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**Visual Culture and the Holocaust**

**Dr. Rachel E. Perry**

**Course Number:** 127.8044

**Semester:** Spring 2016

**Class Time:** Wednesday 11-2

**Class Location:** TBA

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Phone:** 054-772-1169

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**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.

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. One class will be devoted to Nazi aesthetics and the 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 and debate 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?

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### **Course Requirements:**

This course is designed as a seminar. In addition to frontal lectures with powerpoint presentations, this course requires active participation in class and on museum visits. 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**.

**Museum Visits:** We will be visiting **Yad Vashem**. The museum visit offers hands-on access to the materials of the course. It is an integral part of the course and attendance is absolutely mandatory.

**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:**

Mid-Term Exam	40%
Response Papers	20%
Final Term Paper and Oral Presentation	40%

The **Mid-Term** will cover theoretical and historical material presented in the first half of the course in lectures and readings.

**Short 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)

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**Course Schedule:**

Week 1 (March 2) : **Introduction - "Facing the Holocaust":** Portraits in a Time of Crisis: *Last Portrait* exh. cat. Yad Vashem 2012.

Week 2 (March 9) : **The Nazi Campaign against Degenerate Art**

**Film Screening:** *Architecture of Doom, Degenerate Art, Good Morning Mr. Hitler*

**Reading:**

- Christoph Zuschlag. "An Educational Exhibition" in *Degenerate Art* LACMA, 1991.
- Peter Adam. "The Great German Art Exhibit" in *Art of the Third Reich*, 1992, ch 6.
- Lynn Nicholas, "They Had Four Years" in *The Rape of Europa*, 1995.
- Stephanie Barron, *Degenerate Art*, LACMA, 1991.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1991), pp. 138-153, 180-181.
- -----, "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.greatesttheft.com/>

- <http://therapeofeuropa.com/>

Week 3 (March 16): **Art in the Ghettos and Camps and in Exile**

**Reading:**

- Pnina Rosenberg, "Art During the Holocaust", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Macmillan, 2006.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Complexities of Witnessing," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Pp. 123-147.
- 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.
- 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.

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

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

Week 4 (March 23): **Cinematic Representations: Fact or Fiction?**

**Short paper due – visual analysis in class**

**Film Screening:** Resnais, *Night and Fog*, Lanzmann, *Shoah*, Spielberg, *Schindler's List*

**Reading:**

- Imre Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz"
- Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, 1998
- Claude Lanzmann, Seminar at Yale 1990; Excerpts (Lanzmann #1-10)
- Elie Weisel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," *NY Times*, 1989

Week 5 (March 30): **Is the Shoah Comic? MAUS and the Graphic Novel**

**Reading:**

- Terrence Des Pres. "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust*. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233

- 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.
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. 1-2. Selections from *MetaMaus*.
- James Young, "Maus" in *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale Press, 2000.

Week 6 (April 6): **Photography's Dilemma: Is Seeing Believing? Icons, Iconoclasm and the work of Postmemory**

- Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. Picador, 2001. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* selections
- Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images Malgre Tout*, 2003.
- Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, Minnesota, 1998.
- Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*, Chicago Press, 2000.
- M. Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*. Ed. Zelizer, Rutgers, 2001.
- James Young, "Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 3.

Week 7 (April 13): **MIDTERM**

**Passover – April 20 – 29**

Week 8 (May 4): **Memorialization and Monuments**

**Reading:**

- James Young, "Memory, Counter-memory and the End of the Monument" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 4.
- -----, "Memory Against itself in Germany Today: Jochen Gerz," in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 5.
- -----, "The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989).
- Nathan Rapoport, "Memoir of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument"
- Hans Haacke, "Und ihr habt doch gesiegt"
- Matthew Baigell, "George Segal's Holocaust Monument"
- Susan Hiller, *J Street Project*, Michela Melian, *Memory Loops*
- Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Mourning or melancholia: Christian Boltanski's 'Missing House' Oxford Art Journal, 1998.

Week 9 (May 11): **Fascinating Fascism - Mirroring Evil** (Libera, Levinthal, Schechner)

**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)

Week 10 (May 18): **Israeli Responses:** Bezem, Bergner, Bak to Gershuni, Maor, Rosen, Katzir, Arad, Nuchi

**Reading:**

- 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 (May 25) – **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 and Mirosław Balka, Santiago Sierra....  
Esther Shalev Gerz, *Between Listening and Telling*, Michela Melian, *Memory Loops*

**Reading:** to be announced

Week 12 and 13 (June 1 - 8): **Final Presentations**

**JUNE 15 - FINAL PAPERS due**

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## References

### Web sites:

<http://lastexpression.northwestern.edu/>

<http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/arts/art.htm>

<http://art.holocaust-education.net/>

<http://chgs.umn.edu/museum/>

<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://www.bterezin.org.il/>

### Select Bibliography:

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----- . *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone, 1999. Read excerpts: "Preface," pages 11-15, and sections 2.1-2.7 from chapter 2, "The Muselmann," pages 41-54.

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.

Attie, Shimon: *Sites Unseen – European Projects, Installations and Photographs*. Burlington, VT, 1998.

Azoulay, Ariella. "The Spectator's Place: Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun," in *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. MIT Press, 2001.

----- . "The Return of the Repressed," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein. New York University Press, 2003.

Baigell, Matthew. *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust*, New Brunswick, NJ, 1997.

----- . *Jewish Artists in New York: The Holocaust Years*. New Brunswick, 2002.

Baskind, Samantha and Ranen Omer-Sherman, eds. *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*. New Brunswick, NY, 2008.

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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.

Chicago, Judy. *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light*. New York, 1993.

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.

DeCoste, F.C. & Bernard Schwartz, *The Holocaust's Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics, Law, and Education* (Edmonton, Alta., Canada 2000).

Feinstein, Stephen. Ed. *Absence/Presence: Critical Essays on the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust*. Syracuse University Press, 2005. Andrew Weinstein, "From the Sublime to the Abject: Six Decades of Art"

-----". "Zbigniew Libera's Lego Concentration Camp: Iconoclasm in Conceptual Art About the Shoah" in *Other Voices* 2, no. 1 (2000)

Ficowski, Jerzy, ed. *The Drawings of Bruno Schultz*. Evanston, Ill. 1990.

Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy. "Documenting the Ineffable: Terror and Memory in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*." *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. Eds. Barry Keith Grant and Jeanette Sloniowski. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State, 1998. 204-222.

Friedlander, Saul. *Reflections of Nazism: An essay on Kitsch and Death*. Indiana University Press, 1993.

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

Geis, Deborah, ed. *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's Survivor's Tale of the Holocaust*. Tuscaloosa, Il, 2003.

Godfrey, Mark. *Abstraction and the Holocaust*. Yale University Press, 2007. (Morris Louis, Barnett Newman, Frank Stella)

Goldfarb, Mira. "Sacred Signs and Symbols in Morris Louis: The Charred Journal Series, 1951," in *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, ed. Baigell and Heyd, New Brunswick, NJ, 2001.

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

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

Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Post Memory: Writing and Culture after the Holocaust*, (New York 2012).

Hornstein, Shelley. Ed. *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*. New York, 2003.

----- Ed. *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*.  
Bloomington, Ind, 2003.

Kaplan, Louis. " 'It Will Get a Terrific Laugh': On the Problematic Pleasures and Politics of Holocaust." *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*. Ed. Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. 343-56.

Katz-Freiman, Tami, "Don't Touch My Holocaust," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein. New York University Press, 2003.

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

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----- "Landscapes of Jewish Experience: The Holocaust Art of Samuel Bak," in *Preempting the Holocaust*. Yale University Press, 1998.

----- "Bak's Variations on a Theme by Bak," in Stephen Feinstein,  
Ed. *Absence/Presence: Critical Essays on the Artistic Memory of the Holocaust*. Syracuse University Press, 2005.

*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.

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Rothberg, Michael. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

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----- . *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.

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