, illustrates the continuing difficulties that minority groups face when trying to gain visibility for past suffering. It would seem that at Dachau homosexuality is still a matter of contestation. However, unlike the museum at Auschwitz where no specific memorial to the former suffering of homosexual inmates exists and no plans seem to be in place to rectify the matter, at least at Dachau and other former concentration camps the problem has been addressed, albeit in a manner which suggest that the memorial is almost secreted away, standing in isolation from memorials to more 'acceptable' victim groups.

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[605] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 355.

[606] Harold Marcuse, 'Dachau: The Political Aesthetics of Holocaust Memorials', in Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies Volume III: Memory, Memorialization, and Denial* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p. 164.

In the case of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, an examination of one final memorial, placed at the *Judenrampe* Birkenau in April 2010, illustrates the issue of privately funded attempts at memorialisation at the site. The memorial is in the form of a cattle wagon manufactured sometime between 1919 and 1925, one that could conceivably have been used as part of the deportation process to the former camp. However, the placing of this artefact at the site raises a number of issues that concern the museum's collecting policy and the nature of contemporary memorialisation at Auschwitz.

Frank Lowy, an Australian businessman and co-owner of the World Trade Centre in New York, funded the memorial. His father was deported to Birkenau in May 1944. According to the Auschwitz Museum website Hugo Lowy was classified as fit for labour and selected to enter the camp. [607] However, eyewitness testimony says nothing about Hugo Lowy having undergone the selection before his murder. According to Myer Lowy (who was not related to Hugo), he was killed whilst trying to collect a small parcel containing his 'tallit and tefflin' (religious articles of clothing), 'which he used every morning to pray.'[608] Therefore, his death was brought about because he wanted to have his ritual objects with him, which is suggestive of a martyr's death. In terms of the triangle on the tower of *The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, nothing could be further from the Stalinist inspired image of the Polish national engaged in daily combat against the Nazi oppressor.

Frank Lowy donated €100,000 to the United Israel Appeal, asking them to find an authentic cattle wagon that he could donate to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Following debates at the museum concerning the fact that the museum had until recently exhibited only items found at the site at the time of its liberation, or that

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[607] Details taken from www.auschwitz.org.pl
[608] *Hugo Lowy Synagogue*, at http://tiny.cc/q5aju. Accessed 30 October 2010.

had been accepted by the museum when their authenticity could be proved beyond doubt, the museum's director Dr Piotr Cywinski, issued the following statement:

> Today, when we have gone a long way from the days of the Second World War, the youth have difficulty in imagining the hell of the transports, which sometimes took many long days in a crowded freight car. The possibility of exhibiting a car like this at the ramp of Birkenau, at the original memorial site, is extremely important from the educational point of view.[609]

Dr Cywinski is careful not to state that this wagon was an authentic part of the rolling stock used for actual deportations; it is its similarity to those that were actually used in the deportation process that would allow its inclusion at the site.

A suitable wagon was found in Wessum, following a two-year search in Poland, Hungary and Germany. The wagon was the property Dr Hauser who presented it as a gift to the Auschwitz memorial, believing that United Israel Appeal, were acting as agents for the museum. The wagon was then sent for restoration in Germany, and once the preservation work was completed on 15 September 2009, the wagon was loaded on to a truck and delivered to the *Judenrampe* at Birkenau (*fig. 95*). The following day it was mounted on the rail spur, where it complements two other such wagons placed at the *AlteJudenrampe* [the original place of disembarkation for those deported to the camp]. That location is between the twin sites of Auschwitz and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The importance of the wagon to the museum as both memorial and pedagogic tool was explained in the following announcement:

> For us the freight car is not aimed only at commemorating those deported to Auschwitz, it's also an educational tool. Our guides will be able to explain the deportation process - which was part of the Holocaust - in a clearer way, with the original and authentic freight car from Germany standing in the background.

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[609] Ofer Adoret, 'The secret Auschwitz ceremony that Ehud Olmert exposed', Haaretz.com, 18 April 2010. At http://tiny.cc/hnzez Accessed 30 October 2010.

Thus the didactic value of the artefact was, according to the museum beyond doubt. Preparations were then undertaken for the dedication of the wagon and it is at this point that the controversy begins.

Frank Lowy supplied the United Israel Appeal with a guest list for the ceremony, which would be the culmination of a week of events to commemorate the life of Hugo Lowy.[610] The UIA asked the participants not to reveal to the press that the ceremony was to take place. The museum remained silent, issuing no details of the occasion through its online service or in the press, itself unusual for the museum. What alerted the media to the fact that the event was happening at all was that the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had to return from Poland to Israel to answer an accusation of financial wrongdoing in his relationship with Frank Lowy. At Auschwitz he was to have been the principal guest of honour and make a speech at the commemoration. The press office at Auschwitz announced Olmert's absence from the ceremony, and it was this that raised media interest, with journalists asking what the former prime minister was doing there at all.

In answer the museum stated: 'The question should be addressed to the organisers of the event. We are merely the hosts'. The UIA responded: 'The United Israel Appeal task in this respect was merely logistical and the ceremony was a ceremony of the Auschwitz museum'. However, an investigation by the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* noted that neither Dr Hauser nor the German restorers were invited to the ceremony, the newspaper claiming that 'it was a "family event" and the Lowy's decided whom to invite'. Micha Limor boycotted the ceremony saying,

> I went to investigate and locate the authentic freight car out of a feeling that this
> was a public mission, and the recognition of the importance of exhibits that

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[610] *Weekly Bulletin*, Jerusalem Great Synagogue, available at www.Ko-Kr.facebook.com, no date given for last updated, accessed 31 October 2010.

would confirm the story of the Holocaust of the Jewish people. I accepted the mission before I knew the details of how it was funded behind the scenes.[611]

Apart from members of the Lowy family, those attending the ceremony included Meir Lau, a former Chief Rabbi of Israel, together with the director of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev. Speaking about the memorial Shalev said: 'I wish to express my appreciation to the Museum director, Piotr Cywinski, for initiating this project.' However, it would seem that the museum did not initiate the project; that process was begun by Frank Lowy, and the accusation still remains that this is the first 'private family' memorial to be placed at the site.

A small plaque attached to the wagon reads: 'The train car was donated and restored by the sons of Hugo Lowy, who was put to death here in May 1944.' Further away from the wagon a sign explains that the wagon is a memorial to the Hungarian deportations of 1944. When further questioned, the museum stated that under certain circumstances it does acknowledge the benefactor and their reasons for making a donation. However, at the time of writing all other plaques recognize national initiatives, for example, the restoration by the Chinese government of the former post office block at Auschwitz I.

The case of the Birkenau wagon raises a number of important issues that have continually concerned the museum since its inception. Firstly, the museum has steadfastly held to a policy of authenticity, in order to defend it from allegations by Holocaust deniers, who relish any opportunity to attack the museum over its telling of the story of the camp. (For example, the case of an armband bearing a Star of David exhibited in the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, and which turned out to be counterfeit, having perhaps been artificially aged through the application of boot polish, was enough for deniers to call into question the whole system of identification used in

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[611] Adoret (2010). See note 41.

the camps.[612]) Indeed Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier has referred to the Auschwitz museum as a 'Disney-style tourist attraction',[613] and has accused the authorities at the museum of 'building fake watchtowers.'[614]

Second, the museum claims not to memorialise individuals, but instead to memorialise all people who died at the site. However, Father Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein have both been singled out for particular attention. The cell in which Kolbe died has been transformed in to a memorial space that bears witness to his suffering alone. The cult of Father Kolbe has attained a global status, even gracing the Great West Front of Westminster Abbey. During the recent ecumenical visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Abbey, the Right Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, was at pains to point out Kolbe's statue to Pope Benedict, whilst ignoring the other nine statues that stand as votive monuments to other twentieth-century Christian martyrs (*fig. 96*).

Commemoration – the Museum

Although the overtly political dimensions of the former narrative employed at the museum were changed after the fall of communism, the iconic exhibits, such as the pavilion dedicated to telling the story of the extermination process, together with its relics, such as shoes, hair, objects of faith and children's clothes remain largely the same as before. However, there are plans to introduce innovative developments into this exhibition, such as interactive multimedia presentations, mediated through touch-sensitive video screens.

What should be realised is the fact that the objects at Auschwitz are undeniably related to the site. They were once the property of those who had been deported to the

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[612] Claudia Cornwall, 'Commercialisation of the Holocaust', in *The Globe and Mail*, 22 February 2000. At http://tiny.cc/a75c4 Accessed 31 October 2010.
[613] *World Jewish Congress*, 'Revisionist British historian David Irving to lead guided tours of former Nazi death camps', 20 September 2010. At http://tinyurl.com/448e23a Accessed 31 October 2010.
[614] Sarah Gordon, '"My death camp tours aren't sick": Holocaust Denier David Irving defends plans for "Nazi Travel" tourist trail', *Mail Online*, 23 September 2010. At http://tinyurl.com/2f6xww6 Accessed 31 October 2010.

camp and as artefacts, once assembled as exhibits; once amassed at the site, they have never been placed elsewhere. In this respect they are unique. Their manifestation in the present display contributes towards our understanding of the disruption between original owners and the often-anonymous criminal perpetrators.

However, as it has been noted, the museum does lend material from its collections, be they artefacts such as shoes, suitcases, paintings and drawings. One such loan, which raises interesting points regarding the relationship between authenticity, the sensitivities of museum visitors and the museum's own collecting policy, can be seen in the case of a recent loan made by the Auschwitz museum collections department to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. twenty pounds of human hair, arguably the most viscerally moving and ethically complex part of the exhibition culture at Auschwitz was sent for display to Washington. Whilst the hair intended for the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington was nowhere near the 5 tons that is on display in Poland, the effect in Washington could have produced the same response as in Poland. The opportunity for displaying the hair was brought to an abrupt halt by the protests of two members of the exhibition committee, who felt that the possibility existed that the hair could have belonged to either of their mothers (*fig. 97*). Oren Baruch Stier has considered this demanding problem, whereby the personified remains, in this case hair, distressed employees and audience alike. She states, 'Because of its connection to human life, its display was considered by some to be sacrilegious, a desecration of that life.'[615] In an attempt to solve the problem, the museum has produced a photograph of the hair and presents this in its stead. However, it is possible to argue that in so doing the museum has valued presentation over representation and may have created an idol in place of an icon.

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[615] Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural meditations of the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), p. 42.

Thus to conclude, and in wishing to bring the narrative of Auschwitz's representations up to date, I have drawn together the three subject areas of art, commemoration and memorialisation, as they have diversified into distinct forms of remembrance in the present. The fall of communism in Poland has allowed the museum to contribute actively to the exhibition held in institutions beyond its own physical boundaries, for example at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, the Imperial War Museum in London, and the Neue Berlin Synagoge. This openness has allowed new audiences to see significant parts of the museum's collection, and this has extended the possibilities for teaching about the subject of Auschwitz away from the site itself. At the same time, areas of contestation still exist. This can be seen in, for example, problematic questions of repatriation; or, as in the case of the memorialisation of the homosexuals who died at Auschwitz, that nevertheless, difficulty still exists in acknowledging the suffering of certain stakeholder groups. In their exclusion, after all, we hear echoes of earlier arguments that were used against the specific inclusion of Europe's Jews as a named category at the site. It appears that Auschwitz is as contested today as it has always been.

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Stefan Jassienski, *Crucifix*, (after 29 September 1944),

Incised marks on plaster,

Block 11, Cell 21, KL Auschwitz, H. 15 x W. 10 cm.

Fig 2

Anonymous, *Clock without Hands*,

Pencil, incised marks and domestic paint,

Block 2, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, H. 60 cm.

Fig. 3 Map showing the locations of Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau and Auschwitz III-Monowitz.

Fig. 4.

Anonymous, *First Deportation of prisoners to Auschwitz from Tarnów Prison*

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives.

No Nr. or neg. reference given, size unknown.

Fig. 5

Anonymous, *A Baby's Cot*, oak,

Produced by inmate carpenters employed by the

Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke

Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

Fig. 6 Włodzimierz Siwierski (?), *Don Quixote and Rosinant,* wood and string,

H. 50 cm

 (KL Auschwitz 1940-1945),

Collections of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 7

Józef Szajna, *Our Personal Data*,

Ink thumbprints and pencil on paper, 35 x 17 cm

KL Auschwitz (1944),

Collections of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 8

Marian Ruzamski, *Portrait of Xawery Dunikowski*,

Pencil, paper, 29 x 19,7 cm (KL Auschwitz 1943-44).

Collections of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig 9

Photograph, *Dismantled Barracks Awaiting Collection*,

Judenrampe, Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

View taken from the 'Gate of Death' watchtower

Spring or Summer 1945.

Fig. 10

Photographer, 'Alex the Greek Jew', *Sonderkommando Photograph* ('Bodies of people who have been gassed are burnt in the open air by Jewish prisoners').

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (1944).

Fig. 11

Photographer, 'Alex the Greek Jew', *Sonderkommando Photograph* (Naked Jewish women being herded towards Gas Chamber V).

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (1944).

Fig. 12

Marianne Grant, *Wall Mural*, Children's' block, Birkenau

Oil on plaster,

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (no later than July 1944).

Fig 13

Anonymous, *Konigsgraben* (King's Canal),

Oil on plaster, Ceiling painting, Penal Company block, Auschwitz II-Birkenau

(No later than July 1942).

Fig. 14

Fransziek Targosz, A Letter with an Ornament 'Crocuses'

Tempera, paper, 21 x 15 cm

KL Auschwitz (1942),

Collections of the State Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 15

Francziszek Targosz, *Arabian horse*,

Pencil on cardboard 21 x 29.5 cm

KL Auschwitz (1944), (Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum).

Fig. 16

Francziszek Targosz, *Hussar of Death*

Oil on cardboard, 17 x 11.5 cm

KL Auschwitz (1942), Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Fig. 17

Mieczyslaw Koscielniak, *Interior of the Lagermuzeum*

Signed MK and dated 1942.

69 X 59 cm.

KL Auschwitz (1942). Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 18

Halina Olomucki, *Ringworm is Cured in the Camp*,

Pencil and Ink on Paper

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (1942). Collection of the Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

Fig. 19

Jan Liwach, *Exterior Light*,

Iron and Glass, KL Auschwitz (circa 1940-1944).

Author's photograph.

Fig. 20

Antoni Suchanek, *Frigate*, Oil on canvas,

50 x 72 cm. Signed and dated 1943 (KL Auschwitz 1943). Collection of the Auschwitz-

Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 21

Auschwitz II-Birkenau, *Gold Teeth*, Post 27 January 1945.

Photograph from, *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nurnberg Military Tribunals*

(Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1949-1953), Vol. XXX, p. 433.

Fig. 22

Jan Liwach, *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work Makes Free) Gateway,

Iron, KL Auschwitz (1940),

Authors photograph.

Fig. 23

Anonymous, *Blacksmith's Workshop*,

Photograph, KL Auschwitz (circa 1941-1944).

Fig. 24

Anonymous, *Verhalte dich ruhig* (No noise be calm),

Proverbial Wall Text, domestic paint,

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (circa 1942-1945).

Fig. 25

Mieczyslaw Kościelniak, *Eine Laus – Dein Tod!* (One Louse – Means Death),

Colour Linocut, 41 x 29 cm, Original design by Zbignew Raynoch

KL Auschwitz (circa 1942).

Fig. 26

Anonymous, *Eine Laus – Dein Tod!* (One Louse – Your Death),

Proverbial Wall Text,

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau (circa 1942-1945).

Fig. 27

Anonymous, *Falsch – Richtig* (Wrong – Correct),

Lithograph on Paper, 29 x 22 cm

KL Auschwitz (1941).

Fig. 28

Mieczysław Kościelniak, *Wall Mural*, now lost,

Oil paint on plaster,

Haus der Waffen SS, Oświęcim (1944). Size unknown.

Fig. 29

Mieczysław Kościelniak, *Wall Mural*, now lost

Oil paint on plaster,

Haus der Waffen SS, Oświęcim (1944).

Size unknown.

Fig. 30

Mieczysław Kościelniak, *Wall Mural*, now lost

Oil paint on plaster,

Haus der Waffen SS, Oświęcim (1944). Size unknown.

Fig. 31

Dinah Gottleibova-Babbitt, Gypsy woman

Watercolour 38 x 31.5 cm

Fig. 32

Jean Bartichand, *Golleschau Murals*,

Charcoal on plaster

KL Golleschau (Sub-camp of Auschwitz, sometime before 18 July 1945).

Fig. 33

Jean Bartichand, *Golleschau Murals*,

Charcoal on plaster

KL Golleschau (Sub-camp of Auschwitz, sometime before 18 July 1945).

Fig 34

Jacques Markiel, *Jawiszowice Statue*,

Concrete, 2.5 m

KL Jawiszowice (a sub-camp of Auschwitz, after June 1943).

Fig 35

Doris Zinkeisen, *Human Laundry, Belsen: April 1945*,

Oil on Canvas, size not given

(Collection of the Imperial War Museum, London).

Fig 36

Anonymous Photograph, *Men Awaiting Liberation at Auschwitz*, January 1945

(Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum).

Fig. 37

Anonymous photograph, *Hospital for Liberated Prisoners, Auschwitz: 1945*

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 38

Photograph, *Procession of Coffins for the Ceremonial Funeral of 470 Former Inmates of the Auschwitz Complex*, 28 February 1945 Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 39

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *The Clothing of Deportees to Auschwitz Strewn Across the Floor of Block 4*, Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 40

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Children's Clothes*, Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig 41

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Prostheses*, Block 4,
Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 42

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Suitcases Belonging to*
Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 43

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Domestic Baskets Belonging to Deportees to Auschwitz-Birkenau*, Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 44

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Urn Filled with Human Ashes and Crown of Thorns*, Basement of Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 45

Anonymous Photograph, Fragment of the First Exhibition, *Illuminated Cross*, Basement of Block 4, Auschwitz, possibly summer 1945

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 46

Photograph, *Dr Hewlett Johnson and Dr Jan Sehn Visiting Auschwitz*, April 1946.

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 47

Photograph, *Józef Cyrankiewicz Addresses the Crowds at the Opening of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum*, 14 June 1947

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 48

Photograph, *The Arm of a Prisoner with signs of an experiment made by Dr Emil Kaschub*

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 49

Picasso, *Man with a Sheep*, Bronze

79 1/2 x 28 inches (201.9 x 71.1 cm) Base: 30 x 13 inches (76.2 x 33 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of R. Sturgis and Marion B. F. Ingersoll, 1958

Fig. 50

Grünewald, 'The Lamb' from the Central Panel of the *Isenheim Altarpeice*

Oil on Panel,

Colmar, Museum Unterlinden.

Fig. 51

Photograph, Interior of Room 5, Block 5.

Glass Display Cabinets containing the Shorn Hair of Deportees to the Camp (right), and centre Cloth Manufactured from the Deportees' Hair

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

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Fig. 52

Brandhuber's Description of how His Memorial Design for Victims of Auschwitz was to have looked. Reproduced in Janina Jaworska, Nie Wszystek Umre: Tworczosc plastyczna Polakow w hitlerowskich wiezieniach I obozach koncentracyjnch 1939-1945 [Not all of me will die: Art Work of Polish Prisoners in Nazi Prison Camps]. (Warsaw: Ksiazka I Wiedza, 1975).

Fig 53

Wilhelm Hubotter,

Sachsenhain (Saxon Grove, Verden, near Bremen), 1934.

Fig. 54

Sir Reginald Bloomfield,

The Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgian,

Unvieled 24 July 1927.

Fig. 55

Sir Edwin Lutyens

Memorial to the Missing of the Somme

Thiepval, France,

Unveiled 31 July 1932.

Fig. 56

Rudolph Indruch

The 'Eaglets' Cemetery,

Lyczakowski Burial Ground, Lwów, Ukraine.

Fig. 57

Saxon Palace,

Warsaw, c 1925.

Fig. 58

Tomb to the Unknown Soldier,

Warsaw.

Fig. 59

For Our Fallen Brothers,

Auschwitz-Birkenau 1945. Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 60

Stone of Martyrdom

Auschwitz-Birkenau 1948.

Fig. 61

Stone of Martyrdom

Auschwitz-Birkenau 1948.

Fig. 62

Benjamin Arie (Lieb) Perelmuter,

A Memorial Monument to the Jews of Płock Who Perished in the Holocaust,

Photograph undated. Collection of the Ghetto Fighters House, Israel.

Fig. 63

Benjamin Arie (Lieb) Perelmuter,

Plaque (Detail), *A Memorial Monument to the Jews of Płock Who Perished in the Holocaust*,

Photograph undated. Collection of the Ghetto Fighters House, Israel.
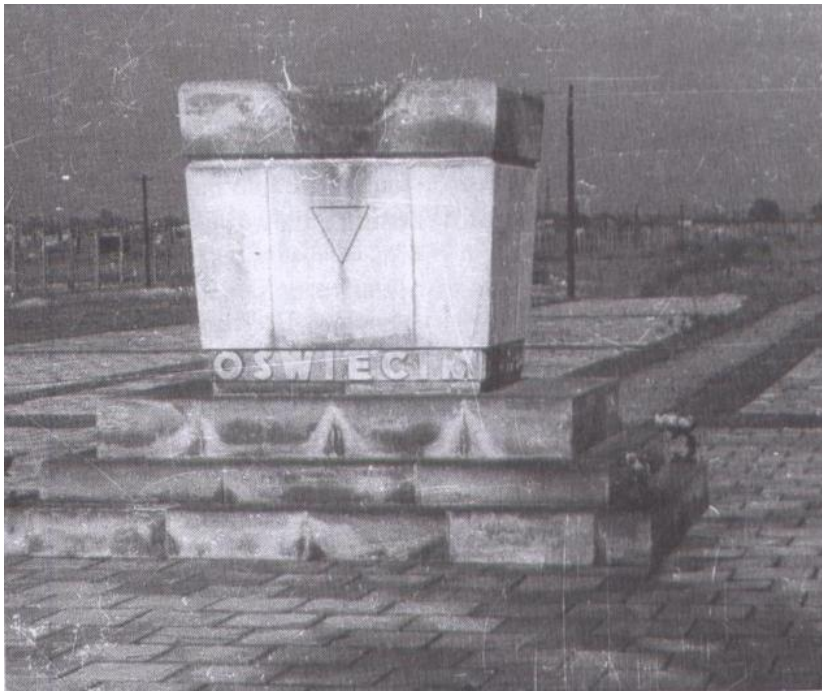
Fig. 64

Urn Monument,

Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1955.

Fig. 65

Urn Monument, showing the balustrade to the west of the monument,

Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1955.

Fig. 66

Paul Manousso, *Design Submitted for the Auschwitz Memorial Competition,* 1957.

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. AMPO K-84

Fig. 67

Kenneth and Mary Martin with John Weeks,

Design Submitted for the Auschwitz Memorial Competition, 1957

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. AMPO K254.

Fig. 68

Benno Schotz, *Design Submitted for the Auschwitz Memorial Competition*, 1957

Collection of theAuschwitz_Birkenau State Museum. AMPO K-210.
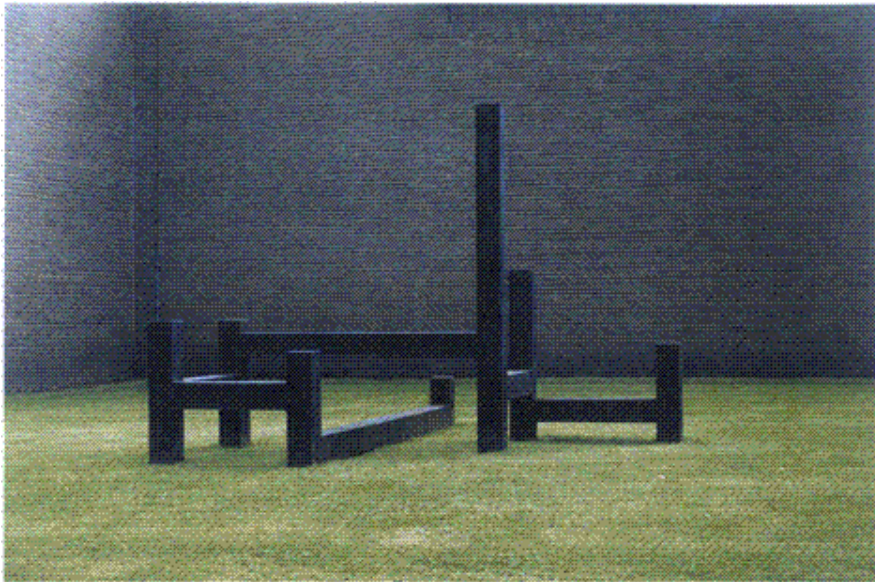
Fig. 69

Carel Visser,

Auschwitz,

Iron, 220 x 300 x 300cm (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands).
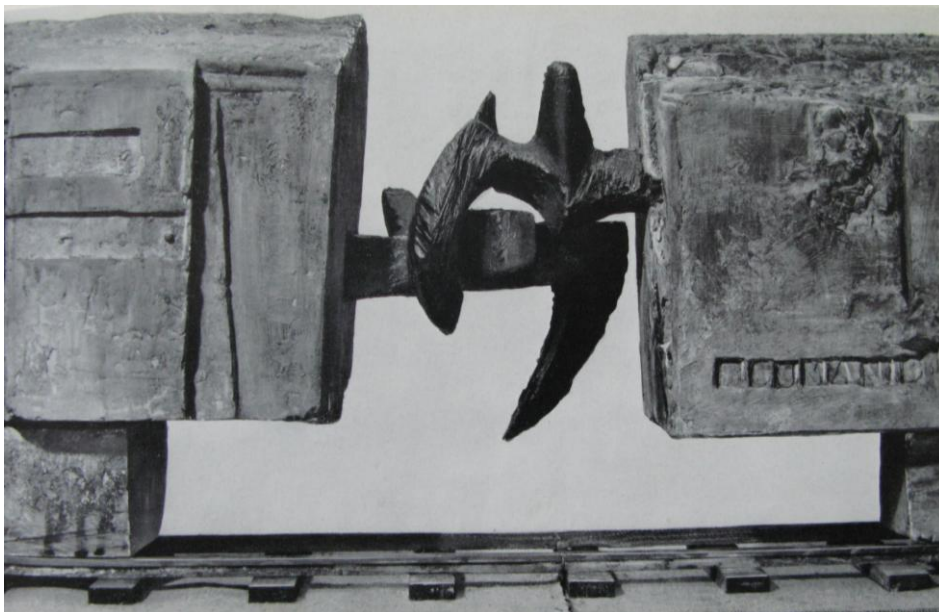
Fig. 70

Maurizio Vitale, Giorgio Simoncini, Tammaso Valle and Pericle Fazzini,

Model: *Cattle Wagon Memorial*,

Detail showing the cast couplings.

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.
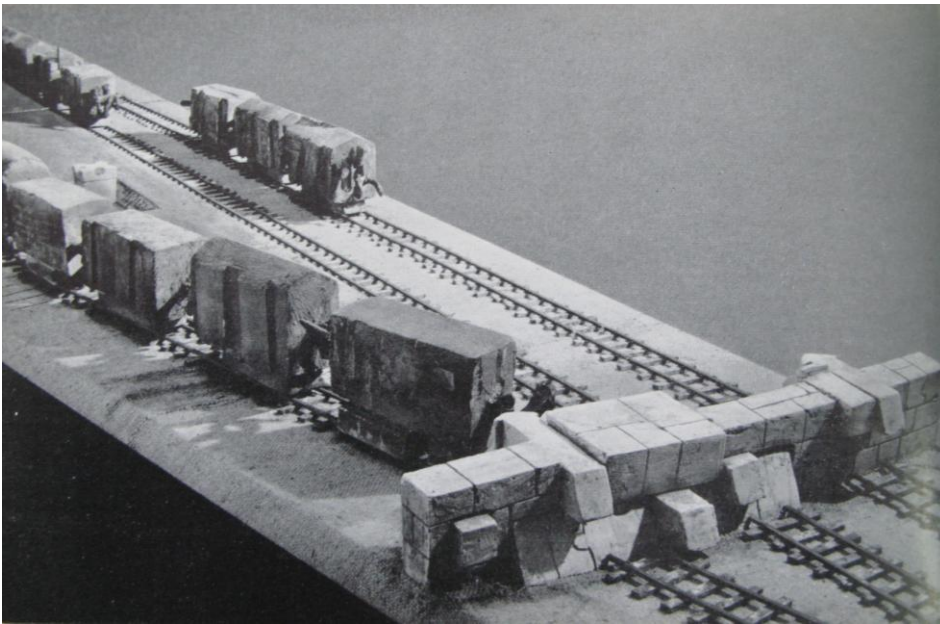
Fig. 71

Maurizio Vitale, Giorgio Simoncini, Tammaso Valle and Pericle Fazzini,

Cattle Wagon Memorial,

Detail showing the boulder blocking the railway lines to the crematoria at Birkenau

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 72

Maurizio Vitale, Giorgio Simoncini, Tammaso Valle and Pericle Fazzini,

Sketch: *Gradually Sloping Road of Death*,

Detail showing a figure walking along the incised roadway

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 73

Maurizio Vitale, Giorgio Simoncini, Tammaso Valle and Pericle Fazzini,

Model: *The Basin cut in to the Ground between the Crematoria*,

The group of figures in the centre of the model were thought by Moore to be 'too slight to support the burden of memory.'

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 74

Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Lechoslaw Rosinski,

Map of Birkenau showing 'Road' cut across the Former Camp

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 75

Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Lechoslaw Rosinski,

Model: *'Road' Encases the Ruins of the Barracks at Birkenau*

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig 76

Franciszek Duszenko and Adam Haupt,

Treblinka Memorial, 1964.

Fig. 77

Oskar Hansen, Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Lechoslaw Rosinski,

Model: *'Road' Encases the Ruins of the Crematoria at Birkenau*

Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig 78

Constantin Brancusi,

The Table of Silence, 1938.

Tirgu Jiu, Romania.

Fig. 79

Constantin Brancusi,

The gate of the Kiss, marble, 1938,

Tirgu Jiu, Romania.
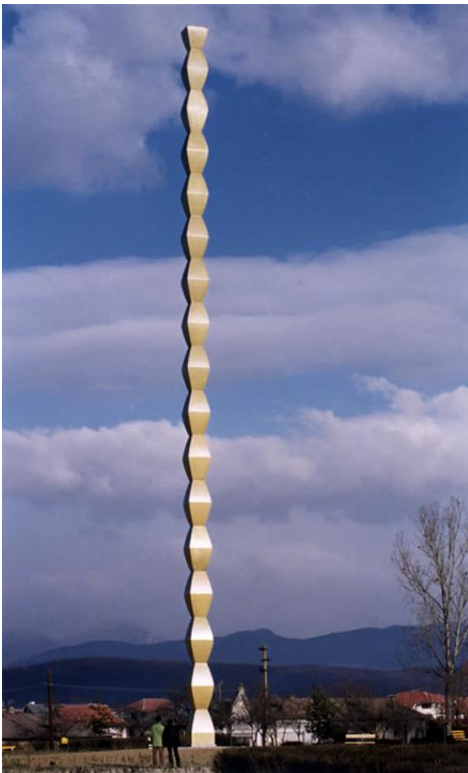
Fig. 80

Constantin Brancusi,

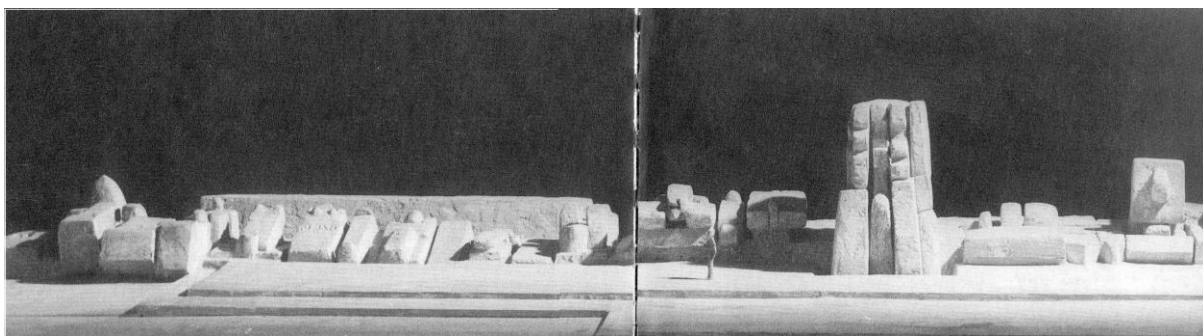*The Endless Column*, 1938, zinc and brass-clad, cast iron modules,

Tirgu Jiu, Romania.

Fig. 81

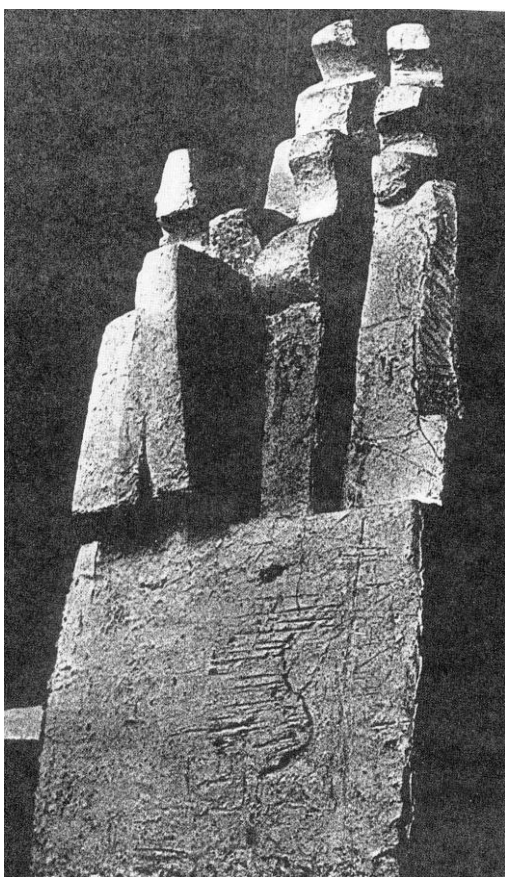The final model for the memorial at Birkenau. Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 82

Detail of the figures proposed in the final design for the memorial at Birkenau Collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Fig. 83

Hansen, Vitale and Lafuente,

'The Monument to the Victims of Fascism' showing detail of *A Group of Three Figures at the Base of The Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, 1967
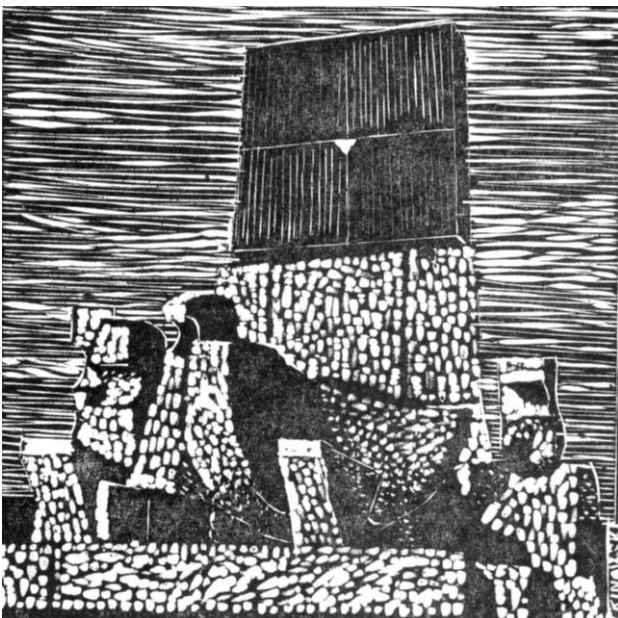
Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland.

Fig. 84

Tadeusz Kinowski, *Commemorative Postcard*, produced for the Dedication of The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism, 16 April 1967.

Fig. 85

Verso, *Commemorative Postcard*, produced for the Dedication of The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism, 16 April 1967.

Fig. 86

K. Rogaczewska, *Commemorative Stamp* Issued to Coincide with the Dedication of The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism, 16 April 1967.

Fig. 87

Auschwitz Block 27, 'The Martyrology and Struggle of the Jews', Inscription etched in stone *Cain, What Have You Done With Your Brother Abel?*
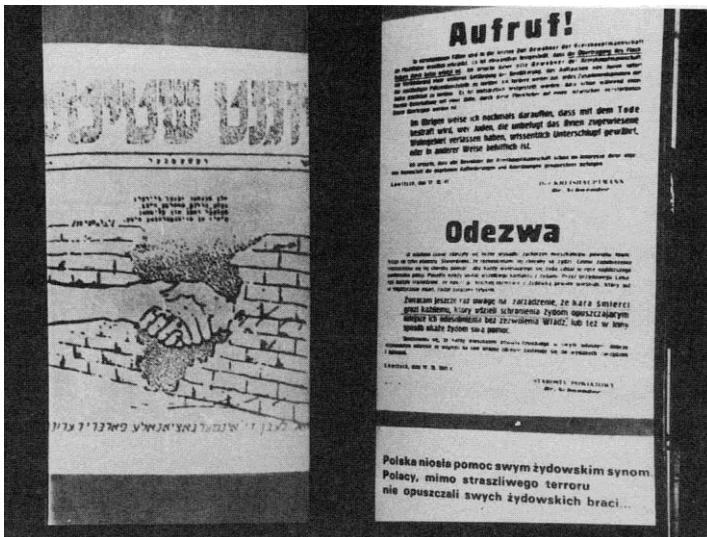

Fig. 88

'Martyrology and Struggle of the Jews', Left, a a reproduction of a resistance newspaper showing the hand of a Polish gentile clasping the hand of a Polish Jew who is incarcerated behind a ghetto wall. Right, Proclamation in both German and Polish stating that anyone offering assistance to the Jews will be executed.
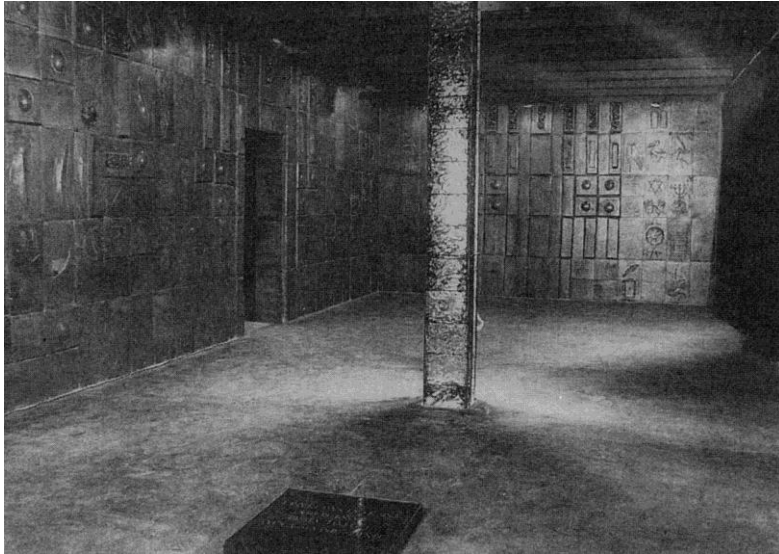
Fig. 89

Final room of the 1968 exhibition: 'Martyrology and Struggle of the Jews.' A glass column contains a plume of smoke and carries a projection of the the label from a tin of Zyklon-B.

Fig. 90

His Holiness Pope John-Paul II prays at the Wall of Death Auschwitz, 7 June 1979.

Fig. 91
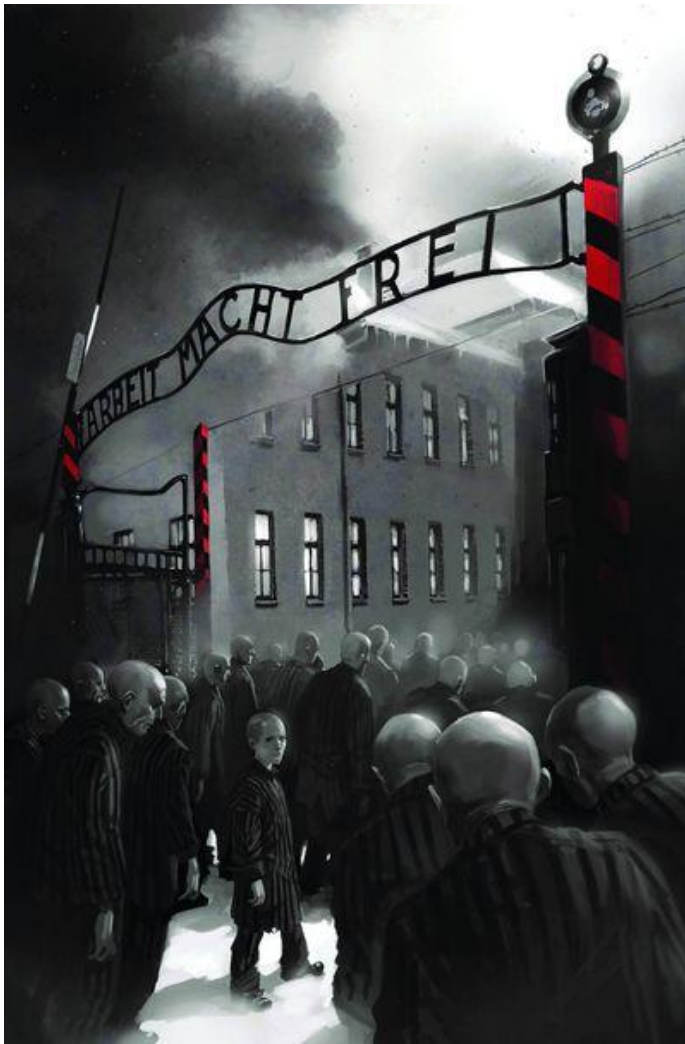
Imperial War Museum (London), *Holocaust Galleries*.

Fig. 92

X-Men: Magneto Testament 'The Last Outrage.' X-Men Magneto Testament,1:4 (February 2009).

Fig. 93

Dachau, *Monument to the Gay Victims of Dachau Concentration Camp*.

Fig 94

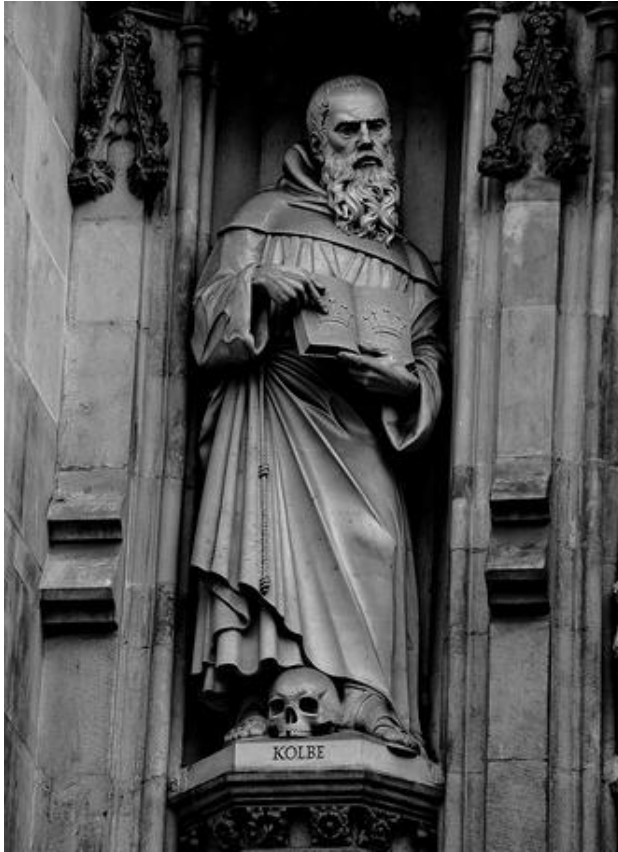Judenrampe, Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Memorial to the Hungarian deportations of 1944*.

Fig. 95

Andrew Tanser, *Maximillian Kolbe*, Great West Door, Westminster Abbey, London. Unvieled July 1998.

Fig. 96

Photograph, *Female Hair*

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