

VISUAL CULTURE AND THE HOLOCAUST  
**Art and Visual Culture in Response to Fascism**  
**Dr. Rachel E. Perry**

**Course Number:**

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Semester:** Spring 2018

**Class Time:** Sunday 6-9

**Phone:** 054-772-1169

**Class Location:** TBA

**E-Mail:** perryrub@bezeqint.net

**Course Description:**

More than half a century later, the Holocaust remains one of the most traumatic events of modern Western experience. Drawing from a wide variety of media and genres, from high and low culture, directed at private and public spaces of reception, we will examine some of the many drawings, paintings, multimedia installations, graphic novels, video performances, sculptural monuments and conceptual counter-monuments, photography, and architecture used to represent the Holocaust both during the event and afterwards.

The first half of the semester surveys the art created during the period of the Holocaust by individuals in exile or in hiding, in the camps and ghettos. We will explore how victims used artistic expression as both a means of documentation and as a form of “creative resistance” to communicate their protest, despair or hope. In addition to artistic responses to Fascism, we will examine Nazi aesthetics and cultural politics and their campaign against “degenerate art.” The second half of the semester will cover artistic representations “after Auschwitz.” Despite Theodor Adorno’s injunction that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” artists have struggled over the past 70 years with the paradox of trying to represent the unrepresentable. We will analyze how artistic representations vary geographically and across generational lines, between the victims and survivors and the second and third Post-Holocaust generations for whom the Holocaust constitutes a mediated, “vicarious past.”

In addition to developing visual, analytical skills, we will encounter ethical, pedagogical, theological and philosophical dilemmas such as: What is the relationship between the historical event and representations of it, between what happened and how it is passed down to us? How has memory and awareness of the Holocaust been produced and transmitted through representational practices and cultural forms? What is—or should be—the primary role of art about the Holocaust: didactic, redemptive, cathartic? Are some media or genres more, or less, suitable to the task? What strategies have been and are being used to represent the Holocaust in the visual arts? What place does comedy or parody have? When does representation fall prey to sentimentality or melodrama, and at what costs? Can a representation of the Holocaust be beautiful, sublime or enjoyable or does aesthetic pleasure trivialize and exploit the pain of others?

**Course Requirements:**

This course is designed as a seminar. In addition to frontal lectures with PowerPoint presentations, this course requires active participation. It is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss and respond to course readings. It is strongly suggested that you print

copies and bring these texts to class with you as we will devote a portion of each class to close textual and visual analysis.

**Film Screenings:** Film screenings are scheduled throughout the semester both in class and as homework assignments. If you cannot make a screening, you must inform me in advance.

**Required readings:** PDF files of assigned articles and other documents may be downloaded or printed directly from the Moodle website under Course Library. Because this class only meets once a week, it is critical that you leave yourself enough time to read the material each week so that you will be able to discuss new concepts and arguments in class discussions.

**Grade Distribution:**

- Response Papers 40%
- Final Term Paper 40%
- Oral Presentations 20%

**Response Papers** – 3-5 pages. Each paper assignment asks you to consider the representational strategies found in media treatments of the Holocaust in the light of the theories and modes of analysis explored in class. No late submissions.

**Final Research Paper and Oral Presentation:** During the semester, you will work independently on an original research project. In addition to preparing a 12 page paper, you will present your research in a PowerPoint presentation to the class. Please begin thinking about topics early in the semester!

- Submit preliminary list of sources, annotated bibliography of at least 5 key sources and thesis statement by midterm period.
- PowerPoint presentations in class the last two weeks of the semester.
- Final papers due in hard copy the last day of class.

**Office Hours:** By appointment. I can be reached at 054-772-1169. Email: [perryrub@bezeqint.net](mailto:perryrub@bezeqint.net)

## Course Schedule:

Week 1 (March 4): **Introduction: Facing the Holocaust**

Week 2 (March 11): **The Rise of Fascism: Artistic Responses** (Photomontage, Anti-fascist propaganda, Chagall) and **Fascist Aesthetics**

Film Screening: *Good Morning Mr. Hitler*, *The Eternal Jew*, *Triumph of the Will*

Readings:

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1991), pp. 138-153, 180-181.
- Sybil Milton, "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary", Randolph L. Braham (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.
- Pnina Rosenberg, "Art During the Holocaust" *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Macmillan, 2006.
- Rachel Perry, "Hitler's Sculptor" International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem. <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/germanys-sculptor.html>
- Rachel Perry, "Jean Fautrier's Jolies Juives" *October* 2004.

Week 3 (March 18): **Nazi Campaign against Degenerate Art**

Film Screening: *Architecture of Doom*, *Degenerate Art*

Readings:

- Christoph Zuschlag. "An Educational Exhibition" in *Degenerate Art*, 1991.
- Peter Adam. "The Great German Art Exhibit" in *Art of the Third Reich*, 1992.
- Lynn Nicholas, "They Had Four Years" in *The Rape of Europa*, 1995.
- Neil Levine, "Judge for Yourselves!" -The "Degenerate Art" Exhibition as Political Spectacle," *October*, Vol. 85 (Summer, 1998).
- Stephanie Barron, *Degenerate Art*, LACMA, 1991.

Web sites: <http://www.greatesttheft.com/> and <http://therapeofeuropa.com/>

Week 4 (March 25): **Art in Exile** (Charlotte Salomon, Felix Nussbaum etc.)

Film Screening: Franz Weisz, *Charlotte Salmon*, 2012

Readings:

- Mary Felstiner, "Charlotte Salomon's Inward-turning Testimony," *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Hartman (1994)
- Berger, Eva, et al., Felix Nussbaum: *Art Defamed, Art in Exile, Art in Resistance, a Biography*. Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY, 1997.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Artist as Refugee," in *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, ed. Mendelsohn and Cohen, New York, 1990

Web sites: <http://www.jhm.nl/collection/themes/charlotte-salomon>

<http://www.osnabrueck.de/fnh/english/default.asp>

April 1 – PASSOVER vacation

Week 5 (April 8): **Art in the Ghettos (Terezin, Kovno, Lodz, Warsaw), Internment Camps and Concentration Camps**

Film Screening: *The Führer Gives the Jews a City* (Theresienstadt, 1944)

Reading:

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Complexities of Witnessing," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Pp. 123-147.
- Pnina Rosenberg. 2004: "*Mickey au camp de Gurs* by Horst Rosenthal: Humour in the Art of the Holocaust", Stirling French Publications: University of Stirling (10), pp. 1-16.
- Miriam Novitch and Lucy Dawidowicz. *Art from the Concentration Camps, 1940-1945*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981.
- Sybil Milton, "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary", Randolph L. Braham (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.
- Miryam Rajner, "From the Shtetl to the Flowers of Auschwitz"

#### Recommended

- Mary Costanza, *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*. New York, 1982.
- Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence: The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory*, Barbican Gallery, London, 2003.
- Lamberti, M.(1995). *Making Art in the Terezin Concentration Camp*. New England Review, 17 (4). Pp. 104-112. pp. 1-34.

#### Week 6 (April 15): **Cinematic Representations: Fact or Fiction?**

Film Screening: *Holocaust* miniseries, *Night and Fog*, *Shoah*, *Schindler's List*

#### Reading:

- Imre Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz?"
- Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, 1998
- Claude Lanzmann, Seminar at Yale 1990; "Why Spielberg has distorted the truth" *Village Voice*, 3/29/94, "Schindler's List is an Impossible Story"
- Elie Weisel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," NY Times, 1989

#### Week 7 (April 22): **Is the Shoah Comic? MAUS and Beyond** (*Deuxieme Generation*, *The Search*, Pascal Croci, *Episodes from Auschwitz*, *Snow White in Auschwitz*)

#### Reading:

- Terrence Des Pres. "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust*. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. 1-2. Selections from *MetaMaus*.
- M. Hirsch, "Mourning and Postmemory," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*. Eds. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg. Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- James Young, "Maus" in *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale Press, 2000.

#### Week 8 (April 29): **Photography's Dilemma: Is Seeing Believing?**

#### **Visual analysis paper due – and presentation in class**

Film Screening: Hersonski, *Film Unfinished*, 2011. Jablonski, *Fotoamator*, 1998.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvUdffAhFH4> selections

#### Readings:

- Selections from Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. Picador, 2001. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* and Ulrich Baer and Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images Malgré Tout*, 2003.
- Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, Minnesota, 1998.
- David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust*
- Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*

- Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*, Chicago Press, 2000.

Week 9 (May 6): **Photographic Practices in Contemporary Art (Cont.)**

Readings:

- M. Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*. Ed. Zelizer, Rutgers, 2001
- Young, "Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 3

Week 10 (May 13): **Memorialization and Monuments**

**Response Paper:** Memorials

Reading:

- Esther Shalev Gerz, *Between Listening and Telling*, 2005
- Michela Melian, *Memory Loops*
- James Young, "Memory, Countermemory and the End of the Monument" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 4, 5.
- Nathan Rapoport, "Memoir of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument"
- Hans Haacke, "Und ihr habt doch gesiegt"
- Matthew Baigell, "George Segal's Holocaust Monument"

(May 20): Shavuot – **No class**

Week 10 (May 27): **Fascinating Fascism and Don't Touch My Holocaust**

Reading:

- Norman Kleeblatt, "The Nazi Occupation of the White Cube" in *Mirroring Evil*, The Jewish Museum, 2002.
- James Young, "David Levinthal," *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 2.
- Stephen Feinstein: "Zbigniew Libera's Lego Concentration Camp"
- Alan Schechter, [www.dottiecommies.com](http://www.dottiecommies.com)
- Dalia Manor, "From Rejection to Recognition: Israeli Art and the Holocaust," in Stephen Feinstein, Ed. *Absence/Presence*, 2005.
- Tami Katz-Frieman, "Don't Touch My Holocaust," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein. New York University Press, 2003
- Adi Ophir, "On Sanctifying the Holocaust," *An Anti-Theological Treatise*, Tikkun 2, 1987.

Week 11 (June 3): **The Future of Holocaust Memory: Artistic Responses 2000-2016**

**Normalizing the Holocaust?** From PETA to Comme des Garçons to *I Miss You, Jew!*

Hitler memes, Kitlers, *Inglorious Basterds*, *Look Who's Back*, Holocaust Tattoos and Holograms, Holocaust Tourism and Musealization and TV (South Park..), Artur Zmijewski, Rafał Betlejewski, Gustav Metzger, Mirosław Balka, Santiago Sierra, Esther Shalev Gerz, *Between Listening and Telling*, Michela Melian, *Memory Loops*

## Web sites:

<http://www.ecoledeparis.org>  
<http://lastexpression.northwestern.edu/>  
<http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/arts/art.htm>  
<http://art.holocaust-education.net/>  
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/99/>  
[http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/art\\_museum.asp](http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/art_museum.asp)  
<http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/>  
<http://chgs.umn.edu/museum/>  
<http://www.terezin.org.il/>

## Bibliography:

*Art From the Holocaust*, ex.cat. (Yad Vashem, Jewish Museum Berlin, 2016).

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/art/index.asp>

Amishai-Maisels, Ziva. "The Complexity of Witnessing", in *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*. Edited by Monica Bohm-Duchen. Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Sunderland; Lund Humphries, London, 1995, pp. 25-48.

----- . *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*. Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1993.

----- . "Haunting the Empty Place," in Stephen Feinstein, Ed. *Absence/Presence: Critical Essays on the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust*. Syracuse University Press, 2005.

----- . "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 1991.

----- . "The Artist as Refugee," in *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn and Richard Cohen, New York, 1990.

Bathrick, David. "Teaching Visual Culture and the Holocaust." *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*. Eds. Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes. New York: MLA, 2004. 286-300.

Blatter, Janet, and Sybil Milton. *Art of the Holocaust*. Rutledge Press, New York, 1981; Pan Books, London, 1982.

Braham, Randolph L. Ed. *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*. The Csengeri Institute for Holocaust Studies, Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York; Columbia University Press, New York, 1990.

Costanza, Mary, S. *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*. Free Press, New York; Collier Macmillan, London, 1982.

Czarnecki, Joseph P. *Last Traces: The Lost Art of Auschwitz*. New York, 1989.

Friedlander, Saul. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution."* Harvard University Press, 1992.

Gong, Catherine. *George's Kaddish for Kovno and the Six Million*, 2009.

Green, Gerald. *The Artists of Terezin*. Hawthorn Books, New York, 1969.

Lamberti, M.(1995). Making Art in the Terezin Concentration Camp. New England. Review, 17.. Pp. 104-112.

*The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz.* Exh. Ca. Evanston, Ill, 2003.

Levi, Neil, and Michael Rothberg. "Literature and Culture After Auschwitz: Introduction." *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*. Eds. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg. New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2003. 273-276.

Liss, Andrea. *Trespassing Through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust*, University of Minnesota, 1998.

Milton, Sybil. "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary", Randolph L. Braham (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.

Novitch, Miriam, Lucy Dawidowicz and Tom L. Freudenheim, *Spiritual Resistance. Art from Concentration Camps, 1940-1945*. Philadelphia, 1981.

Rosenberg Pnina, "Art During the Holocaust", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Macmillan, 2006.

------. *L'art des indésirables: l'art visuel dans les camps français* L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003.

------. "Women Artists in the Camps/Depictions of Women," *The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz*. Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Illinois, 2003.

------. *Images and Reflections: Women in the Art of the Holocaust*. The Ghetto Fighters House Museum, 2002.

------. "Mickey Mouse in Gurs: Graphic Novels in a French Internment Camp," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 6 (3), pp. 272-293, 2002.

*Seeing Through 'Paradise': Artists and the Terezin Concentration Camp*, exh.cat. Boston, 1991.

Shultze, Deborah and Edward Timms, *Pictorial Narrative in the Nazi Period: Nussbaum, Salomon and Daghani*. London, 2009.

Steinberg, Michael P. and Monica Bohm-Duchen, Eds. *Reading Charlotte Salomon*. Ithaca, NY, 2006.

Sujo, Glenn, *Legacies of Silence: The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory*, Barbican Gallery, London, 2003.

Toll, Nelly. *Without Surrender: Art of the Holocaust*. Running Press, Philadelphia, 1978.

Wyszogrod, Morris. *A Brush with Death: An Artist in the Death Camps*. Albany, NY, 1999.

*Artists Witness the Shoah: Camp Drawings from the Collections of Beit Lohamei Haghetat and Yad Vashem*. Sheffield, Graves Art Gallery, 1995.

## **Nazi Art**

Ades, Dawn. et al., *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45*. Thames and Hudson in association with Hayward Gallery, London, 1995.

Adam, Peter. *Arts of the Third Reich*. Harry N. Abrams, New York; Thames and Hudson, London, 1992.

Barron, Stephanie (ed). *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1991.

Cone, Michèle C. *Artists under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution*. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 1991.

Golomstock, Igor. *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and of the People's Republic of China*. Collins Harvill, London, 1990.

Grosshans, Henry. *Hitler and the Artists*. Holmes & Meier, New York, 1983.

Hinz, Berthold. *Art in the Third Reich*. Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber. Pantheon Books, New York, 1979; Blackwell, Oxford, 1980.

Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. *Art under a Dictatorship*. Octagon Press, New York, 1973.

Nicholas, Lynn. H. *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*. Knopf, New York; Macmillan, London, 1994.

Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1996.

Taylor, Brandon and Wilfred Van der Will. *The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich*. Winchester School of Art Press, Winchester, 1990.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Weekend in Munich: Art, Propaganda and Terror in the Third Reich*. Pavilion Books, London, 1995.