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## Remembering Ideological Identities

### Transference of Holocaust Memory through Artistic Expression

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**Remembering Ideological Identities:  
Transference of Holocaust Memory through Artistic Expression**

**A Master's Thesis for the Degree Master of Arts (Two Years) in Visual Culture**

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**Remembering Ideological Identities:  
Transference of Holocaust Memory through Artistic Expression  
by Tania Norell**

**Abstract**

We are rushing into an era where there will be no more witnesses to carry on the conversation about what happened during the Holocaust, but that does not mean there will be a lack of facts. The issues are rather *how* to remember, *who* is to remember *what*, and even *why* remember such atrocities at all. It is often stated that we have to remember to make sure “it” never happens again. Commemorations days are held and monuments are erected to prompt remembrance because we are perceived to have a duty to remember that which we might otherwise forget, but who “is” we? What memory holds, and how it’s content is remembered and expressed, and even why it is remembered at all, differs from person to person.

By analyzing the transference of Holocaust Memory through the artistic expression in the comic *Maus: A Survivors Tale*, by Art Spiegelman, and the ash paintings “Memory Works”, by Carl Michael von Hausswolff, using social semiotics, psychoanalysis, and ethical reasoning, I question if Holocaust art is a constructive use or a destructive abuse of a collective memory? I argue that if art is understood as objects that help preserve a society’s history aesthetically, and cultural memories are taken as the subjective that delineates an individual’s identity psychologically, then they can both be considered sensible tools for the function of creating an all-inclusive collective memory in regards to the Holocaust Memory sociologically. In other words, I question if art can be a tool usable to work with what we know, as well as towards that which we cannot reach, to help close the gap between the incomprehensible and the reality of the Holocaust, to assist an understanding of human ethics.

**Keywords:** Holocaust Memory, transference, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivors Tale*, Carl Michael von Hausswolff’s “Memory Works”, Ethics of Care.

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## Prologue

As a child I grew up in Japan during the 1970's. At the age of ten our fifth grade class made a school trip to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Nakajima, which made an impact that is still with me today. I remember vividly being told to sit on the grass to eat a packed lunch; my head spinning after having been in the museum, my stomach definitely did not want food. Why had our teacher taken us on such an awful school trip, I wondered, aren't trips supposed to be fun? Even though I knew that this was part of our history education I was not sure what we were supposed to learn exactly. I remember having the thought; we already know what happened, we were taught that in school, then why do we have to travel to see those horrible pictures? I also remember being confused by the Children's Peace Monument.<sup>1</sup> According to my imagination it resembled the tip of an atomic bomb, which to me seemed uncanny to have as a memorial. I have since then never understood teachers that take teenagers to Auschwitz on school trips, to me such undertakings have always seemed like some kind of absurd macabre tourism in the name of education. Since this experience as a child I seem to have a need to understand, not only why or how such war atrocities can happen, but rather why humanity seems to have a need to remember them. I now know, theoretically, that remembering history is necessary for the creation and preservation of both group and individual identity, and even if I can comprehend the hypothesis that a horrific past must be remembered to assure that it will never happen again in the future i.e. that remembering the atrocities of war is for a good cause, namely peace, I still react ambiguously to commemoration days pertaining to the remembrance of the 'victims' and 'heroes' of horrific events of slaughter. I am not a student of History, Human Rights or Political Science, but of Religion and Visual Culture Studies. The aim of this thesis is thus not to provide a history of *what* World War II entailed, discuss the *who* of blame, or propose a hypothesis on *how* to reach a more harmonious future, but rather I intend to make an inquiry into *why* remembering

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<sup>1</sup> Designed by Kazuo Kikuchi in 1958, then a professor of Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, and made in commemoration of Sadako Sasaki, who was exposed to the bombing at age two, contracted leukemia ten years later and died. Shocked by her death, her classmates put out a national call to "build a monument to mourn all the children who died from the atomic bombing." With the support of students in more than 3,100 schools around Japan and in nine other countries, including England, the Hiroshima Society of School Children was able to build this nine meters high bronze statue with the inscription, "This is our cry. This is our prayer. For building peace in this world." Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. [www.pcf.city.hiroshima](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima) May 1, 2014.

a horrific event is perceived to be self-evident and *why* it at the same time can be considered controversial depending on how and who is doing the remembering.

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

## *1:1 Current state and general issues*

On February 23 2014, *The Lady in Number 6*<sup>2</sup>, Alice Herz-Sommer, the oldest survivor of the Holocaust, died 110 years old. We are rushing into an era where there will be no more witnesses to carry on the conversation about the truth of what happened during the Holocaust<sup>3</sup>, but that does not mean there will be a lack of facts. Several autobiographies have been published and, to name just a few archives, the Shoah Visual History Foundation, founded by Steven Spielberg after the filming of *Schindler's List* in 1993, contains 52 000 testimonies from survivors of the horrors of the Holocaust. The Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem, with its International School for Holocaust Studies, has been able to collect 4.5 million names of the 6 million that were murdered and 110 000 Holocaust survivor testimonies are preserved in The Hall of Names. The problem is thus not that we are entering an era where there will be a lack of knowledge about the Holocaust, but rather the issues are of *how* to remember, *who* is to remember *what*, and even *why* remember such atrocities at all. It is often stated that we have to remember to make sure “it” never happens again. But, even with the efforts to accurately document testimonies, build Holocaust memorial museums and monuments, as well as establishing commemoration days; and even despite The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that was established after World War II in 1948, as well as the dedication within organizations like, for example, the Global Ethics Foundation, atrocities still continue to occur around the world.

## *1:2 Relevance of topic*

The Holocaust can be argued to be a unique event, implying that the extermination of a peoples has not occurred again in the same industrialized style, scope and scale with the same intent since World War II. This view can be claimed as evidence that humanity has “learned” and thereby become “better”. But, as can be seen in society and heard through the news, variations with the aim to at least use, export, and extort people is still prevalent. This view can be argued as evidence that the remembrance of atrocities, as well as universal declarations

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<sup>2</sup> *The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved my Life* is a documentary about Alice Herz-Sommer available on [www.nickreedent.com](http://www.nickreedent.com) 25 Feb.2014.

<sup>3</sup> I will in this thesis use the term Holocaust, meaning burnt offering, in contrast to the term Shoah, meaning the catastrophe, because Yad Vashem has chosen to utilize the term Holocaust in regards to their facilities.



pertaining to human rights, do not seem to have a conclusive positive effect on people's attitudes in regards to "the other". Based on the foundation of democracy, and Article 19 in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that; "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"<sup>4</sup>, there are Neo-Nazi groups and political parties expressing national and racial views within the frame of governments today. Nations around the world have in many constellations, depending on a variety of reasons, been victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, in regards to anti-religious and anti-racial violence throughout world history. In regards to World War II, many different peoples and people were victims of the horrors of extermination via the euthanasia program, fire squads and death camp gas chambers. It can thus be argued that the memories of the horrors of World War II do not only belong to the Jewish people, or even only to the victims and the subsequent generations, but the memories are relevant and belong to all of humanity.

### *1:3 Methodology and Material*

Dealing with the memory of other peoples trauma demands integrity and respect. Being neither religious nor born of a Jewish mother, and fortunately having knowledge of the Holocaust only through history, testimonies and religious studies, I found that to write this thesis, pertaining to the subject of the Holocaust, demanded utmost care and awareness. I have therefore, as part of my thesis preparation, attended a 10 day course at The International School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, as well as traveling to Poland with a Lund University Judaism course dealing with the topic Perspectives after Auschwitz. Because of these "time" removed field studies, so to speak, and the reflexive approach, the foundational method is not ethnography, *per se*, but ethnographical.

Dealing with personal trauma through mediums of art is not unique and there is therefore a great amount of material to choose from. I have selected a few visual images that exemplify what I perceive to be relevant in providing a visual insight of a meaning of some of the markers that have paved the way to the Holocaust, in other words, a variety of pre-war social images that contain the ingredients used for the creation of the Nazi ideology, which

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<sup>4</sup> Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.  
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a19>. 14 April 2014.

had devastating consequences for predominantly the people within the frame of Jewish culture. The primary sources of artistic expressions made for the purpose of Holocaust memory transference that I have selected for critical visual analysis are the comic books *Maus: A Survivors Tale* written by Art Spiegelman,<sup>5</sup> who is a first generation son of a Holocaust survivor, and the art exhibition “Memory Works” made by Carl Michael von Hausswolff,<sup>6</sup> who is a Swedish artist, and to my knowledge without any Jewish heritage.

Having created costumes for the theatre for almost 20 years I am familiar with the use of stereotypical designs of clothes for the purpose of providing the audience with an identifiable image that conveys information and meaning through semiotics, and therefore my choice of method is social semiology, since it deals with how images make meaning by studying signs. The image itself and its audiencing are the two sites of meaning production that psychoanalysis examines, and I therefore pursue to psychoanalyze the transference of Holocaust Memory through the method of psychoanalysis to interpret, or as I would call it, through academic subjectivity I argue and discuss, the use of masks and the insertion of a portrait photo in Spiegelman’s comic *Maus*. I also use the method of critical reasoning in regards to von Hausswolff’s “Memory Works” and the topic of ethics. The audiencing aspect is included by sharing my personal observations at the exhibit and interview material is also provided to make some Jewish voices heard.

#### *1:4 Theories*

The theories used in reference are; Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) theory of *totemism*<sup>7</sup>, Walter Benjamin’s (1892-1940) theory regarding the *aura of authenticity*<sup>8</sup>, Philip Zimbardo’s theory of *dehumanization*<sup>9</sup>, and Saul Friedlander’s theory about the difference between *deep and common memory*<sup>10</sup>. Focus is thus not on a descriptive content analysis of symbols, *per se*, but on the audiencing aspect of myself as a reader of the perceived signs, which implies extracting meaning by identifying the context of signs. I am aware that this implies that the analysis is primarily my own interpretations, which means that in relation to Sigmund Freud’s

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<sup>5</sup> A. Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivors Tale. vols. I and II*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1986 and 1991.

<sup>6</sup> “Memory Works” Exhibition at the Martin Bryder Gallery in Lund, Sweden, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude\\_L%C3%A9vi-Strauss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_L%C3%A9vi-Strauss). 23 May 2014.

<sup>8</sup> W. Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in Preziosi, D. (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp.435-442.

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_Zimbardo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Zimbardo). 23 May 2014.

<sup>10</sup> S. Friedlander, ‘Trauma, Transference, and “Working Through” in Writing the History of the Shoah’, *History and Memory*, vol.4, no.1 (Spring-Summer), 1992.

(1856-1939) theory of *psychoanalysis*<sup>11</sup> I primarily use Carl Gustav Jung's (1875-1961) theory of *analytical psychology*<sup>12</sup> and Roland Barthes (1915-1980) theory of semiotics, called the *process of signification*<sup>13</sup>. The literature that lays the foundation for the content, line of thought, and style of this thesis is James E. Young's book *At Memory's Edge*, Viktor E. Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Saul Friedlander's article "Trauma and Transference", and Susan A. Crane's article "(Not) Writing History" (see bibliography).

### *1:5 Research*

The most recent research in regards to the topic of the Holocaust and antisemitism<sup>14</sup> was published in New York on 13 May 2014 by the Anti-Defamation League with results from a worldwide survey of 53,100 people in 102 countries, which showed that one-in-four adults carry antisemitic attitudes today, 54% have heard of the Holocaust, 35% have never heard of the Holocaust and 32% think it is a myth or exaggerated.<sup>15</sup> The sociologist Stuart Hall (1932-2014)<sup>16</sup> is often considered the founding father of Visual Culture Studies and his focus was on how visual media contributed to racism, and one of the most devastating expressions of racism is the Holocaust, which stereotypically pertains to the Jewish people. It can be argued, though, that there is a paradox in placing Judaism in a relation to visual culture, which is explained by Jonathan Sacks commentary in the *Koren Siddur* prayer book;

Secular terms for understanding are permeated with visual images. We speak of insight, foresight, vision, observation perspective; when we understand, we say 'I see'. Judaism, with its belief in an invisible, transcendent God, is a culture of the ear, not the eye. The patriarchs and prophets did not see God; they heard Him. To emphasize the non-visual nature of Jewish belief, it is our custom to cover our eyes as we say these words; "Listen, Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One"<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund\\_Freud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud) . 23 May 2014.

<sup>12</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Jung](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung) . 23 May 2014.

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland\\_Barthes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes) . 23 May 2014.

<sup>14</sup> I have chosen not to hyphen the word antisemitism since there are no Semites, *per se*, but it is rather a linguistic term concerning similarities in the languages of a variety of peoples.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/anti-semitism-international/adl-global-100-poll.html>. 16 May 2014.

<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuart\\_Hall\\_\(cultural\\_theorist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuart_Hall_(cultural_theorist)) .23 May 2014.

<sup>17</sup> J. Sacks, *The Koren Siddur*, Jerusalem, Koren Publishers, 2009, p.338. Sacks starts the *Sh'ma* prayer with "Listen, Israel" and states that it is said with covered eyes after Kabbalat Shabbat during the Shabbat service every Friday. But in the Hebrew Bible Deut.6:4 it is written "Hear, O Israel, our God Adonai is one", which is also said twice a day during the *Shacharit* (morning prayer) and *Ma'ariv* (evening prayer) and ideally with the last breath at death.

One of the reasons why oral traditions have such a prominent place within Judaism can be because the Hebrew Bible states with a commandment that ‘thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth’ (Exodus 20:4).

Another oxymoron, which can be argued to be inappropriate, is the combinations of some kinds of art, such as comics, toys<sup>18</sup>, and humor<sup>19</sup>, with the topic of the Holocaust, because they can be considered disrespectful and trivializing the seriousness of trauma. I will not entertain the question of what is and is not considered art, but I will suggest that artistic representations of the Holocaust can have different implications. Holocaust art can be art created by the prisoners themselves while in the camps, it can refer to the art by survivors after the fact, and it can be the art made by the generations born of survivors, and it can be the art by people who have no other affiliation to the Holocaust except for being part of the same world history as every human in the world is part of its history, whether they identify with it or not. I would even go as far as to claim that the art used as propaganda leading to the Holocaust can be considered Holocaust art. Saul Friedlander asks; ‘Is such attention fixed on the past only a gratuitous reverie, the attraction of spectacle, exorcism, or the result of a need to understand; or is it, again and still, an expression of profound fears, and on the part of some, mute yearnings as well?’<sup>20</sup> The answer is probably all of the above. There is no lack of scholarly work dealing with memory studies, the history and horrors of the Holocaust, or Holocaust art and issues of commemoration, but there is an urgent concern with how to continue to convey testimonial knowledge since we are entering a time where there will be no more firsthand survivors of the Holocaust. The issue at hand is thus *metapherein*, which means to transfer.<sup>21</sup> But, the questions regarding how and what to transference, to whom, and why, is still in need of yet more analysis.

Today, we live in a globalized world. This is a commonly used phrase, but what does it mean? The term is generally regarded to be a postindustrial capitalist phenomenon referring to international integration because of the trade of commodities. Pertaining to the concept of the mobility of people across proclaimed boundaries, then globalization can be argued to have always been part of the shared world phenomenon, be it nomadic, commercial

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Polish artist Zbigniew Libera’s work, “Correction Devices” LEGO Concentration Camp 1996.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the Holocaust humor clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6E9sJ6B-u8> from Jewish comedian Sarah Silverman’s show, “Jesus is Magic”, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> S. Friedlander, *Reflections of Nazism*, New York, Harper & Row, 1993, p.19.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor>. 23 April 2014.

trade, the dislocation and dispossession through slavery, colonialism, quest for knowledge, or the consequence of clashing world views resulting in diasporas. The quintessential change in our time can be claimed to be the lightning speed in which the different aspects of globalization take place. The varied aspects of the relatively new term globalization are thus not new, but what can be regarded as new is rather today's technology.

Laymert G. dos Santos refers to the playwright Heiner Muller (1929-1995) to highlight that, apart from technological advances, there is also within the concept of globalism a new criterion of selection as demanded by the economic acceleration of industrialized capitalism, which discriminates between those who belong as raw material in the future evolution of humanity. This principle of selectivity leads to genocide and Muller regarded Auschwitz as an example of the dominant social logic of the functionality of capitalism. dos Santos also refers to Susan George who goes even further by stating that 'the logic of extermination was not dissolved in 1945; on the contrary, it is now more current than ever, contriving neoliberal strategy even as it is implemented on a planetary scale.'<sup>22</sup> Now if these are the underlying tendencies of the welfare of the globalization of the world then the idealist view, of globalism as an all-inclusive phenomenon exemplifying the evolution of human community on our globe, is shattered.

The people of the world do not only live in a time of claimed globalization, but also in a world that is considered to be post-modernist. Postmodernism suggests that both collective memory and personal identities are losing their foothold because of the powerful force of the media to fragment traditional metanarratives. Dominic Strinati states that 'popular cultural signs and media images increasingly dominate our sense of reality, and the way we define ourselves and the world around us.'<sup>23</sup> According to, for example, *ocularcentrism*,<sup>24</sup> and historian Martin Jay and visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff, Western society is affected by the attempt of analyzing reality through social media; but if it is a reflection or a distortion of reality I will leave for others to discuss.<sup>25</sup> One thing that is for certain though is that to be able to transfer any knowledge memory is necessary.

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<sup>22</sup> L.G. dos Santos, 'Belonging and Not Belonging', in K. Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, London, Saqi, 2008, p.57f.

<sup>23</sup> D. Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London, Routledge, 2004, p.205.

<sup>24</sup> G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, London, Sage Publications, 2012, p.3.

<sup>25</sup> See 'Theories of the Media, Theories of Society' in M. Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran, and J. Woollacott (eds.), *Culture, Society and the Media*, London, Methuen.

## 1.6 Disposition

I therefore begin the thesis with an overview of some of the different foundational aspects within memory studies, as well as providing a closer view of Jewish memory in particular. After general information concerning Holocaust memory transference carried out within the Israeli school system since World War II, I continue, inspired by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) *discourse theory*<sup>26</sup> of the relationship between power and knowledge used for the purpose of social control, to provide a brief colligation of historical knowledge that I perceive to have been necessary for the production of the stereotypes that have been and, to an extent, still are applied to the Jewish people. The Nazi ideology, which is based on an antisemitic worldview of Jews as a destructive race that poisons and undermines the foundation of human existence, is not a religious belief, *per se*, but it is a view that has a history with roots in the fertile soil of the Christian religion, and in combination with the science of evolution, I provide some transparency to the claim that religious anti-Judaism paved the way for the ideology of racial antisemitism.

Stuart Hall states that 'primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings.'<sup>27</sup> The search for meaning can be argued to be relevant and even central to most disciplines and aspects of life, as well as being non-existent, *per se*. Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997), a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, describes in his biography *Man's Search for Meaning* that, even in a situation of such apparent meaninglessness as in the camps of Auschwitz, the search for meaning was what motivated a continued desire to live, against all odds. This search was carried out through the visualizations of, for example, loved ones, of coming home and eating a favorite meal. Visual imagery is always constructed, and visual culture studies deals with a critical inquiry into the social work that that visualization can provide. As Gordon Frye and John Law explains, 'it is to note its principles of inclusion and exclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available, to understand the way in which they are distributed, and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalizes.'<sup>28</sup>

Besides the statements we must remember, we must learn, and we must transfer, one could ask who "is" we? The final part of the thesis deals with the topic of ethics. The reason I perceive ethics to be relevant to this thesis is not because the Holocaust has been

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<sup>26</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel\\_Foucault](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault). 23 May 2014.

<sup>27</sup> S. Hall, 'Introduction', in S. Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, Sage, 1997, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> G. Frye and J. Law, 'Introduction: On the Invisibility of the Visible', in G. Frye and J. Law (eds.), *Picturing Power: Visual Depiction and Social Relations*, London, Routledge, 1988, p.1.

given the role of the epiphany of evil and therefore for the past atrocities of the Holocaust to have meaning it must mean that “we” must all use it to learn to behave ethically “correct” in the future. Frankl states that, ‘if there is meaning then there is meaning in suffering,’<sup>29</sup> but Gillian Rose points out that,

meanings may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, they may be felt as truth or as fantasy, science or common sense, and they may be conveyed through everyday speech, elaborate rhetoric, high art, TV soap operas, dreams, movies or muzak (sic); and different groups in a society will make sense of the world in different ways. Whatever form they take, these made meanings, or representations, structure the way people behave- the way you and I behave- in our everyday lives.<sup>30</sup>

I therefore argue that in this age of globalization, collective memory can transition from being culturally specific and/or national to being multicultural and transnational and thereby becoming a global memory. The Holocaust, which was carried out within the context of a World War, can be claimed to be an event that extends beyond the collective memory of the specific people involved. It is an event that is considered to epitomize evil in general and therefore it goes beyond specifically pertaining to the victims and perpetrators. In rough terms it implies that the rest of the world were bystanders and therefore included.

### *1:7 Questions*

Since the atrocities of the Holocaust are so unimaginable, it is often asked if fiction can facilitate an insight into the surreal reality of the Holocaust and if art can assist in closing the gap between the incomprehensible and the reality of the event. I do not focus on giving an answer to that question but, when it comes to the transference of memories that have been expressed and thereby also preserved through the medium of art, I question if the two chosen artistic expressions, *Maus* and “Memory Works”, are a constructive use or a destructive abuse of a collective memory? I also provide views on the question;

- *Are there any limitations to the artistic representation of the Holocaust?*

I also discuss if these artistic works of memory transference can provide knowledge, as well as trigger critical reflexivity and thereby function as a visual language for the purpose of remembrance that highlights ideologies in a way that can potentially transform destructive attitudes into respectful attention and curiosity, which in turn may lead to an

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<sup>29</sup> V. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2006, p.67.

<sup>30</sup> G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, London, SAGE Publications, 2012, p. 2.

increased understanding and dialogue between ideological identities? I also provide views on the question;

- *Do the Nations of the World have a responsibility toward promoting Holocaust remembrance?*

These two specific questions with provided views, though, are not my own. At Yad Vashem Learning Center there is a list of questions in regards to the Holocaust that have been answered, in video interview form, by several Jewish people within varied walks of life such as survivors, historians, clergymen, educators, journalists, art curators, authors and playwrights. I have not conducted any interviews personally but by courtesy of the International School of Holocaust Studies I have been able to include two of the interview questions and answers (found transcribed in complete form in the appendix). The reason I have used two already asked questions is so that I can include some of the Jewish voices in the discussion and argumentation in the thesis. Thus, using the borrowed questions as a foundation the aim is to hypothesize about if and/or how Holocaust remembrance may or may not benefit from artistic expressions, as well as analyze the consequences depending on how and who is responsible for the visual expressions.

Besides trying to provide that 10 year old child in Japan with an answer to her question regarding the reason for remembrance of horrific events, the issue at hand is to inquire into some of the consequences of reasoning in relation to the claim that we must remember, we must learn, and we must transfer, so that the memory of the Holocaust survives when there will be no more Holocaust survivors.

### *1:8 Demarcation*

The Holocaust is not an area with too little research but rather so extensive that at least a rough demarcation is necessary. I will not discuss the horrors of the Holocaust with its multifaceted aspects of perceived evil in regards to, for example, Hannah Arendt's *banality of evil*<sup>31</sup>. I will not analyze artistic expressions relating to Adolf Hitler, as for example the films, *Dictator* (1940) by Charlie Chaplin, and *The Producers* (1968) by Mel Brooks. I have also chosen not to discuss the propaganda and demagoguery used by the Third Reich through, for example, Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Triumph of the Will* (1934) and Viet Harlan's antisemitic film *Jud Suss* (1940).

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<sup>31</sup> H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York, Penguin Books, 1965.



## CHAPTER 2: WE MUST REMEMBER!

### *2:1 Memory and Identity*

To be able to remember anything at all one must have the capability of memory, which is a common trait that humans with a healthy mind share. What that memory holds and how it's content is remembered and even why it is remembered differs from person to person. One's truth is thus what is, but what is is varied depending on the identities circumstances. If art is the assemblage of materials to create an image, memory can be argued to be a composition of experiences to create an identity, which makes an identity equivalent to a work of art. If cultural art is understood as objects that help preserve a society's history aesthetically and cultural memories are taken as the subjective that delineates an individual's heritage psychologically, then they can both be considered sensible tools for the function of creating a collective memory sociologically.

Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) is considered the founding father of memory studies and he claims that individual memory is only triggered in relation to other people's memories and therefore always a *collective memory*.<sup>32</sup> Memory is an ability, according to Astrid Erll, and 'an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts.'<sup>33</sup> Both our personal and social identities are thus social constructions based on memory. The social identity theory (*SID*) was developed in the 1960's by Henri Tajfel who did research on the aspects of identity. It showed that there is a difference between, *personal identity*- which is an individual's unique blend of experiences that create particular characteristics and, *social identity*- which asserts that 'people define and evaluate themselves in terms of groups to which they belong.'<sup>34</sup>

Jan Assmann focuses on the importance of social interaction, for the meaningful

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<sup>32</sup> M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> A. Erll, *Memory in Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.7f.

<sup>34</sup> P. Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social identity*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p.25f.

development of coherent memory. This has prompted him to give it the name *communicative memory*. He means that it is in the intermediary realm between individuals, through the tool of language, tradition and ritual that memory is transformed from *scenic memory*, which registers information, into a *narrative memory*, which has meaning.<sup>35</sup> It is important though to acknowledge that, just as scenic memory does not hold meaning in itself, neither does narrative memory. It is given its meaning by the language used and by the emotional force connected to it. In other words, all memory needs to be interpreted to be understood. All the people who understand the language or symbols and metaphors used, or who can resonate with the emotions connected to the memory, can then be said to have, and be part of, that memory. A category of “we” is thus potentially created based on what understanding one has and therefore means that a belonging can be achieved by increased knowledge instead of restricted by unchangeable factors like religious dogma and race.

Pierre Nora points out that ‘it is the self that remembers, and what it remembers is itself, hence the historical transformation of memory has led to a preoccupation with individual psychology.’<sup>36</sup> Cultural memory is thus the memory source of truthfulness for the self-identity, but it does not necessarily have anything to do with remembering history correctly. History and memory are therefore separated according to Nora’s *sites of memory* theory, which means that sites of memory are needed because the collective memory is no longer intact in the un-institutionalized, transnational and multicultural world we live in today.<sup>37</sup> In other words, sites of memory are constructed to create a collective memory and not made by selecting from a collective memory.

When it comes to the concept of *cultural memory*, Assmann states that ‘cultural memory is complex, pluralistic, and labyrinthine; it encompasses a quantity of bonding memories and group identities that differ in time and place and draws its dynamism from these tensions and contradictions.’<sup>38</sup> In other words, cultural memory goes beyond a collective memory and communicative memory and can therefore not be equaled with the concept of tradition. Cultural memory is not that which is actively handed down to future generations but rather that which is stored in the unconscious, stemming from the past generations, and which

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<sup>35</sup> J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, California, Stanford University Press, 2006, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> P. Nora, ‘Paper Memory’, in U. Flecker (ed.), *The Treasure Chests of Mnemosyne*, Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 1998, p.300.

<sup>37</sup> P. Nora ‘Memory is Always Suspect in the Eyes of History’, in U. Flecker (ed.), *The Treasure Chests of Mnemosyne*, Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 1998, p.286.

<sup>38</sup> Assmann, 2006, p.29.

lays the foundation of our understanding of what traditions mean. In reference to Hans-George Gadamer (1900-2002), Assmann states that there can be no understanding without memory of past culture and there can be no future existence of that culture without tradition.<sup>39</sup> Miroslav Volf proclaims that 'we have a moral obligation to remember truthfully.'<sup>40</sup> He highlights the importance of remembering rightly so as to be able to learn from the past and thereby develop the capacity to actively respond instead of passively react.<sup>41</sup> He claims that we are not only the product of our past because we have an ability to be more than just our memories.<sup>42</sup> What this means is that an identity need not be a passive and thereby a fixed cultural monument. An identity can be an expression of its culture constructed by the active selection from a collective memory and thereby become a sign of a cultural memory or a site of memory in itself. Rather than a passive and fixed cultural monument, an identity could be conceived of as a work of art that actively keeps up with the present times of change, but still makes an effort to remember the past truthfully and rightly. According to Volf, we are thus not only expected to be responsible identities, but also identities that are responsible when it comes to memory.

Perceiving the memory of the Holocaust as a transnational liability of human crime can be viewed as an effort to proclaim a common moral standpoint of 'Never Again!!'. It expresses the ideal of the considered need of a common human responsibility and a demand to respond with the construction of a global ethics. This 'responsible' attitude in regards to the Holocaust is exemplified by the fact that the Declaration of Human Rights was conceived after the World War II in 1948. Human Rights are considered to be universal,<sup>43</sup> but as Jean Fisher points out, 'human rights are the rights of the citizen, not the homo sacer'<sup>44</sup>.<sup>45</sup> This shows that when we say that we live in a globalized world, with Human Rights, it does not necessarily imply being included in a "safe" global community, bonded by a global memory,

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<sup>39</sup> Assmann, 2006, p.27.

<sup>40</sup> M. Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, Cambridge, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2006, p.51.

<sup>41</sup> Volf, 2006, p.11ff.

<sup>42</sup> Volf, 2006, p.24ff.

<sup>43</sup> Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

<sup>44</sup> *Homo sacer*- a term coined by Giorgio Agamben in his book by the same name to express his theory of marginalization which entails a person 'set apart' from others by law, an outlawed citizen, a person stripped of everything except of the bare fact of being human, but that 'bare life' can paradoxically also be taken away by the law of a sovereign power in a 'state of exception'.

<sup>45</sup> J. Fisher, 'Where Here is Elsewhere', in K. Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, London, Saqi, 2008, p.63.

but rather it brings about awareness that anyone, anyhow, anywhere, and at any time, can be excluded. In reference to excluded people who have lost all Rights, Agamben refers to Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) who states that;

the concept of the Rights of man, based on the supposed existence of a human being as such, collapsed in the ruins as soon as those who professed it found themselves for the first time before men who truly lost every other specific quality and connection except for the mere fact of being human.<sup>46</sup>

In relation to the Holocaust, some nations may not appreciate being included in a universal concept of global memory because it implies being placed in the same category as the nation's responsible for the extermination. In relation to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, some victims may not appreciate that their suffering is being considered as a dreadful mistake that happened in the past and with focus instead put on the betterment of the future for all of humanity, which ultimately then includes the perpetrators. But, does a universal all-inclusiveness necessarily have to imply no longer identifying with a specific cultural past and only with a common global future?

## *2:2 Jewish Memory*

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) claimed that 'only something that continues to hurt remains in the memory.'<sup>47</sup> The memory of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust gives rise to a Jewish identity that entails remembering that which is painful. Christie Davies states that;

Despite centuries of pressure to convert, assimilate, and intermarry and despite the persecution, expulsion, and murder of entire communities by anti-Semites there is a visible Jewish presence in every continent. The survival of Jewish identity is one of the most remarkable sociological phenomena of the last two thousand years. Most people in exile, however brilliant their culture, disappear.<sup>48</sup>

The Jewish people are viewed as a closely knit group created by the connective memory of actively remembering their past history through the ritual of passing down beliefs and traditions from generation to generation. That is if one defines tradition as the tool of transmitting memory in order to not forget who they are collectively as a group. The Jewish people have also been accused of not being able to change and thought of as monuments of the old, as will be explained shortly, and just as a monument appears to stay the same as a fixed memorial, so too does an identity appear to be the same every day even though they

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<sup>46</sup> G. Agamben, 'We Refugees', *Symposium*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1995, pp.114-119.

<sup>47</sup> J. Assmann, (2006) p.5.

<sup>48</sup> C. Davies, "Jewish Identity and Survival in Contemporary Society", New Brunswick & London, Transaction, 1998, p.123.

both actually shift in meaning depending on circumstances that trigger different memories at different times. But, as Halbwachs points out, objects stand about mute and motionless, but we still understand them because they have meaning. He explains that this is because objects only appear motionless, but they are not because their meaning changes and thereby “moves” depending on social perceptions and preferences. The seeming stability provides a comforting continuity of social identification and thereby becomes a monument, not of a historical person or event, *per se*, but of a collective memory of a group of people that identify with that person or event.<sup>49</sup> Halbwachs states that ‘since the world of thought and feeling fails to provide the requisite stability, it must guarantee its equilibrium through physical things and in given areas of space.’<sup>50</sup> As the Jewish historian Nora so poetically states, ‘memory is always on our lips because it no longer exists,’<sup>51</sup> and ‘the less memory is experienced from within, the greater its need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists except qua memory.’<sup>52</sup> As I understand Nora he means that objects and monuments can be described as dead memories, relics created as a ritual in a ritual-less society. They are erected to prompt remembrance because we are perceived to have a duty to remember that which we might otherwise forget. As he also so eloquently expresses, ‘moments of history are plucked out of the flow of history, then returned to it –no longer quite alive but not yet entirely dead (---).’<sup>53</sup> Nora also suggests that since history today has become an ever changing current of events, the function of embodying memories and thus preserving ideologies through traditions has ceased to function in secular society.<sup>54</sup> He explains that ‘in the Jewish tradition, whose history is its memory, to be Jewish is to remember being Jewish. In a sense, it is a memory of memory itself.’<sup>55</sup> Judaism could thus be considered a monument since it is, according to Nora, a memorial of what being Jewish entails.

When it comes to the historical event of World War II, even if many other categories of people were exterminated through the euthanasia program as well as in the camps, the Jewish people could be considered its main monument, just as Auschwitz is for the multitude of camps, and the Holocaust the monument of evil. This could, at least in the

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<sup>49</sup> M. Halbwachs, ‘Space and the Collective Memory’, in U. Flecker, (ed.), *The Treasure Chests of Mnemosyne*, Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 1998, p.266.

<sup>50</sup> Halbwachs, ‘Space and the Collective Memory’, 1998, p.274.

<sup>51</sup> Nora, ‘Memory is Always Suspect in the Eyes of History’, 1998, p.286.

<sup>52</sup> Nora, ‘Paper Memory’, 1998, p.296.

<sup>53</sup> Nora, ‘Lieux de Mémoire’, in U. Flecker (ed.), *The Treasure Chests of Mnemosyne*, Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 1998, p.294.

<sup>54</sup> Nora, ‘Memory is Always Suspect in the Eyes of History’, 1998, p. 288.

<sup>55</sup> Nora, ‘Paper Memory’, 1998, p. 301.

majority of Europe, be argued to be a correct assessment. But, in Japan, Hiroshima is the monument of World War II, over shadowing the bombing of Nagasaki, as well as the Holocaust in Europe. This exemplifies the phenomenon that the same historical event can have a completely different focus of content depending on culture and circumstances, which highlights the issue of what is considered true or right to remember in regards to the victims of World War II. The presumed sameness of a monument, be it a past event or a person, can therefore represent a variety of meanings depending on when, where, why, and how it is remembered. Just as the common human species can have different identities depending on their collective and cultural memories individually and as a group.

Efforts to remember the Jewish memory, pertaining to the Holocaust, have been made in a variety of ways through, for example, testimonials, autobiographies, museums, commemoration days, documentaries, films, media art and education in schools. During my studies at the Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem, as well as while visiting Auschwitz in Poland, educators and guides alike commonly said that ‘to remember or not remember is not what is important, the importance is to learn.’ To learn what exactly was my thought as I remembered myself as a 10 year old in Japan. But what guarantees do we have that there is anything to learn from the horrors of the Holocaust? Are we to learn about War history? How beastly Germans are? How inhumane humans are capable of being? How to, after losing a War, bring a country back on its feet and out of a depression by stealing the bank accounts, apartments and businesses of the bourgeois class? Medical and psychological knowledge based on experimental and industrialized extermination? What good and evil is? How to care? Or is it to learn to identify ideologies that pave roads to atrocities? If the aim is to learn, so that “it” may never happen again, is remembering and adopting testimonies about past atrocities adequate to prevent future atrocities? Should there be more museums, monuments and commemoration days? Some may claim that there can never be enough Holocaust remembrance and that knowledge is the key? And, some may say enough already!

## CHAPTER 3: WE MUST LEARN!

### *3:1 Ideology and Prejudice*

Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress suggest that the contradictory version of held knowledge, which is used to legitimate a dominant group, as well as the knowledge that is held by the dominated group, is called the *ideological complex*.<sup>56</sup> Ideology is thus not a truth, but the conceived truth depending on how one perceives one's memory, since the site of the image of truth perceived can be argued to be conceived in your own mind. As Gillian Rose explains, 'Ideology is knowledge that is constructed in such a way as to legitimate unequal social power relations (...) and semiology is centrally concerned with the social effects of meaning.'<sup>57</sup> Meaning can be equated with that which is held as the knowledge conceived from the perceived; be it constructed or extracted depending on one's view. According to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) knowledge comes from the synthesis of perceived experience and conceived concepts and therefore aesthetics has the power to provide inspiration for reason. The whole idea is thus "to see" so to speak.

Werner G. Jeanrond claims that 'all human knowing passes through initial stages of prejudgment on its way toward a deeper and more appropriate understanding and assessment. Potentially, therefore, prejudices can have an epistemological function.'<sup>58</sup> Gadamer acknowledges the constructive function of prejudices; he even goes as far as to state that '(...) prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments constitute the historical reality of his being.'<sup>59</sup> Saul Friedlander states that, 'even if new forms of historical narrative were to develop, or new modes of representation, and even if literature and art were to probe the past from unexpected vantage points, the opaqueness of some deep memory would probably not be dispelled.' In other words, if prejudices are conditions for understanding, but

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<sup>56</sup> R. Hodge and G. Kress, *Social Semiotics*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Rose, 1988, p.106f.

<sup>58</sup> W. G. Jeanrond, 'The Ambiguous Power of Prejudice and Love', in J. Svartvik and J. Wiren (eds.), *Religious Stereotyping and Interreligious Relations*, 2013, p.46.

<sup>59</sup> H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 1975, p.289.

an understanding of the Holocaust, *per se*, is not possible, then maybe focus on remembering the history of the development of the specific ideologies that paved the way to the Holocaust would be beneficial, instead of trying to use the atrocities as some kind of universal evaluation of humanity at large. Holocaust education would then entail knowledge of a history of human ideas and thereby provide tools for a clearer understanding of the testimonies about the atrocities done by people to “the other” people. For is it not the knowledge that we hold and the ideas that we have that motivates and provides meaning to what we do?

Prejudices are foundational for the creation of stereotypes and what differentiates stereotypes from identity is that stereotypes are created by a group in contrast to “the other” and an identity is constructed by oneself in relation to others. Without knowledge of the history of anti-Judaism and antisemitism through education or experience, the general public can be argued to receive their understanding of what it entails to be, for example, a Jew from media. Stereotypes can be used as a language for the purpose of entertainment, but also as a prejudice or uneducated description for the purpose of propaganda. The language of stereotypes provides a condensed visual of a specific occupation, class, type of personality, as well as of a peoples and national character based on a perceived truth applicable to all within a group or category, but since it has a tendency to be used as a degrading generalization of a group as a whole it does not express a monolithic truth in regards to all the individuals that make up that group or category.

### *3:2 Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism*

Xenophobia implies the fear of the stranger in general, whereas antisemitism implies judeophobia, since it refers to the fear, or rather the hatred and suspicion, of the Jews in particular. A definition of antisemitism is the hostility towards or discrimination against Jews as a religious or racial group.<sup>60</sup> Antisemitism can be claimed to have its foundation in the ideology of supersessionism, based on readings of the Bible, which puts it within the realm of religion, and can therefore also be referred to as anti-Judaism.

The Jewish people have lived as a minority in many countries for more than two thousand years. The view that they have not assimilated to any great extent can be interpreted

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<sup>60</sup> <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/27646/anti-Semitism>. 30 Jan. 2014



as an expression of their attitude of being better than, and especially since their sacred text states that they are The Chosen People this can conjure up both resentment and contempt, which history has shown. Antisemitism can be claimed to pertain to the blame that Jews are responsible for things that ‘go wrong’, the charge that Jews are conspiring to take over the world, and that Jews are sub-human offspring of Satan that are a threat to the survival of humanity. Anti-Jewish understandings, though, stem from the readings of the Gospels and Paul’s letters in the New Testament. The major issues that the Jews are accused of are the refusal to embrace Jesus Christ as the Messiah, which was interpreted as a failure to evolve, and they are held responsible for the killing of Jesus. The Jews are thereby stereotyped as a bloodthirsty people stuck in their ways. But, even if the New Testament has been, and still is, read and interpreted as antisemitic it is argued by contemporary scholars and theologians that it can not be conclusively confirmed that the New Testament actually is anti-Jewish since it pertains to a Jewish context. In other words, when interpreting the Bible it is important to acknowledge that both Jesus and Paul and the Apostles were Jewish. As Paula Fredriksen points out, ‘Judaism is essentially Christianity’s context and its content, not its contrast.’<sup>61</sup>

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is the Church father known for the doctrine of Jewish Witness. In his book, *City of God*, he writes that Jews were to be kept alive because they were the “librarians” that protected the word of God written in the OLD Testament and this was considered vital for the understanding of the NEW Testament. He claimed that the mere existence of Jews was important as a reminder of God’s mercy for those who were so blind that they continued to follow the Law of Moses without realizing that its spiritual fulfillment lay in Jesus Christ. Jews were not to be slayed but instead become monuments for the purpose of spreading Christianity.

In regards to the ideology of replacement theology E.P. Sanders suggests that antisemitism, can be understood as pertaining to what he calls *anti-ancientism*. He argues that ‘(...) in many cases what they dislike is the ancient world, and they simply attack the version of it that they meet in the Gospels.’<sup>62</sup> In other words, it is not necessarily Judaism as such that is “old” but rather Judaism has become a representative of that which is considered out dated. I think it would be safe to say that anti-Judaism was not antisemitic in nature at the time of

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<sup>61</sup> P. Fredriksen and A. Reinhartz, *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti Judaism: Reading the New Testament After the Holocaust*, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, p.5.

<sup>62</sup> E.P. Sanders, ‘Jesus, Ancient Judaism, and Modern Christianity: The Quest Continues’ in P. Fredriksen and A. Reinhartz (eds.), *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament After the Holocaust*, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, p.34.

Jesus because the early Church Fathers would have known that he was a Jew. I find that this exemplifies what Gadamer implied about the necessity of having a cultural memory from the past for the purpose of understanding a tradition in the present, and what Nora states about the power of memory welding people together because it is always an emotional subjective phenomenon of the present, whereas history is an intellectual objective representation of the past that tends to ferret people apart.<sup>63</sup> Christianity can thus be argued to have been fertile ground for anti-Judaism during its development in the first half of the first millennium and Christian Liturgy and theology have continued to keep that ground fertile through history.

### *3:3 Holocaust history transference through education*

Susan A. Crane states that “history” is an ambiguous term because it refers generally to both “what happened” as it was experienced in a former time and what has been thought and said about “what happened” ever since.<sup>64</sup> Birgitte Enemark explains that, “in the early years of Israel’s existence, the collective memory of the Holocaust was characterized by the schism between the Holocaust martyrs and heroes, emphasizing the bravery and revolt of the few, while neglecting the physical suffering of the victims.”<sup>65</sup> It can thus be argued that during the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 emphasis on the heroic myth of the ghetto fighters was the part of history most useful for creating a new society, but which ultimately led to a neglect and an attitude of contempt towards the masses of victims that had gone without putting up a fight “like sheep to slaughter.”<sup>66</sup>

Founded by the survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Kibbutz Lohamei Ha Ghetot was the first Holocaust documentation center established in 1949. In 1961 during the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem testimonies of survivors were broadcast on the radio in Israel and had extensive media coverage internationally. This was the first time that the silence was broken and the general public heard the Holocaust stories from the “ordinary” victims, meaning not the Ghetto Fighter hero stories, which made the situation of the “choiceless choices”, and the impossible circumstances that had made resistance extremely difficult, become apparent. Since the information was too horrific to comprehend and take to

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<sup>63</sup> Nora, ‘Memory is Always Suspect in the Eyes of History’, 1998, p.289.

<sup>64</sup> S.A. Crane, ‘(Not) Writing History’, *History and Memory*, vol. 8, no.1, (Spring-Summer), 1996, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> B. Enemark, ‘Holocaust Remembrance and Education in the State of Israel 1948-2000’, H. Trautner-Kromann (ed.), *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies*, vol.22, no.2, 2001, p.107.

<sup>66</sup> Stemming from Psalms 44:23 “It is for your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

heart, focus was still not placed on empathy for the victims, but instead on the demonization of the perpetrators. Not until after the experience of the Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973 were the Israeli people able to start to deal with the concept of the suffering of the Holocaust survivors and the Ministry of Education had to start to include Holocaust studies within the framework of the schools. In 1982 Holocaust studies became a compulsory subject in Israel, and whether knowledge of the Holocaust is to be considered education for the purpose of the development of moral values, or if it should be a part of history education, is still discussed and argued until today. Since the 1990's a program of youth voyages, instigated by Dr. Yair Auron, has been implemented in the school system, which provides learning about the Holocaust through the experience of a face to face encounter with "the other" in Poland. These trips are considered by some as providing difficult but positive encounters for the purpose of education and continued remembrance of the Holocaust, whereas some argue that a visit to a concentration camp is macabre death tourism and that meeting the other only solidifies the perspective of otherhood. Still others suggest that maybe this constant focus on the importance of remembering encapules the Jewish people in a mode of everlasting surviving, which could be judged as stifling instead of empowering.<sup>67</sup>

In reference to the biblical story of Lots wife,<sup>68</sup> maybe it would be beneficial to stop constantly looking back because of the risk of solidifying a mode of surviving at the expense of living. A lack of facts pertaining to the Holocaust that happened in the past is not the problem, what is an issue is the normative means for future remembrance, since we now know that "ordinary men"<sup>69</sup> are capable of carrying out atrocities. In other words, we have information, but what we do with it is another matter. The facts about the industrialized extermination of the Jewish people, that has been preserved through diaries, letters, testimonials and biographies, has itself become the material for what can be called an industry of Holocaust memory, since it is used for commercial means such as, for example, films, series, comics, art, poetry and novels. The relationship between fact and fiction is not novel but, in regards to the Holocaust memory, it can be argued that fiction is not necessary, since it is hard to surpass the surreal facts of what actually happened. Since what happened during the Holocaust is so unimaginable a question that can be asked is if using what we know and

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<sup>67</sup> Enemark, 2001, pp.107-129.

<sup>68</sup> In Genesis 19:26 it is written "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

<sup>69</sup> An implication to Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, New York, Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992.

combining it with the imagination needed for the creativity of art, can be a tool used to work towards an understanding that we cannot otherwise reach?

## **CHAPTER 4: WE MUST TRANSFER!**

### *4:1 Art and Stereotypes*

Holocaust art, meaning art dealing with the topic of the Holocaust, does not necessarily have to be only that which was created during or after the Holocaust. In other words, I argue that the stereotypes of the Jewish people, expressed through caricatures in the press and characters in plays and literature, are necessary artistic cobbles stones in the road that lead to the Holocaust, and thereby also Holocaust art. Instead of arguing for the eradication of stereotyping, because of the negative consequences that can be verified by history, I propose that stereotypes can be used positively if consciousness of accuracy and if ethical responsibility of its use becomes part of the picture.

Jeanrond writes that 'a genuine conversation about truth can never tolerate prejudices, stereotyping, and taboos, though it might have to start in a context marked by them and look for ways to confront them rather than to bypass them.'<sup>70</sup> In other words, since stereotypes seem to be a natural part of the human communication system and can therefore not in actuality be eradicated, then they can be argued to be essential, not only to identify ideologies and remember atrocities as such, but also for the purpose of making sure they never happen again. It is then important to learn how to use stereotypes as a language for the purpose of understanding and celebrating differences instead of continuing to use them as a tool of contempt and ridicule because of differences. If stereotypes are viewed as a visual language of prejudices the question is can images and fiction facilitate an insight into the surreal reality of the Holocaust, which was a real event based on the consequences of prejudices? The issue is then not only that we must remember, so that the memory of the Holocaust survives as some kind of security blanket against it happening again, but rather

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<sup>70</sup> Jeanrond, 2013, p.45.

how do we live with all the varied memories that have survived during the 69 years that have passed since 1945?

#### *4:2 Ideology transference through artistic expressions*

Stereotypes may be claimed to stem from myth, religion, and prejudice ideology, but they can also be claimed to be “true” according to science. Even if the scientific theory of *natural selection*, in Charles Darwin’s book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), did not pertain directly to humans, the theory of human evolution can be argued to have emerged from it, since humans too are a species. In combination with Herbert Spencer’s theory of *the survival of the fittest*, in his book *Principles of Biology* (1864), where he wrote; ‘This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called "natural selection" or the preservation of favored races in the struggle for life.’<sup>71</sup> These examples can be viewed as some of the scientific theories that provide fuel for the argument of a superior Aryan human. The ideology of the Nazi Party saw the Germans as the master race and sought to create a new world order, the Third Reich, in a world without Jews. They used all of the above ingredients to maneuver towards its goal of bringing Germany and the Aryan people back up on its feet after the devastation of having lost World War I, and one of the ways of portraying and conveying antisemitism was through the arts and images like a poster.

A semiotic content analysis can exemplify how such an image can be used to convey information with a specific meaning for a specific purpose. The poster depicts the head of a person with big features and the head of a woman with delicate features. There are two swastika signs, which within Hindu culture symbolize well-being, but it can be argued that the relay-function of meaning, in regards to the swastikas, is that of a Nazi symbol because of the written word Deutschland. It gives the swastikas an anchorage within the national frame of Germany, which in turn provides a connotation of what the Nazi Party’s ideology contained. The deigesis of the poster can thus be claimed to be the image of a sub-

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<sup>71</sup> H. Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, vol. 1, 1864, p. 444.

human Jewish man and an Aryan woman, and for the “well-being” of Deutschland it is beneficial to support the Nazi Party. The poster is from the 1920’s and World War II was not declared until 1939, and the Holocaust pertaining to the extermination of the Jews did not officially start until after the Wannsee Conference in 1942. This poster thus shows that the Nazi ideology grooming of the German people, in regards to the conceived Jewish Problem, took many years to accumulate the power needed to explode into its full exposure, which resulted in the Final Solution (see **Fig.1**).



Antisemitisches Wahlplakat zur Reichstagswahl. 1920

**Fig.1-** “Deutschland; Antisemitisches Wahlplakat zur Reichstagswahl 1920”.

Professor Rafi Vago, from Tel Aviv University's Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism, was one of the educators at Yad Vashem who highlighted the question if the road to the Holocaust was straight or zig-zag? He also pointed out that when it came to the stereotypes of the Jews it was not only based on religion, ideology, science, and art, but also the structure of the society in which the Jews lived shaped the stereotypes by deciding what they were allowed to do within that society, and then reacting to the Jews success within those designated frameworks. The Jews were not allowed to own land in the countries in which they lived and therefore had to find other ways to do business since they could not grow or sell their food, but had to earn money to be able to buy food. This separated them from manual labor, which is considered the “lower” work force, and placed them in the “middle” class that dealt with trade and commodities, which in turn put them in close relations to money and banking. The idea that the aim of the Jewish people is to rule the world can be claimed to be the most prevalent stereotype of the Jews still around today.<sup>72</sup>

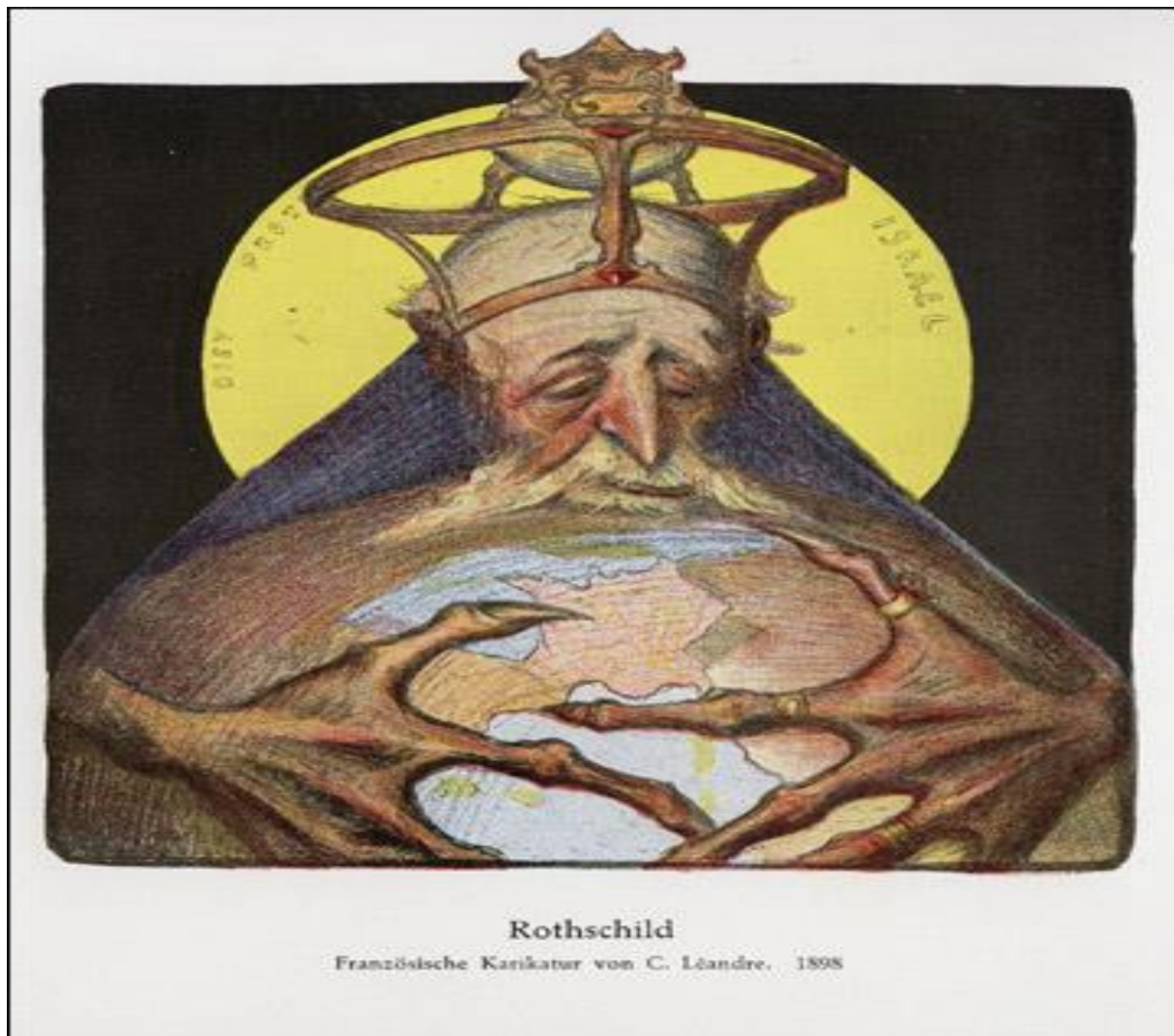
The illustration “Le roi Rothschild”, by Charles Lucien Léandre, was a cover for *Le Rire* in April 16th 1898.<sup>73</sup> The Rothschild banking family of England was founded in 1798 by Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777–1836). He had five sons who also became successful bankers and this historical fact is used as evidence for the conceived idea that there is an innate character trait within the Jewish people of being bankers that have the intention of taking over the world, if they are not already running it. Caricatures, meaning images of condensed information portraying a stereotypical view, can be both funny and satirical and they have been used for amusement, as well as to convey information since the beginning of images being used within the press. They can be argued to exemplify the saying that a picture says more than a thousand words and are therefore potent in laying a foundation for what can be conceived as knowledge, when they are in actuality most often conveying a prejudice. Léandre’s illustration of the Jewish banker wearing a crown while embracing the world and shutting out the light of the sun behind him is from the 1800’s (see **Fig 2**). I also include two complementary images to show how engrained the prejudice of Jews as being money obsessed still is today; one of the role of “Fagin” from Charles Dickens book *Oliver Twist* and

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<sup>72</sup> Notes from Rafi Vago’s lecture at Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies, 21 Jan.2014.

<sup>73</sup> E. Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte*, Munchen, Albert Langen Verlag, 1921, s.208.





an example relaying the same connotations through the classic children's cartoon Winnie the Pooh (see Fig. 3, 4).

**Fig. 2-** “Le roi Rothschild”, by Charles Lucien Léandre, was a cover for *Le Rire* in April 16th 1898.



**Fig. 3-** Griff Rhys Jones as “Fagin”.



**Fig. 4-** “Winnie the Jew”.

This business expertise, learned through the ages, was used and appreciated by the “upper” class and aristocracy, but it was also a threat to their independency. Poland was the country in Europe that had the most Jews when World War II began. Since the 1264 *Statute of Kalisz*,<sup>74</sup> which was a medieval document that allowed Jews personal freedom and legal autonomy, written by Boleslaw the Pious (1224-1279), the majority of the Kings of Poland had invited the Jewish people to settle there as a way to upgrade the country’s economy. In a sense, this is what the Jews were used for by the Third Reich as well, but from another angle of logic. Instead of seeing the Jewish people as an asset and investment for Germany the Nazi’s instead invested in the Jewish assets by burglary and murder to upgrade the Third Reich for the Aryan race, in other words, the attitude in regards to the Jewish people was that they were a Jewish Problem and there was therefore a need for a Final Solution, which accumulated into what is referred to as the Holocaust.<sup>75</sup>

#### *4:3 Holocaust memory transference through Art Spiegelman*

Art Spiegelman is a cartoonist who has tackled the documentation of his father’s Holocaust survivor story, as well as trying to understand and cope with Holocaust remembrance, in the artistic medium of two comic books called *Maus I - My Father Bleeds History* (1973) and *Maus II - And Here My Troubles Began* (1986). Spiegelman calls his cartoon medium, which is the mixture of image and narrative, as *commix* rather than comics because the term comic ‘brings to mind the notion that they have to be funny.’<sup>76</sup> It can also be argued that the reason for the new term, commix, is to create some distance between the combinations of a comic, which is an object associated not only with humor but also with children, and the horrors of the Holocaust, since it too can be considered controversial. The *com* in *commix* can refer not only to *comic* and *combination*, but also to the *complexities* of *communication*, the difficulties of *comprehension*, the act of *commemoration*, and the object of *commodity*, because *Maus* is an example of all of these issues. The format of *Maus*, with its comic style panels, that demand attention as to be followed in the correct order of coherence, as well as the constant

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<sup>74</sup> For complete Statute of Kalisz see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute\\_of\\_Kalisz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute_of_Kalisz) . 10 April 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Notes from Orit Margalit lecture at Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies, 19 Jan.2014.

<sup>76</sup> A. Spiegelman ‘Commix: An Idiosyncratic Historical and Aesthetic Overview’, *Print*, (November-December), 1988, p.61.

interruptions of the present daily life occurrences during the communication about the past between Art and Vladek, exemplifies Saul Friedlander's theory of the continuous self-reflection that he claims is necessary as the constant reminder of the void between deep and common memory. As James E. Young states; 'It is a narrative that tells both the story of events and its own unfolding as narrative.'<sup>77</sup> Spiegelman's technique of documentation also constantly reminds that there are always at least two sides to a story, in this case the father's and the son's.

Art's father, Vladek, was not the only one in the family with a deep memory of the Holocaust, also his mother was a Holocaust survivor, but she had committed suicide and was therefore not available as a third person to be part of Art's documentation. An example that portrays the desperate want to understand, and the belief that more deep memory information and sides to a story would solve the frustration of the seeming shallowness of the common memory's comprehension, is when Art explodes in anger calling his father a murderer after hearing that his father has burned his mother's dairies (Maus1:59). Friedlander claims that deep memory will be lost with the disappearance of the Survivors, and what is then left is the common memory, but it can be argued that even while deep memory is still available it can not necessarily be completely understood. Art's use of the term murderer can be an example that highlights the void between the father and the son's understanding of what that term can contain and imply.

The two volumes of *Maus* are not testimonies as such because as Spiegelman explains, 'Maus is not what happened in the past, but rather what the son understands of the father's story...It is an autobiographical history of the Nazi death camps, cast with cartoon animals.'<sup>78</sup> When Speigelman is asked, by Young in an interview, about the use of animal masks he says, 'I need to show the events and memory of the Holocaust without showing them. I want to show the masking of these events in their representation.'<sup>79</sup> This technique of masks can thus be understood as an effort to portray the duality of the knowing as, for example, was the case with the understanding of the term murderer above.

An allegory suggests a resemblance but can only be understood in relation to the knowledge one already has. The animal masks used in *Maus* can be claimed to be allegories since they can be perceived as an extended use of a metaphor for the purpose of illustrating an

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<sup>77</sup> J.E. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 2000, p.18.

<sup>78</sup> Young, 2000, p.15.

<sup>79</sup> Young, 2000, p.32.

attribute that is perceived to relay information without specifically describing what it implies. In *Maus* the Jews are cast as mice, the Nazi's as cats, the Poles as pigs, Swedes as elks, French as frogs and the Americans as dogs. Lévi Strauss theory of *totemism* refers to the use of animals and nature to represent a group or individual and claims that any correlation is arbitrary. For the totem signs to become intelligible a relational structure between culture and nature must be identified so as to be able to extract meaning.<sup>80</sup> A person can acquire a role by putting on a mask or a costume, but for that role to have value it has to be recognized as having an identifiable meaning. Giorgio Agamben calls this identified identity the *persona*, which in Latin originally means mask, and he claims that the *persona mask* is an expression of the personality of an individual and states that 'this formation first took place in the theater but also in stoic philosophy, which modeled its ethics on the relationship between actor and his mask.'<sup>81</sup>

The use of masks in *Maus* is thus an example of how stereotypical understandings are used without spelling it out and without any underlying mocking insult but only for the purpose of providing information that promotes an overall understanding. The rhetorical connotations of the animal masks signify the ideology of the animal hierarchy of mice being eaten by cats and cats being scared of dogs. This supposed common knowledge has probably, in the West, been learned through cartoons, such as Tom & Jerry, based on the knowledge of the seeming laws of nature. It can therefore be argued that Spiegelman uses the masks as a non-verbalized discourse, meaning a communication through code, because the masks are signifiers that provide signified meaning and are therefore signs. The Poles in pig masks can be interpreted as signifying that they are non-kosher, but this understanding is only possible with the knowledge of what that implies within a Jewish context. That the French eat frog legs and Swedes eat elk meat, which might be the grounds for Spiegelman's use of those animals for those nationalities, demands knowledge of the national culinary traditions of those countries for them to make any sense.

Semiology is the study of signs and since signs do not contain meaning in themselves, according to Lévi-Strauss, but are dependent on historical and sociological factors, it can be argued that in relation to Chinese culture, for example, which has a Zodiac that contains rat, dog and pig, the connotations conveyed through the denoted code or sign language conveyed through the use of the masks in *Maus* will probably differ in connoted

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<sup>80</sup> D. Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London, Routledge, 2004, p.86-88.

<sup>81</sup> G. Agamben, *Nudities*, California, Stanford University Press, 2011, p.46f.

meaning. David Summers states that the ‘perceived makes possible the minds conceiving’.<sup>82</sup> What if Spiegelman had used other animal masks, for example, portraying the Germans as foxes, the Jews as goats, the Americans as eagles, the Swedes as polar bears and French as snails, would the connotations be the same or even similar? In other words, the ability to recognize a signifier does not guarantee mutual understanding of the signified. Just as Assman and Gadamer claim that memory is essential for any interpretation to emerge, in regards to memory studies, E. H. Gombrich (1909-2001) claims that, in regards to art, all interpretations are based on previous impressions and familiar forms.<sup>83</sup> The function, though, is ‘always the same, namely the transmission of information.’<sup>84</sup> One could argue that if the definition of art is framed as “pictures” preserved, displayed and viewed in museums, then memory can be argued to refer to “pictures” stored, remembered and visualized in our minds. If art is the assemblage of materials to create a monument, memory can be argued to be a composition of experiences to create an identity, which makes an identity equivalent to a work of art. And, if monuments are understood as art objects that help preserve a society’s history aesthetically, and collective memories are taken as the subjective that delineates an individual’s heritage and identity psychologically, then they can both be considered sensible tools for the function of creating a cultural memory sociologically.

In the two *Maus* volumes there is only one picture that is “real”, meaning not drawn, and where there is no mask, but instead there is a costume. This is a portrait photo of the Holocaust survivor Vladek (see Fig. 5). Clothes in general are emblematic identity markers that provide information regarding, for example, a person’s gender, age, status, profession, nationality, group affiliation, music taste, ideology and social hierarchy. Walter Benjamin argues that fashion is a perfect example, not only of what he calls dialectical images implying that they are capable of providing information, but also of the theory that everything new is always based on the old, because a shirt is always a shirt even if it is in the newest color and style. As a reader I find the souvenir portrait photography of Vladek yet another example of the void between the deep and common memory. The reason; it is not a documentary photo taken while he was a prisoner wearing a camp uniform during the war, but a studio photo taken when he was free, in other words, he is not dressed in a prison uniform but in a prison camp costume provided by the studio after the war.

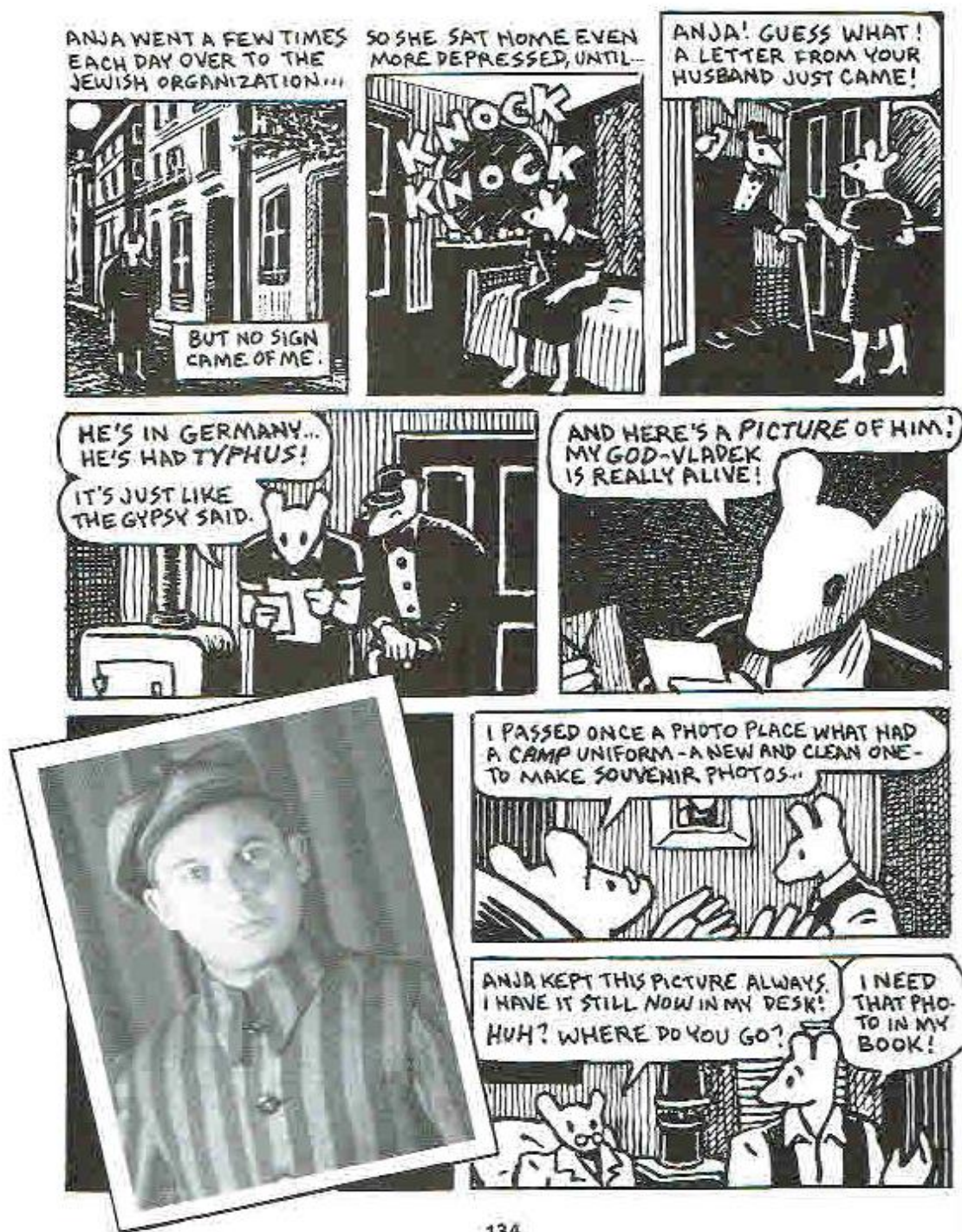
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<sup>82</sup> D. Summers, ‘Real Metaphor: Towards a Redefinition of the “Conceptual” Image’, in N. Bryson and A. Holly (eds.), *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, New York, Harper Collins, 1991, p.232.

<sup>83</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 1986, p.89.

<sup>84</sup> Summers, 1991, p.235.





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Fig. 5- Souvenir portrait photo of Vladek (*Maus* 2:134).

This photo exemplifies the gap between the deep memory behavior and the common memory's understanding of its rational. Why does a photo studio offer such a service and why would a survivor of the horrors of the Holocaust willingly dress up in a prison camp costume for a portrait photo? The comprehension of the provided service can be theoretically argued as a way to cope with issues of identity and memory, but can the complexities of an individual's need to actually use such a service and carry out such an act ever really be understood?

Susan Sontag writes; 'a photograph is supposed not to evoke but to show. That is why photographs, unlike handmade images, can count as evidence. But evidence of what?'<sup>85</sup> Benjamin claims that the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.<sup>86</sup> According to Sontag's and Benjamin's theories Spiegelman can be accused of having included the photo for his own benefit as evidence that his work is approved by a Holocaust survivor, in other words, the photo can be argued to be a stamp of authenticity.

An interesting dichotomy from a costume maker's point of view is that uniforms are used as a group cohesive identification marker for the purpose of erasing any particular image that makes up an individual, whereas a costume has the opposite purpose of providing a stereotypical image of a group that in actuality is not cohesive. Vladek's photo in a uniform costume is the only human face depicted in *Maus*. Philip Zimbardo, on the other hand, claims that the use of uniforms is a potent tool for dehumanization, which means that which 'occurs whenever some human beings consider other human beings to be excluded from the moral order of being a human person'.<sup>87</sup> Through the Stanford Prison Experiment,<sup>88</sup> Zimbardo found;

the Power that the guards assumed each time they donned their military-style uniforms was matched by the powerlessness the prisoners felt when wearing their wrinkled smocks with ID numbers sewn on their fronts. These situational differences were not inherent in the cloth ...rather, the source of their power is to be found in the psychological material that went into each group's subjective constructions of the meaning of the uniforms. It is the *meaning* that people assign to various components of the situation that creates its social reality.<sup>89</sup>

Spiegelman's use of cartoon human figures with animal masks can be argued to be a dehumanizing tool as well, and his disconcert with his father's well-being as well as his

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<sup>85</sup> S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York, Picador, 2003, p.47.

<sup>86</sup> Benjamin, section II, pp437f.

<sup>87</sup> P. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*, 2007, p.307.

<sup>88</sup> The Stanford Prison Experiment entailed Zimbardo's university students dressed up as guards and prisoners within a simulated prison environment for the purpose of demonstrating the power that situational variables have on human behavior.

<sup>89</sup> Zimbardo, 2007, p.221.

unconcealed irritation with his father when he does not comply to his command to keep telling the story also exemplifies a dehumanizing tendency of using someone as a thing for one's own benefit (Maus 2:47). If Spiegelman's aim with the masks was to show without showing, as he himself stated in his interview with Young, then the portrait photo can be argued to be Vladek's effort to show without showing. But, to show what?

In reference to portrait photography, Benjamin states that it is in the cult of remembrance that the aura emanates from the photographs in the expression of a human face.<sup>90</sup> In relation to that theory, the portrait photo may have been added to provide the mass produced *Maus* comic books with what Benjamin calls an aura<sup>91</sup>, meaning the uniqueness of the original that is destroyed by mechanical reproduction. Adding a photo of his father, who is a first generation survivor, and thereby contains an original deep memory, can be interpreted as an effort at getting hold of an aura of authenticity that is ungraspable for Art, who is a second generation copy created through, not mechanical but biological reproduction, so to speak. That a person with first-hand experience of the Holocaust, a survivor with a deep subjective memory, also has a need to create a physical object of that memory through, in this case, a souvenir photo can be a way to try to keep the memory outside oneself, because a photo can be locked away in a desk. Maybe the subjective memories are so unphathomable that even the Survivor deals with the frustration of trying to understand, and believes that something tangible will help to confirm the reality of the incomprehensible. In other words, just as Art, with his common memory, is frustrated by not getting his hands on his mother's diaries, so too can Vladek be perceived as frustrated, even though he has his deep memory full of such which is not possible to handle. In other words, just because the Survivor has the deep memory does not necessarily automatically imply that the Survivor contently knows enough to understand. It is not certain that Vladek himself knows why he had such a portrait taken of himself. There is therefore not only a void between the deep and common memory, but also within deep memory itself.

Just as a photograph can be argued to be able to provide a more authentic account than a painting, so too does a portrait photo of Vladek give a more authentic portrayal of a Holocaust survivor than a cartoon character with a mouse mask. The photo can be interpreted as showing that Vladek identified with being a Jew and the camp uniform costume was the most potent symbol of just that. Paradoxically though, that would imply that the

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<sup>90</sup> Benjamin, section VI, p.441.

<sup>91</sup> Benjamin, section III, pp.438f.

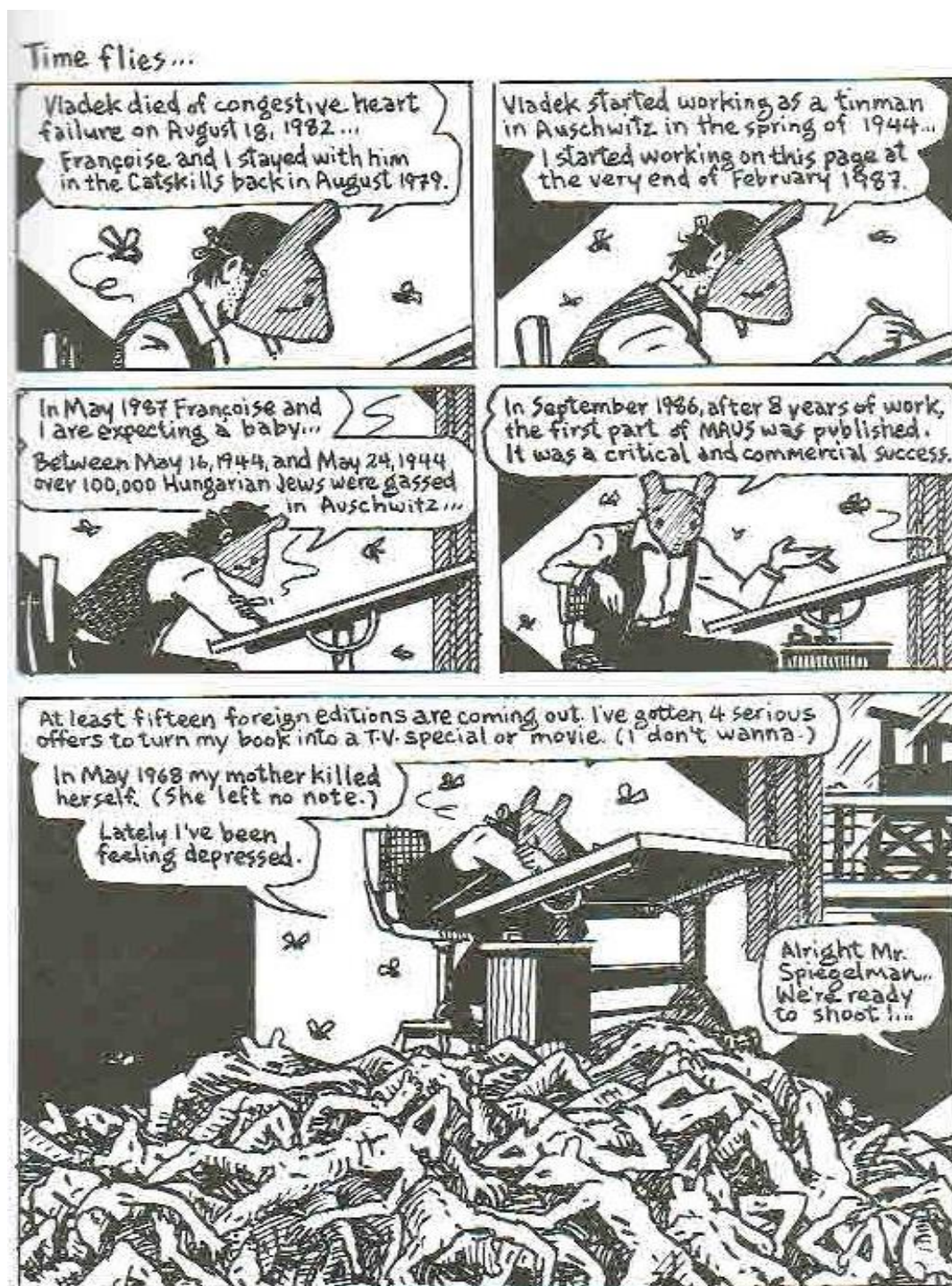


uniform that symbolized the Jews sub-human status, during World War II, was now after the war a symbol of Jewish survivor status. As stated, a costume provides someone with a something that is not true, *per se*; it is the portrayal of a character that is not oneself. Vladek's photo of himself, in a prison camp costume, can therefore also be interpreted as showing that he does not identify himself as a camp prisoner or Holocaust camp survivor. Since a costume can be put on or taken off at will, Vladek could be showing that he knows he is a human and that the role of sub-human, which is relayed to the audience through the camp prison costume, is something that, when given he can now accept or decline. The paradox, again, of the same image being able to be interpreted as a symbol of degradation and of empowerment. If the striped outfit has the potential of shifting in meaning it implies that it is a sign, which can be interpreted depending on context, culture and memory, and not a symbol that has a set meaning.

The reason Spiegelman has included the photo can be to highlight the awareness that Vladek's memories are more authentic than his artistic expression of the memories, since Spiegelman's chosen art medium for preserving the memories are of a sort not regarded as high art, he can therefore have added a real photo to provide an aura of authenticity to aviate the status of his work. As stated, the only reason Art seems to want to visit his father is to gather material for his comic book. Maybe the photo shows that Vladek is aware that he is being valued solemnly as a Holocaust survivor, but it might also show Spiegelman's awareness of Art primarily valuing his father as a Survivor? In *Maus* 2:41 Spiegelman exemplifies his own reflections and recognition that he has capitalized on his father's story. The image shows Art at his drawing board perched on top of a pile of dead corpses. *Maus* has become a mass produced commodity for sale and, as Young writes, "the Holocaust has been good to a starving artist"<sup>92</sup> (see Fig. 6).

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<sup>92</sup> Young, 2000, p.35.



**Fig. 6-** Art at his drawing board perched on a pile of corpses. It shows the artists awareness and anguish about the success of his work, which is based on the story of the victims of the Holocaust. (*Maus* 2:41).

#### *4:4 Holocaust memory transference through Carl Michael von Hausswolff*

Carl Michael von Hausswolff is a composer and visual artist born in Sweden, and to my knowledge without any Jewish heritage. His exhibition “Memory Works” from 2012 displayed at the Martin Bryder Gallery in Lund Sweden,<sup>93</sup> and shown for a limited time (10 Nov.-11 Dec.) because of controversy, is an example of art in relation to the Holocaust that has contributed to ethical debate worldwide. In other words, for this artist the choice of literally making the Holocaust the material of his art has been good PR (see Appendix I).

“Memory Works” is a three piece exhibition. One part is a photograph of the remains of the Nazi Hermann Görings hunting cabin. According to von Hausswolff, the photographic work was inspired by the urge to document so as not to forget, because as he states, ‘if one does not remember what has happened in history it will happen again.’ Another part of the exhibition is an audio recording of the sounds in a building in Mexico City where the author William S. Burroughs had murdered his wife in the 1951. According to von Hausswolff, ‘voices of concentrated, un-erased memories could be heard “from the other side”’. The third part pertains to von Hausswolff’s claim of having taken ashes from the cremation ovens in the Polish Majdanek concentration camp in 1989 and with which he has now mixed with water so as to be able to use the ashes to paint pictures for display.<sup>94</sup> Even though I understand that these three works are connected under the unified heading of the exhibition “Memory Works” I have taken the liberty of only focusing on the “Majdanek (1989) I-IX”, which is the work pertaining to the ash paintings (**for a visual see Fig. 7, p.39**).

It can be argued that we are so bombarded with images that for anything to stick out it has to contain a shock effect, often pertaining to traumatic aspects of sex or horror, so as to potentially affect us on an emotional level and thereby hopefully catch our attention. Are there any moral boundaries related to the concept of free expression, which can be argued to be the credential for what is considered as contemporary art? This is something we might think we know the answer to cognitively, but may need to rethink in emotionally loaded situations like this. The question here is rather if these images can be perceived as art in the first place? The artist himself states in the exhibition handout that while painting with the

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<sup>93</sup> The Swedish daily paper *Sydsvenskan*, p.B2, 11 Dec. 2012. Text: Eskil Fagerström. OBS only in Swedish.

<sup>94</sup> Information taken from an official handout received at the Martin Bryder Gallery in Lund Sweden during a viewing of the “Memory Works” exhibition, 7 Dec.2012. See appendix page. OBS Only available in Swedish.

ashes figures emerged and they “spoke” to him. The images are thus described as containing the energy and memories of the souls that died by torture in one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most ruthless wars. If the souls in the ashes spoke to von Hausswolff, then “they” can be conceived of as being present here and now; one could then dramatize the situation and perceive that they have now, yet again, been tortured by being relocated, poked, drowned in water, and smeared out on pieces of paper. They have then been imprisoned in a frame of glass as to provide a window for voyeurism of their never ending fate of suffering. The artist’s actions can thus be perceived as a mockery of the memory of the Holocaust victims and as mimicry of past transgressions.

Jill Bennett writes, in reference to Leo Bersani, that he argues that there is a kind of hubris in colonizing “the others” experiences within the framework of art, especially if it claims to have the potential of salvaging the damaged other and thereby redeem life to a higher level, but Jill Bennett herself claims that trauma-related art touches us by a transactive affect and not by communicate experience, and in her comparison with Bersani Bennett leans on Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) research on the visual medium to identify what it is that art itself “does” to give rise to a way of thinking or feeling, as she states, he claimed that it is through the felt affect that cognitive thought is triggered.<sup>95</sup> This highlights the difficulty in assessing if an experience of art can be considered “real”. In other words, do we see and hear what we believe or do we believe what we see and hear? If the ashes spoke then Hausswolff’s art can be argued to be an effort to preserve and continue to relay the deep memory of the embodied collective memory of the Holocaust victims through the ashes so that it will not be lost. And, as his overall exhibition and handout reveals, he believes that the memories of atrocities should be remembered, and that those memories are capable of communicating “from the other side.”

The question debated in relation to this exhibition is not only if it can be considered contemporary art, but also if it is ethically acceptable behavior. The exhibition can thus be seen as performative art, but it can also be regarded as narrative art because the apparent upheaval does not have to only pertain to what the artist has done. It can also pertain to the story of what he claims he has done. Who is to say that the ashes used are not from his own ashtray? According to BBC News; “The camp, now a museum in Poland, has called the

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<sup>95</sup> J. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, p.2f.

alleged theft of the ashes an "unimaginably barbaric act."<sup>96</sup> In Sweden there was a police inquiry in reference to the illegality of desecrating the dead.<sup>97</sup> The art critic Hal Foster has analyzed the appeal of trauma in relation to art and suggests that trauma-art does not deal with trauma or even with the artist, *per se*, but it is rather emblematic of a contemporary cultural sensibility. He states that "the fact that we live in a post-Holocaust world is understood to compel us to deal with Holocaust memory, and to account for the ways in which the Holocaust has touched us either directly or indirectly."<sup>98</sup>

One question I perceive as lacking in the debate, revolving around the indecency of the artist and his work, is who and why do people go to see exhibitions like this? I was one of the people that saw the "Memory Works" exhibition before it was shut down, and my answer to that question is that I was curious to see who went to see such an exhibition! When I arrived I was alone and thereby had uninterrupted time to view the paintings. I did not know how I would react or feel knowing the story of them having been made with the remains of Holocaust victims. I must say I did not feel anything, or hear any voices except for the recorded voices from Mexico City that came out of the speakers. I did ponder what my ethical perspective was, and I did not know. The gallery owner also seemed interested in who came to see the exhibit. He gave me a handout with information and asked who I was and why I was there. I said I was a student studying Judaism at Lund University and that was why I was interested in the exhibit. A few more people arrived, some alone, some in pairs, one person was very eager to take pictures of the paintings with her mobile and the gallery owner had to tell her that it was not allowed several times. More people arrived and I noticed that, for the majority, looking at the paintings was only of interest for a seemingly very brief time. There seemed to be more interest amongst the visitors to find out who the others were and why they were there. The woman with the mobile was only interested in trying to capture her own copy in her phone, as already stated, one man was in and out quietly and quick, a couple talked and talked with the gallery owner, and in the middle of the floor, a cluster of 6 or 7 people, all with their backs turned to the paintings, there was a lively discussion about the decency and indecency of the exhibit, mixed with stories of their relation to either a Jewish friend or relative, which means that people with personal ties, as well as no family ties to the Jewish Holocaust Memory were apparently interested in the exhibit, even if, like I have already

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<sup>96</sup> BBC News, 8 Dec. 2012.

<sup>97</sup> *Sydsvenskan*, p.B2, 7 Dec.2012.Text: Görel Svahn. OBS only available in Swedish.

<sup>98</sup> J. Bennett, 2005, p.6.

stated, the majority seemed more interested in making themselves heard than to contemplate the actual paintings. I did not join the conversations, *per se*, but I stood and listened.

Can von Hausswolff's exhibition be considered successful? I think so. It has created a platform for worldwide ethical debate, which can be argued to be a good thing and thereby making the exhibition a success. But, is this what the artist had in mind? von Hausswolff was silent and not involved in the debates that followed after his exhibition closed in 2012. In 2013 he made his voice heard in the daily press where he insinuated that it might not actually be Holocaust ashes after all.<sup>99</sup> On the 21 April 2014 he was a guest on the Swedish Radio program "Filosofiska Rummet" (the Philosophical Room) with two other philosophers, Jeanette Emt and Nils Erik Salin, where they discussed his ash paintings. von Hausswolff explained that the reason he had taken the ashes was because they were seemingly still just lying there in the ovens without anyone caring one way or another. The issue if the ashes in the art works were authentic Holocaust remains was not discussed, but they spoke about the freedom of expression and von Hausswolff stated that his aim as an artist is not to provoke, but the focus is on the search for meaning for himself, because he never knows if anyone else will come to see or hear his works. He also voiced that he considered an art work to be a success if it had a function, if it was being kept alive by continued discussion, which the Majdanek ash painting exhibition inevitably has.

The name of the exhibit was "Memory Works" and now after the fact it can be read as a statement, that yes memory works. It can thus be claimed that von Hausswolff has made a successful effort to make sure that the Holocaust memory is kept alive, which was his intention even if he claims that the works were not aimed to provoke ethical debate. I can not help but wonder, though, if the reactions to the Holocaust ash paintings would have been as controversial if they had been made by a Jewish Holocaust survivor or even a second generation Jewish artist. Could the ashes, incased in glass frames, have been considered memorials honoring the victims of the Holocaust? In other words, who is included in the "we" in the statements we must remember, we must learn, and we must transfer?

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<sup>99</sup> *Sydsvenskan*, p.B2, 23 Jan. 2013.Text: Eskil Fagerström. OBS only available in Swedish.



**Fig.7-** One of the “Majdanek (1989) I-IX” in the “Memory Works” Exhibit by Carl Michael von Hausswolff.



## CHAPTER 5: WHO “is” WE?

### 5:1 Ethics

Susan A. Crane asks ;

How does history become personal- only when it is survived, or only when private lives become public knowledge? What constitutes an “experience” of history- “being there”, being told about it (telling it), being taught it (teaching it), reading about it, writing it? Or does history become “personal” when an individual cares about it?<sup>100</sup>

The establishment of the Universal Human Rights Declaration after World War II in 1948 may imply that ethics was what was considered the most crucial to learn as a guarantee against potential future genocides. But, as history has shown genocides and trafficking of people as commodities has continued around the world, even if not in the unique industrialized framework as the Holocaust. Viktor Frankl writes: ‘We have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord’s Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips’.<sup>101</sup>

Ethics is often thought of as some kind of lesson that when learned will become a protective shield against indecent behavior. A dictionary definition of ethics is ‘an area of study that deals with ideas about what is good and bad behavior: a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally right and wrong.’<sup>102</sup> It can be argued that ethics need not be universal in the Kantian theory of the *Categorical Imperative*, meaning that if a moral is to be held as right it must be right for everyone, everywhere, at all times, because that does not leave room for the varied circumstances that force ethics to be dynamic and alive. In other words, ethics does not have to be a monument made up of rules to be followed, ethics can also be guidelines to be contemplated and then creatively applied. This then calls for personal responsibility, which in turn demands self-consciousness in regards to the selection of memories that form the ideas that one holds as knowledge, for as has been stated they are the grounds for any ideological knowledge, be it right or wrong, good or bad. It must be remembered that what happened during World War II was considered legal by the Third

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<sup>100</sup> Crane , 1996, p.20.

<sup>101</sup> V.E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2006, p.xii.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics>. 20 Feb 2014.



Reich and thought to be carried out for the good of humanity. As the Anti-Defamation League's study showed, the Holocaust is not a common knowledge. It can thus be argued that information about the Holocaust is not regarded as meaningful for the general public. A reason for this could be perceived to be because of an unbalance of focus when it comes to Holocaust information. Monuments, testimonies, and commemoration days all deal with the Jewish memory of the Jewish victims. It can be argued that for Holocaust information to be meaningful for all then all needs to be included, not for the sake of including every detail correctly, but for the sake of providing room for all the kinds of suffering, shame and guilt, not only the kind that pertains to the Holocaust victims, so that everyone has a chance to identify and therefore possibly want to understand because it can provide meaning.

Religion, science, history, philosophy, and art can be argued to all deal, in some way, with the search for the meaning of life, and according to the dictionary ethics deals with the study of the ideas that pertain to how to live life. Frankl, as a Holocaust survivor, explains that after the initial emotional shut down, which occurred as a natural process of protection in the camp, it was not the physical pain that hurt the most, but rather the agony of the unreasonableness of it all.<sup>103</sup> One way to deal with the seeming meaninglessness of the circumstances of life in the camp was to become curious and thereby provide the absurdity of the prevailing outside life situation some meaning.<sup>104</sup>

We need to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life-daily and hourly (...) These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment. Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way.<sup>105</sup>

The concept *Ethics of Care* has been the most prominent version of ethics growing out of feminist concern with the domain of personal relationships. `Developed initially by Nel Noddings in 1984, though influentially suggested by the psychologist Carol Gilligan in 1982, care ethics emphasizes attentive concerns to the individual other person in her particularity, rather than a focus on universal principles.<sup>106</sup> The theory is that caring relations, evidenced in personal relationships, can serve as models for a broader social concern because even though care is always particularistic, it does not require personal relationships for it to be able to operate in a more general sense. In other words, it enables an ethical point of view in relation to everyday life in contrast to a blind obedience of a set authoritarian theory. The consequence

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<sup>103</sup> Frankl, 2006, p.23f.

<sup>104</sup> Frankl, 2006, p.16.

<sup>105</sup> Frankl, 2006, p.77.

<sup>106</sup> R. Frey and C. Wellmann, (ed.), *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, Malden, Blackwell, 2005, p.522.

of unquestioned obedience and relying on a knowledgeable authority of experts alienates us from our actions so that we do not feel responsibility for them. On the other hand, paradoxically, the awareness of obligation is an awareness of a relationship and its demands, even if it is not personal.

The basis of Ethics of Care questions the idea of a seeming obligation that for ethics to be of value it has to be impartial and impersonal, because it creates a separation, or rather an individualization, which requires a sense of me and you or us and them, and thereby one's relationship to the whole is severed. This leads to a desensitized empathetic conscience, instead of a compassionate conscience, which in turn actually leaves the value of respecting all human dignity behind. Darrell Fasching and Dell deChant explain that 'the violation of human dignity almost always begins by defying others as strangers as to show they are not as human as we are.'<sup>107</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. is known to have said that too much focus on justice in itself, in reference to the concept of "an eye for an eye", will ultimately leave everybody blind!

Noddings points out that Ethics of Care in relation to relationships is not waterproof because in reality most abuse happens in the home, which shows us that not all relationships are caring. Noddings also points out that the ethics of caring does not necessarily benefit anyone beyond one's closest circle of friends and family and thereby has limited value when it comes to ethical care of people in need in general i.e. we have no obligation to help the needy on the other side of the earth, if we do not have personal relations to them. This is correct if one looks at Ethics of Care as a principle thru the perspective of obligations and principles needed for humans to care in the first place, instead of as a virtue that is dynamic and alive. If humans innately care for near and dear ones then the trait of caring is apparently already there. One could then ask, are the obligations and principles necessary to be able to care, as the Utilitarian and Kantian ethic models declare, or is it the Aristotelian virtues that need to be nurtured to get in touch with the ethics of caring? Frankl writes that;

Life in a concentration camp tore open the human soul and exposed its depths...from all this we may learn that there are two races of men in this world, but only these two- the "race" of the decent man and the "race" of the indecent man. Both are found everywhere; they penetrate into all groups of society. No group consists entirely of decent or indecent people. In this sense, no group is of "pure race".<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> D.J. Fasching and D. deChant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p.308.

<sup>108</sup> Frankl, 2006, p.86f.

As Frankl has stated if life has meaning then necessarily so does suffering, since it is a part of life, but how we cope with suffering is our choice, which in a sense can be considered a “choiceless choice” because it is always dependent on the circumstances, but a choice to provide one’s life with some kind of meaning, non-the-less. Even if it has been established that humans, who can both think and feel, are “moral agents” and therefore have responsibility for their actions, history and the news shows that this does not come naturally to all people. Friedlander states that;

Whether one considers the Shoah as an exceptional event or as belonging to a wider historical category does not affect the possibility of drawing from it a universally valid significance. The difficulty appears when this statement is reversed. No universal lesson seems to require reference to the Shoah to be fully comprehended.<sup>109</sup>

It can thus be argued that we “is” what we are, neither good nor evil, and when we see what we are we may or may not make alterations. That being said, if it is claimed that we must remember the Holocaust memories, to develop human virtues it can still not be guaranteed what we learn, or that we learn, or even that there is anything to learn, however we may package it for transference. It is always going to be varied depending on where, who, what and why we remember. Is it then justified to continue to use the Holocaust as a tool to hit humanity over the head with to get “them” to ethically evolve? Has not history shown us that a mythical ideology of ethics bashing, and aspirations of biological evolution were some of the cobble stones in the road towards the Holocaust not away from it.

### *5:2 Jewish voices*

I find that it is both interesting and important to also hear the voices of some of the people that are not as far removed as I am from the issues of Holocaust remembrance, in other words, from those with, if not deep memory, at least a deeper common memory than I myself have. I therefore include some of the Jewish voices from the Yad Vashem interviews as my “stamp of authenticity”, since I perceive that they can provide viewpoints from a more personal perspective, whereas I have argued in reference to the academic tools that I have available in relation to the two Yad Vashem questions;<sup>110</sup> Are there any limitations to the artistic representation of the Holocaust? and, Do the Nations of the World have a responsibility

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<sup>109</sup> Friedlander, ‘Trauma, Transference, and “Working Through” in Writing the History of the Shoah’, *History and Memory*, vol.4, no.1 (Spring-Summer), 1992, p.54.

<sup>110</sup> Yad Vashem two questions and answers by courtesy of the International School of Holocaust Studies.

toward promoting Holocaust remembrance? (see Appendix: II and III). The reason I do not include them in a discussion is because I have not conducted the interviews myself.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

### *6:1 Conclusion of the work in reference to the questions*

The place of departure for this thesis was the statements; we must remember, we must learn and we must transfer to make sure that the memory of the Holocaust survives, since we are moving into an era that will not contain any living Survivors with a deep memory of what happened, and the reason for remembrance is to make sure that “it” never happens again. The general question that was held in mind throughout the thesis was who “is” we?, and my philosophical, as well as concrete answer is we are we, because we are all the other, and we all live on one globe, so any attempt of separation is futile, unless one resorts to the tactics of genocide, which I perceive is the “it” of never again.

In regards to the borrowed questions from Yad Vashem; are there any limitations to the artistic representations of the Holocaust? and, do the nations of the world have a responsibility towards promoting Holocaust remembrance?, there are no definite answers, but the dialogue provided room for some of the varied Jewish voices to be heard on the subjects. My own question, if the transference of Holocaust memory through artistic expressions is a constructive use or a destructive abuse of Holocaust Memory? is answered through the two works of art that I selected for analysis, namely, *Maus* and “Memory Works”. The analysis provided the insight that art can do both, even at the same time. I also attempted to answer the question; if artistic expressions can facilitate an insight into the surreal reality of the Holocaust? My analysis of the art works also here provides an answer that it can, but what insight that is facilitated cannot be pinpointed or even guaranteed, since it will always be varied depending on memory itself. We can conclude from the thesis that we can transfer ideology through artistic expressions and we can transfer Holocaust Memory through artistic expressions and it is therefore possible to gain knowledge and insight, but if it has the power to trigger reflexivity and thereby highlight ideologies for the purpose of altering attitudes, does not have a clear cut answer. My hypothesis is that all the kinds of prejudices that were cobble stones in the road to the Holocaust have to be given room and attention within the scope of Holocaust Memory remembrance, so that it becomes relevant for all people in

general, and not only the Jewish people in particular. My reasoning is that the Holocaust Memory does not belong only to the Jewish people, even if they are the most prominent victims, and therefore it is vital that we all remember, learn and transfer, through artistic expressions, if that is the choice of medium, to be able “to see” the whole picture. What I thus perceive that I have provided grounds for with this thesis is an insight of the importance of an all-inclusive ethical attitude, which I am aware is not a novel proclamation, but one that I perceive needs reminding over and over again.

## *6:2 Summary of the thesis*

The thesis has shown that the knowledge we have at hand today claims that memory will always be personal, identities will always be masks (Agamben) and costumes, history will always be varied, and ideology will always be complex (Hodges and Kress). In other words, in relation to the Holocaust Memory, whatever or however we remember, as well as what or how we learn, will always be understood depending on previous knowledge (Gombrich), judgments (Jeanrond and Gadamer) and memory. In other words, however we transfer the memory of the Holocaust we will never catch “it” (Friedlander) because we apparently do not have a clear vision of what “it” is (Rose). Some would claim that it is the evil in general, others the extermination of the Jewish people in particular, and the rest can suggest an array of varieties depending on their relationship to what the Holocaust implies to them. I have respect for the claim that it is essential to remember atrocities for the purpose of making sure they never happen again, but since we already are remembering through commemoration days, monuments, museums, education, face to face encounters, etc. and atrocities still are prevalent, I find it of relevance to try to provide suggestions on additional aspects to entertain, in regards to the remembrance of atrocities, and in this case the focus has been on the Jewish memory of the Holocaust.

After providing some foundational theories within memory studies, necessary for an understanding of the issues of remembrance, and presenting some of the cobble stones, both ideological and visual, that paved the way to the Holocaust, I analyzed, first, *Maus* by a Jewish artist, who is a second generation survivor of a Survivor, using the authentic deep memory material from a Holocaust survivor, which can be regarded as commendable, but it is relayed via a controversial art medium of cartoon animal characters in comic books sold as

commodities in bookstores; Then, I analyzed “Memory Works” by a supposedly non-Jewish artist, without apparent Jewish heritage, using what is claimed to be the authentic remains of Holocaust victims, which can be regarded as atrocious, but it is relayed via a traditional art medium of paintings exhibited in an art gallery. I have not discussed the issues of free expression or what can and cannot be regarded as art, but I have made room for some Jewish voices, in regards to the question, if there are limitations to artistic representations of the Holocaust? It is my own perplexity, though, that has been the fuel for the thesis, with thoughts that revolve around the question if searching for meaning is a fuel for life (Frankl) then why is so much effort put on trying to preserve, teach, represent and remember the horrors of the Holocaust when they are considered to be an ungraspable meaninglessness? I have pondered what can be needed to move Holocaust Memory from being preserved in the chains of, what I perceive to be, an identity that just happened to not die then, into being used as raw material for an understanding of, what I conceive to be, identities that are alive now? The issue is thus not only that we must remember, learn, and transfer, so that the memory of the Holocaust survives as some kind of security blanket against such horrors happening again, but rather how do we live with all the varied memories that have survived during the 69 years that have passed since the end of World War II?

The argument in the thesis has been, based on my own experience as a costume designer, the knowledge that stereotypes are a tool used to visually communicate within the media and the arts, and since stereotypes seem to be a natural part of the human communication system, and can therefore not be eradicated (Jeanrond), and since we live in a globalized transnational world(dos Santos), where art and media reaches almost every corner of the globe, and since postmodernism has claimed the importance of ocularcentrism, when it comes to how information reaches people around the world (Strinati, Jay and Mirzoeff), I propose that art is a potent visual language that is capable of transferring prejudices, as well as knowledge about the atrocities that prejudice attitudes are capable of (as my visual examples have exemplified). The focus on the inclusion of knowledge pertaining to the apparent power of prejudices is considered important because they are necessary to be able to reach meaning (Jeanrond and Gadamer). The reason for the importance is so as to be able to use stereotypes, that are based on prejudices, to communicate constructively for the purpose of understanding and celebrating differences, instead of only using prejudices as a tool for the promotion of ideologies pertaining to supersessionism, racism, elitism, mockery, ridicule and contempt. Holocaust remembrance, thus, according to my findings, does not only have

the responsibility to preserve the Jewish Memory of the Holocaust, but has a potential to provide knowledge about all of humanity. Which can be useful since we do not know how knowledge becomes personal (Crane), but we do know that we all live in a post-Holocaust world. What Holocaust research, testimonials, autobiographies, museums, documentaries, film, art and books like, for example, Browning's *Ordinary Men* shows, and what we thereby can have learned from the Holocaust so far, is that it was humans that created the gas chambers and carried out the atrocities of World War II, and it was humans that died in them (Frankl). And, since the core of the thesis has to do with wanting to understand humanity, it was inevitable to conclude the thesis on the topic of ethics (Noddings). I have also, in regards to the issues of global ethics, through the Yad Vashem interviews, heard what the Jewish voices have to say in regard to the notion that the nations of the world have a responsibility toward promoting Holocaust remembrance.

Through the thesis I have shown that there is a difference between history, which deals with remembering the past, and memory, which pertains to an ongoing remembrance in the present. The invisible individual memories, which are the foundation of an identity, according to Freud, are the archives out of which Halbwachs collective memories are selected, through social interaction. These collective memories are what make up the visible group, which is based on Assmann's cultural memories, as well as what Nora's sites of memory are constructed of, for there to be meaning. All identities are thus collectively what make up human culture and can therefore individually be considered as memorials of life.

We are ourselves objects that evoke memory just as monuments, museums and commemoration days are intended to be, and just as we create monuments as memorials of specific persons or events from the past, so too do we construct from the past our identities as memorials of our own individual particularity in relation to cultures in the present. As cultural monuments we thus encompass a system of orientation in regards to the formation of an ideology, which contains the foundation of a self-image and guidelines for a group's consented normativity (Rose). We think we know who we are and what we should do. I have shown the devastating effects of a normative attitude, through referencing history, pertaining to the thought that individual identities have no value if considered old (St. Augustine and Sanders), wrong (Christianity) and a threat (Nazi Ideology). I used Nietzsche to bring us to the topic of pain as grounds for memory, and through critical analysis of the transference of Holocaust Memory through selected artistic expressions (Spiegelman and von Hausswolff) I have reflected on the constructive use and destructive abuse of the collective Holocaust

Memory that can be perceived to belong to the Jewish people. If we construct social interaction based on the attitude of censorship or disregard of certain identities on the judgmental grounds that they are not acceptable or the same as “us”, and thereby an identity that is valueless, I perceive that we do ourselves a disservice, because we are thereby manipulating memory by eliminating memory triggers. Commemoration days and monuments may seem fixed, but they move in meaning, and just as identities seem to stay the same they change depending on memory. What they seem to have in common though is that they both are alive because of interaction, circumstance and time, but also depending on attitudes. If we need our old cultural memory to understand, and if everything is inevitably based on the old (Benjamin and Gombrich) then do we not need active insight into everyone’s cultural inheritance in order to be able to understand and create a future for everyone?

The reason I chose to write a thesis pertaining to the Holocaust, even though I am not myself Jewish, is because I do not agree that the Holocaust is the monument of evil that has to be remembered so as to keep “it” from showing it’s face again. I find it rather to be an example of what we as humans manifest when we hold the attitude of disregarding the old for the new, instead of viewing the old and past as a vital part of the always new future. If we valued the old for what it is then it may be possible to have a rich multi-cultural memory as an all-inclusive archive of resource material to provide us with a multifaceted perspective to understand the human species, not as the same but, as a whole.

History portrayed through artistic expressions has the potential to make both the “wonderful” and the “devastating” aspects of humanity visible, which can be seen as a mirror or a window depending on one’s point of view, and can therefore offer a potential foundation of information for knowledge and understanding, as well as for inspiration, mobilization, and empathy. As history has shown, art has the potential to repeatedly portray an image with prejudice connotations to create an ideology or fixed stereotype, but it can also be a tool for unfixing stagnant beliefs by providing alternative views and transparency (Frye and Law). So just to be clear, the reason I perceive ethics to be relevant to this thesis is not because the Holocaust has been given the role of the epiphany of evil, and therefore, for the past atrocities of the Holocaust to have meaning, it must mean that “we” must all use it to learn to behave ethically “correct” in the future, but rather to get an insight in how we are behaving now.

### *6:3 How the thesis can serve future research*



One could claim that there is a way the world should be and the way it is, or rather how it appears to be, since the site of the perceived is in our minds. Social semiotics does not define a truth status of specific meanings, but rather advocates a reflexivity of how social differences are created from meanings by identifying what values and strategies that are being used to make the associations that provide the desired effect. When assessing the effect on an audience, it can never be absolutely pinpointed because of the varied interpretations and understandings dependent on previous knowledge and prejudice values of each individual. When it comes to the transference of the Holocaust memories there will always be something elusive, especially when the deep memory of the survivor's will move from being living memories into the history files. But, it can be argued that since "man's search for meaning" can be claimed to be a fuel for staying alive, as Frankl claims, then paradoxically the Holocaust "death" stories will forever provide fuel for life, since they can never provide a conclusive meaning. My reasoning is that the secular framing of the Universal Human Rights Declaration, and the religious connotations that linger within the concept of ethics, both focus on the way that the world should be, which is a noble effort that provides a lot of good in the world. What I suggest is not an either/or approach, even if carried out with outmost tolerance and respect of "the other", but rather an and/and all-inclusive attitude of curiosity and interest, with focus on difference not sameness, because if all difference are of value then relativity will be able to keep its value as well since it is not a competition for The truth, The right or The correct, but rather, paradoxically, for what is most relevant depending on circumstance.

The issue at hand is thus not what, how, when, who and why we should remember the Holocaust but what, how, when, and why it happened, which puts focus on research and education instead of on monuments and commemoration days. We must thus not only remember that it happened, but understand that it happened. In other words, work with what we know, instead of remember what we can not understand. Where does sympathy for the victims and survivors, eminently for the perpetrators, and blame of the bystanders take us? Does it not continue to encapsulate shame and guilt and an "us" and "them" attitude, which is the foundation of all atrocities to begin with? Are we to remember the victims to make sure that the perpetrators are reminded of their guilt and the bystanders their shame? Is focus on how to survive in relation to the other, or on how to live with the other, and since we are all others, is it maybe all about learning to live with ourselves? These are all more philosophical questions for continued contemplation within analytical research, but I am also curious about future empirical research in regards to the topic of Holocaust remembrance, with the focus on

the aspects of Holocaust education with questions like; What is learned from the remembrance of the Holocaust by all the youth that are taught it at school and in face to face encounters? Do their attitudes change? And, if so, in what direction? In other words, can we be certain that what we learn by remembering the Holocaust is positive? And thereby we come full circle back to a philosophical inquiry again.

**Appendix I:** “Memory Works” Exhibition Handout, 7 Dec.2012.

**MEMORY WORKS****CM VON HAUSSWOLFF**

På sen-sommaren 2009 tillbringade jag en tid i Krasnolesie (den Röda Skogen) i Ryssland. Området hette tidigare Rominten och tillhörde Ost-preussen, senare Tyskland. Att ströva omkring i en oexploaterad skog är en fantastisk upplevelse ... en slags gåva i detta 2000-talets brutalt uppodlade natur. Att skogen inte alls varit föremål för mänsklig aktivitet var givetvis felaktigt och spår av detta kunde skönjas om man undersökte terrängen. Jag hittade ruinerna till ett hus, ett ganska stort hus, och man informerade mig om att detta var Hermann Görings jaktstuga – hans första jaktstuga från den tid då han var gift med Emily, sin första fru. Fundamentet till huset fanns kvar dock starkt övervuxet av gräs, mossor, rötter och annat. Det var som om naturen ville förinta minnet av att denne Göring hade varit där; som om den inte ville ha något att göra med hans eftermäle. För mig kändes detta helt naturligt, men också fel: om man inte minns vad som skett i historien, så upprepas den. Jag beslöt mig för att ta mig till platsen igen för belysa den med rött ljus och fotografera den.

1989 reste jag och en kollega till Polen för att ställa ut i Kazimierz Dolny, en liten stad vid Wisla floden. Under vår vistelse för vi runt i området för att samla material till utställningen och färden tog oss till Lublin och närliggande Majdanek koncentrationsläger. Jag samlade lite aska från en av kremeringsugnar, men använde inte detta till utställningen – materialet var för starkt laddat av de grymheter som utspelat sig på platsen. Askan har sedan dess följt med mig; alltid funnits där ... till hands ... givit sig tillkänna. 2010 tog jag fram burken med askan och beslutade mig för att "göra något" med den. Jag tog fram ett antal akvarell papper och beslutade mig för att enbart täcka en rektangulär yta på dessa ark med aska utblandad med vatten. När jag så betraktade bilderna så "talade" dom till mig; figurer visade sig ... som om askan innehåll energier eller minnen eller "själar" från människor ... människor torterade, plågade och mördade av andra människor i ett av 1900-talets mest hänsynslösa krig.

**122 Calle Monterrey, Mexico City, April 2011 (2011)**

1. Location recording at 122 Calle Monterrey, Mexico City.  
2 ch stereo

2. EVP at 122 Calle Monterrey, Mexico City.  
2 ch stereo

- a) "Somebody's out there"
- b) "We saw him"
- c) "Get in"
- d) "Don't go out there"
- e) "Getting warm"
- f) "Who can help me?"

På våren 2011 tillbringade jag en tid i Mexico City för att göra ett filmverk med en mexikansk kollega. Filmen spelades in i ett hus på Calle Monterrey 122, i stadsdelen Roma, där författaren William S. Burroughs skjutit ihjäl sin fru Joan Vollmer Burroughs 1951. Jag passade på att göra en ljud-inspelning i hallen utanför lägenhet nummer 10, där skottet avlossats. Senare skickade jag inspelningen till en kollega i Chicago som är expert på Elektroniska Röst Fenomen - inspelningar av röster "från andra sidan" - och han lyckades hitta en hel del märkliga ljud. Det kan vara så att det har, på vissa platser, skett en eller flera så pass starka händelser att den energi som brukats då hänger sig kvar som ett moln eller ett kluster; ett eller kanske flera typer av osynliga, men inte ohörbara, koncentrat av minnesbanker. Dessa oraderade minnen lever sig kvar och gör sig hörda ... om man så vill.

**MARTIN BRYDER GALLERY**

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**Appendix II:**

## **Yad Vashem Learning Center Interviews**

(courtesy of The International School for Holocaust Studies)

### **First- Question:**

#### **Are there any Limitations to the Artistic Representation of the Holocaust?**

#### **List of Speakers:**

- Mrs. Yehudit Shendar, Senior Art Curator, Museum Division, Yad Vashem, Israel
- Mrs. Miriam Akavia, Author and Holocaust Survivor, Israel
- Mr. Motti Lerner, Playwright, Israel
- Prof. Omer Bartov, Historian, USA
- Dr. Gideon Ofrat, Curator and Art Critic, Israel
- Mr. David Grossman, Author, Israel

#### **Introduction:**

The effort to contend with the events of the Holocaust provided an impetus for artistic creativity. Sometimes art has become a matter of controversy. For example, it has been claimed that art serves social and political purposes, that it is not factually accurate, or that it is imbued with satirical and abusive humor.

- **Mrs. Yehudit Shendar, Senior Art Curator, Museum Division, Yad Vashem, Israel**

As long as survivors are alive, what is permitted and what is not is the boundary that they set, when they say they were injured or insulted or that they found something incorrect in an artistic work. I honor all of them, because of what they underwent, and what we did not undergo, and will not undergo, and I give them the right of veto. The moment there are no more survivors, we can open up the artistic discourse about the Holocaust to a broader lens, which must always be such that it does not rework shallow clichés, of the kind that repeat things from the past, but rather open up a new dialogue, providing us the possibility of speaking about the Holocaust with different and new words. At the basis of all works of art there must always be something that we call “integrity.” That is to say, between the thought and the thinking of the artist and the act in every area, there is one strong connection that says – quality”.

- **Mrs. Miriam Akavia, Author and Holocaust Survivor, Israel**

To use the Holocaust to create some entirely different reality, I think that is simply an injustice. It's a sin. It's forbidden to do that. It was so unique and so special and still in fact there is so much testimony, so that to take the reality of the Holocaust and distort it completely for the purpose of the success of an artist, that really seems wrong to me.

- **Mr. Motti Lerner, Playwright, Israel**

My point of departure is not the evident boundary between what is permitted and what is forbidden, but the boundary between what I can do and what I can't do. The place that I can't enter, for example, is the concentration camp, the gas chambers. I can't go there. I don't have the artistic tools to examine what happened in the concentration camps. I don't have the artistic tools to examine what happened in the gas chamber. Since I don't want to get into a situation of vulgarizing in the struggle with perplexities, with these subjects, I won't go there. I won't go close to there.

- **Prof. Omer Bartov, Historian, USA**

Look, there are always limits. The question is not if there are limits, but who decides where the limit should lie. This determination changes over time. But it must be a product of some sort of cultural discourse, which exists within a society or between different societies. It might sometimes be legal, if there are certain laws which you are breaking. But to say that I or you, or anyone can decide on the limit, and that that person's opinion should be the deciding one, will not help us understand anything, or remember anything. There are things which I do not like and there are things which I do like, and there are artistic works which I respect and those which I respect less, or am even utterly repelled by, or which I would prefer did not exist, but I don't think that is what matters. What matters is that if you make a film about Hitler's last days, or create a comic book about the relationship between you and your father, who is a Holocaust survivor, or whatever it may be, how that translates into a relation between the work of art and the public. If the work crosses certain lines, which the public is not prepared to accept, whether these are limits set by this particular public or by a wider public, then it will not come across. If it does come across, then it would seem that there is a sufficiently broad public, a consensus, which is sufficient to accept this type of representation. We might be repelled by this, but we cannot in any event change it. So it is better to partake in the discussion than to set limits, and by way of participation in the discussion you can try to have your position heard .

- **Dr. Gideon Ofrat, Curator and Art Critic, Israel**

I have to say not. I must first of all say no. Because the concept of art, the concept of art, in essence, is the kind of thing which negates limits. Woe is he who sets limits on art. Either art or no art. If you say art, you are saying freedom, freedom of expression. So, talking of limits and red lines which must not be crossed has nothing to do with art. At the same time, there is such a thing as ceremony, there is such a thing as consideration for the other, there is such a thing as good taste, and there is a such thing as idiocy, and there is such a thing as malice. And we do recall that there are Holocaust deniers, but nevertheless, I say there are no red lines, no limits. I would absolutely not be prepared to place any red lines, I think that it is inappropriate in any enlightened society. The answer to Nazism is an enlightened society, and an enlightened society does not place red lines, limits on art. Borders on art is tantamount to a totalitarian society, Stalinist or Nazi. And the enlightened society will produce from within itself those smart enough, and sensitive enough to accept and to read the daring way in which the artist treats the Holocaust, and will be wise enough to banish and expel from within itself foolish tampering. I'm not at all concerned. It's just art, and no work of art has yet destroyed a person. We know who did the destroying.

- **Mr. David Grossman, Author, Israel**

I think that art should take upon itself the risk that there will always be those, perverts or sensation seekers, or people for whom it answers all sorts of obscure needs, who will try to cheapen the Holocaust, and to do things which are truly shocking. But censorship of such things must not be determined in advance, because then we are liable to clip the wings of true artists, who need to operate from a sense of total freedom, and to reach places which you would think should not be reached, because that is what art is supposed to do, it is supposed to break limits, it is supposed to reformulate, but it will not always reformulate, unless it makes unceasing efforts to find new modes of expression, new angles. Otherwise there will be a process of coagulation, in which we become stuck within things already familiar to us, which are no longer new, and so cannot touch our hearts, or shock us, or move to a moral act when we want to act. So I would not set any a priori limits. Naturally, when and if there is some work of art which is really [arbitrarily] provocative, which is coarse, which has in it things which we do not wish to see there, then art must deal with it in artistic terms, and the academy will deal with it in academic terms, and journalism on its own terms - but all this needs to be done precisely from a point of total democracy, to allow even these unwanted elements, in order to enable all the rest.

### **Appendix III:**

#### **Yad Vashem Learning Center Interviews** (courtesy of The International School for Holocaust Studies)

## **Second- Question:**

### **Do The Nations of the World have a Responsibility toward Promoting Holocaust Remembrance?**

#### **List of Speakers:**

- Prof. Omer Bartov, Historian, USA
- Father Emil Shofani, clergyman and educator, Israel
- Prof. Hanna Yablonka, Historian, Israel
- Prof. Sidra Ezrahi, Researcher in Holocaust Literature, Israel
- Mr. Yoram Kaniuk, Writer and Journalist, Israel
- Prof. Georges Bensoussan, Historian, France

#### **Introduction**

The Holocaust, which took place in civilized, twentieth-century Europe with the knowledge of the free world, has become a turning point in the history of the Jewish people.

- **Prof. Omer Bartov, Historian, USA**

The legacy of the Holocaust is not what is specific to the Jewish People, and there is a specific legacy for the Jewish People. There is a specific legacy for the German people, and there are other nations which took part or were a part of the Holocaust in one way or another — so there is that sort of legacy. However, if you ask about the universal legacy — there was the rhetoric about this immediately after the Second World War — that instances like this of crimes against humanity must be prevented. In 1948, the United Nations passed a treaty which ultimately most of the countries of the world signed, including the United States — it took her 40 years to sign it, but she also signed in the end — about genocide. In this treaty it is written, and the signatory countries are obliged to obey what is written there, that in the case of genocide occurring, and there is a definition of what genocide is, the signatory countries are obliged to do what they can to prevent it and to penalize it. Since the signing of the treaty until today, there have only been two courts set up in the 1990s that dealt with two instances of genocide, after they had already happened. That was the international legacy that was humanity's legacy. One could say that the Western world had a legacy of enlightenment, but the Western world sees this legacy of enlightenment of the eighteenth Century, of humanism, as a legacy for all of humanity, not just for Europe, not just for the United States — and it did not put it into effect. Today, in these months, as you know, for the first time in history, one country — the United States — recognized an event that is happening now as a genocide, in Darfur, in the Sudan. But the moment she recognized it she was supposed to act against this event. She said “no, we should not take action”. This means that until now, countries did not want to recognize a given event as genocide because they were signed on the treaty which obliges them to act. Now there is a precedent which allows for the recognition of an event as genocide, while at the same time saying “well, we will set up a committee and we will investigate it.” That should have been the legacy of the Holocaust. Nuremberg and the Genocide Treaty happened because of the Holocaust. If you ask again what is unique about the Holocaust, one of the most unique things about the Holocaust was that the Holocaust was the main engine in beginning international legislation and setting up international institutions to prevent genocide. This is a most important legacy, but it has not been upheld.

- **Father Emil Shofani, clergyman and educator, Israel**

I think that the Western world needs to learn this and to go over what happened again, and to learn how to pass it on to the whole world. I have spoken about the universality of the Holocaust. It was the Holocaust of the Jewish People, but among the Jewish People there was humanity which is everywhere — that is now lost. How do we remind the human being to be not separate from the other? United, how

do we remind the human being that he is the image of God and to go from there? This is not just a reminder, but rather a place from which to understand our world today. The Holocaust was a universal lesson. I think that the lesson does not only need to be learned again in Europe. I don't mean a lesson in understanding the study of information or the study of what happened. It is ultimately what happened 60 years ago, and many people say "it's over and done with", so we need to find the ways that [touch] not only the mind but also the heart. Connecting with feeling and responsibility that I will learn about the Holocaust, means that I will take responsibility today for my neighbor and for humanity. The philosophy of the non-European worlds, for example the Moslem Arab or African worlds or wherever, that is the place of human responsibility — you cannot be held responsible for what happened, you can undertake the human responsibility of mankind. You are responsible from a position of humanity and that is not only in the place of what happened (direct responsibility), but a situation in which humanity can again betray self-respect and humanity and ultimately be lead astray.

- **Prof. Hanna Yablonka, Historian, Israel**

I think so. I think that the event of the Holocaust is... a watershed in the moral, ethical and legal heritage of the twentieth century. There is no doubt that this is an international task; [it is] incumbent upon every single country and society to deal with this episode of the Holocaust. I have no doubt of it. I also must say that most [countries] do this. The starting point is a Jewish one but... because as I said, the Holocaust is not only an episode in Jewish history, but also an episode of Jewish history amongst the nations of the world. [The Holocaust] is not only about Jews. I mean this could be an excellent starting point. However, I have no doubt that all the countries have to deal with this episode in history, including countries that were not directly involved... I know that for South East Asia this was not really an episode that directly affected what they did or did not do, or which they encountered directly. This is a dividing line... the Holocaust is a watershed event in my opinion in the history of humanity. Emil Fackenheim said, and I absolutely agree with him, that this was an event that shaped an era. As a result, every society which has reached maturity and grapples with its past, must be part of the story of Holocaust remembrance.

- **Prof. Sidra Ezrahi, Researcher in Holocaust Literature, Israel**

The word responsibility is for me a word which can affect me alone. I cannot lay responsibility on someone else. Another person must take responsibility for himself. I cannot preach to the Germans about how to remember these events. I cannot benefit from that or authorize the phenomenon of people who deal with the most difficult questions. What does a grandchild, who discovers that his grandfather was in the SS, do? I can respect that. I cannot lay the responsibility for dealing with the subject on him. I can respect the way he does this. I can take responsibility for myself. So I think that Jewish society or Israeli society sometimes dealt with it responsibly and sometimes irresponsibly. For example, in my opinion, the poet Dan Pagis, precisely dealt with this matter of responsibility. Where is a person responsible for events like these? Every nation records its own history in a different way. I still think that it is a bit strange that there should be a public memorial for the Holocaust in Washington DC because this was not an American event. It is true that the Americans took part in the War, and took part in the liberation of the camps and in the victory over Hitler, but this is not an American event. I am glad that it exists, but it is still peculiar to me that they established it. Every society must deal alone with its experience of events which belong to that specific society.

- **Mr. Yoram Kaniuk, Writer and Journalist, Israel**

In my opinion, they have a huge responsibility, but they cannot handle it because it is impossible to face up to such a responsibility. I don't know... when I read the history of the French during the period of the Holocaust, the collaboration, the help they gave, sometimes they were the ones who led Jews to the



camps even before the Germans took them. In addition, the cultural renaissance which occurred in French at that time — the best movies, the best plays, I mean one shouldn't forget that. I mean now, to whom can I complain? We should have done that more than fifty years ago, not today, even if we could. But today, to whom will you come, to some Frenchman who doesn't know what you want from him?! The fact that once a year they say at some conference or in some statement that they will never forget and all that, but it's rubbish, they will forget. Other people's pain is very difficult to bear. So at least this is recognized today. Suddenly in the United Nations, they stand to attention in memory of the Holocaust survivors for the first time, then there is something symbolic, which maybe works as a kind of ...as a sort of underground tunnel into people's souls. Suddenly it comes around again. Yet, they come and say, I don't know, "the Jews today are Nazis". I know — "They made an Auschwitz in Jenin". Today everything is turned upside down. ...The Portuguese Nobel Laureate for literature [Saramago] said that Israel had created an Auschwitz in Jenin. Fifty-six Arabs were killed there, and twenty- three Israelis. To call that Auschwitz is the sacrilege of sacrileges, but that is what goes on today. So I don't know if all these grand statements by the leaders of the world can really change anything, when they say, just a minute, it's not us, it's them. I don't know.

- **Prof. Georges Bensoussan, Historian, France**

In principle the Holocaust was the work of Germany, of course, but many of Germany's allies also took part in it. Germany did not act alone and she had many partners in crime: The Ukraine, the Baltic States, Romania, Vichy France, Slovakia, Hungary and other countries. All these countries, even those that did not take part directly in the Holocaust need to be accountable. For example, England closed the gates of Palestine to the Jews despite their cries for help, due to Arab pressure at that time. The United States of America ignored all requests for intervention, such as those states heard at the Bermuda Conference in 1943. Switzerland, contrary to widespread opinion, turned away refugees. Yes, these nations have a special obligation regarding the Holocaust. That does not mean that the emphasis needs to be placed on guilt. Everyone is sick of the matter of guilt. It is impossible to gain a receptive ear from the nations by generating an all-encompassing feeling of guilt. The issue should be examined in historical terms: this is what the nations did; and this is what they did not do. From there, the obligation on the part of the nations to intervene in other nations' affairs will clearly emerge, and the Holocaust has clearly proved this. As for the excuse that it is inappropriate to intervene in the affairs of other [nations] it is impossible to stand by and do nothing when a nation is in danger of annihilation. In this respect, Western countries have a special responsibility to further Holocaust education.

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