



Weiss - Livnat
International Center
for Holocaust Research
and Education



Art in Extremis: Creative Resistance during the Holocaust

Dr. Rachel Perry

Wednesdays 16:00-19:00, Fall Semester

Office Hours: By appointment.

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Course Description:

This course surveys art produced in extremis during the Holocaust, by individuals in hiding, or in the camps and ghettos. We will explore how victims and witnesses used artistic expression as both a means of documentation and as a form of “creative resistance” to communicate their protest, despair or hope. Course readings couple secondary literature with primary sources and ego documents of the period, such as the artists’ own writings and diaries. Particular attention will be given to the social, political and cultural contexts of art production and reception. Throughout, we will examine the complex and varied responses artists had to their circumstances. What rhetorical or stylistic strategies did artists employ (satire, irony, etc.)? What themes and motifs did they gravitate towards? What genres (portraiture, still life, landscape) predominate and why? How is gender represented and how did gender impact art-making? What is the relationship between aesthetics and atrocity? Our material ranges from now iconic works such as Charlotte Salomon’s *Life? Or Theater?* to unfamiliar works by little known or even anonymous artists; from “high” art to popular culture; and from the fine arts (sculpture, prints, painting) to visual culture more broadly defined, as evidenced in comic books, satirical cartoons, posters, illustrated stamps, board games, carved tools, jewelry, clothing, as well as the graffiti left on the walls of the camps.

Instead of writing a final paper, students will be curating their own digital art exhibition. After learning about artistic production during the Holocaust, students will think about how to curate and exhibit this material to the public in interesting, innovative and historically informed ways. Every exhibition tells a story; it crafts a narrative, using objects and images and text. What works of art and artifacts do you want to exhibit? How do you want to install them in the gallery? What kind of space do you think is most appropriate for your show? We will think about modes of presentation and installation as well as questions of ethics and point of view.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

1.	Lead one discussion	10%
2.	Class Participation and Discussion Posts	20%
3.	Oral presentation (formal analysis)	20%
4.	Digital Exhibition, including proposal and presentation	50%

Lead One Discussion: Each week, one student will present the assigned readings for the week and prepare some questions and comments to guide our discussion. Sign up on the first day of class. First come first served.

Oral Presentation: Formal Analysis: Select one work of art and conduct a formal analysis, considering medium, size, scale, technique, content, style and composition. Present your work to the class in a recorded video (max. 10 min), offering reflections on the work's historical significance, the artist's background and possible meanings. Discussions on the presentations to follow in class.

Class participation and Forum Posts: After you have completed the readings, you will then respond to prompts posted in the discussion board (in the "Forum" section on Moodle).

Students are required to write at least TWO posts per week, (except for in week 6 and week 13, where you will write a formal analysis and a peer evaluation in response to the oral presentations and the final projects.)

- One larger post of 200-300 words answering one of the posted forum questions in relation to the recorded lectures, assigned readings, and questions of curation.
- One shorter posts of 150 words responding to posts from other students.
- You are encouraged to post more than these, as well as to add other reflections, but please address first the required forum question.

Your first large post and one shorter post should appear no later than Saturday midnight (11:59 pm Israel time) after our class, and the second one no later than Monday noon (11:59 AM Israel time) that finishes the unit. For example, if the week's readings begin Oct. 1, the first posts are due Oct 4, and the final post on Oct. 7, a day before our next meeting. Early posting will allow people to respond and help create an atmosphere of exchange and mutual inspiration.

Conversely, routinely posting at the very end of the deadlines prevents other students from reading and responding to your posts on time. Think of what shows your most valuable insights and moves the discussion forward. "Empty" posts, i.e., the ones that do not show any reflection or knowledge of the material, will not be counted as valuable participation. I will serve as a monitor for all board discussions but will try to intervene as little as possible in the discussions so that students may more freely engage in an informed and ongoing conversation about each relevant issue.

Digital Exhibition: After you identify the basic idea or theme of your exhibition, you will submit a title, rationale and curatorial statement of intent, a list of selected works, wall text and then upload these to the online template. Your proposal for the exhibition is due after mid-semester (week 8). I encourage you to meet with me to discuss your topic and plans. The submissions will be evaluated and peer reviewed.

After you have identified the basic idea or theme of your exhibition, you will submit a proposal, no later than mid-semester (**Week 8**). Your proposal should include:

- a title
- rationale or curatorial statement of intent
- a list of selected works
- annotated bibliography including at least 5 sources

Writing a curatorial statement:

A well-written curatorial statement is your chance to guide the way the audience perceives your exhibition. It represents an opportunity to communicate directly with viewers and help them recognize your intent and purpose in your body of work, understand your point of view, and generate intrigue and curiosity about the body of work they are about to experience.

Approaching the introduction to the exhibition is like tackling any typical research essay. First, grab the audience's attention and provide some sort of thesis statement concerning the exhibition. What is the main goal of the exhibition? To back up a thesis statement consider what piece of art to include. The pieces of work on display do not exist in a vacuum. Like providing textual quotes to argue a literary essay, art historians use 'art' as their evidence to argue their thesis as well as providing primary and secondary sources. It is best to introduce some of these major works of art in the introduction. The introduction should provide historical and thematic context for the exhibit. The word limit is 400 - 600 words. Do not exceed this.

Once approved, you will upload the following documents to the template:

- selected works
- wall texts
- labels

You will present your exhibition to the class in an oral presentation and then publish it (**Week 12-13**). All submissions will be evaluated and peer reviewed at the end of the semester.

I am available throughout the semester to meet with you and guide you. I encourage you to email me to discuss your topic and plans.

Referats and Seminar Papers: If you chose to write a referat or a seminar paper for this course, please let me know as soon as possible. A referat or seminar paper is in addition to the above-mentioned requirements, projects, and the final project but it can (and I imagine should) expand upon it. These papers are due by the first week of Semester B. Abstracts with bibliography necessary by the end of the semester.

Referats: 8-10 pages. 12 point Times Roman, single spaced. Chicago Manual formatting. Endnotes preferred, bibliography and illustrations appended, with captions necessary.

Seminar Papers: 15+ pages. 12 point Times Roman, single spaced. Chicago Manual formatting. Endnotes preferred, bibliography and illustrations appended, with captions necessary.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Oct. 13 – **Introduction: Despite Everything: Art in Extremis**

- Submit a letter of introduction

Readings:

- Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War* (Princeton, 2014), Ch. 9.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Complexities of Witnessing," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, pp. 123-147.
- Sybil Milton, "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary" Randolph L. Braham (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.

Week 2 Oct. 20 – **Art/Artifact: Identifying and Placing "Holocaust" Art**

Students will consider how the installation and curation of art objects impacts meaning, by discussing how museums have exhibited Holocaust art.

- Review the Digital Exhibition Template and Tutorial
- Discussion posts assignment: What does an art curator do and what kinds of art exhibitions are there?

Readings:

- Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg, "Curatorial Strategies in Yad Vashem Art Exhibitions," *MOCAM Magazine*, 2018.
- Yehudit Shendar, "Power and Fragility: The History of the Art Collection at Yad Vashem," in *The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz*. Edited by David Mickenberg, Corinne Granof, Peter Hayes.
- Kyra Schuster, "The Art Collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC." Unpublished paper.
- Review folder on the Ghez collection - https://vt.pano vision.co.il/Hecht_museum/Hecht_museum/start.html
- https://www.academia.edu/35307010/THE_GHEZ_COLLECTION_Memorial_in_Honor_of_Jewish_Artists_Victims_of_Nazism

Week 3, October 27 – **Facing the Holocaust – Portraits in Peril**

Students will begin to plan and assemble their exhibition: create a rationale and statement of purpose, identify the works and artists they will use, and outline a design and floor plan.

- Go over principles of formal analysis for analyzing images
- **Select a work of art for your formal analysis. Submit for approval**

Readings:

- Pnina Rosenberg, "Art During the Holocaust," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (Macmillan, 2006).
- Stephen Feinstein, *Art and the Holocaust*, link: https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Holocaust/Art_and_the_Holocaust

Week 4 - Nov. 3 - **Student presentations: Formal Analysis – DUE**

Week 5 Nov. 10 - **1938: Responses to Kristallnacht and Entartete Kunst**

Students will think about the stakes of artistic creation and objects of material culture more generally and decide how to convey their message through objects and images.

Readings:

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1991), pp. 138-153, 180-181.
- Lucy Wasensteiner, *The Twentieth Century German Art Exhibition: Answering Degenerate Art in 1930s London* (Routledge, 2018). Ch. 9
- Glenn Sujo, Prewar in *Legacies of Silence*

Websites: *London 1938: Defending "Degenerate" German Art.*

<https://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/London-1938>

<https://www.lbi.org/1938projekt/1/mutual-aid-for-the-dispossessed>

Week 6, Nov. 17 – **Art in Exile: Artists on the Run**

Readings:

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Artist as Refugee," in *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, ed. Mendelsohn and Cohen, New York, 1990.
- Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence*, "Art in Transit"
- Eunice Lipton on Felix Nussbaum, ZEEK magazine
- Mary Felstiner, "Charlotte Salomon's Inward-turning Testimony," *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Hartman (1994)

Watch film: Franz Weisz, *Charlotte Salomon*, 2012

Web sites:

<https://forward.com/culture/430166/refugee-artists-from-nazis-processed-displacement-new-york-exhibit/>

<http://www.ihm.nl/collection/themes/charlotte-salomon>

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

Week 7, Nov. 24 – **Art in Internment Camps** (Gurs, Milles, Compiègne, Drancy)

Readings:

- Pnina Rosenberg, "Mickey Mouse in Gurs" *Rethinking History* (2002).
- Rachel Perry, "Nathalie Kraemer's Rising Voice," *Ars Judaica* (March 2020).
- Pnina Rosenberg, *L'art des indésirables: l'art visuel dans les camps français* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003).
- Nieszawer, Nadine. *Jewish Artists of the School of Paris 1905-1939* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2015).

Websites:

<http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/>

Week 8, Dec. 1 – **Art in Internment Camps (cont.)**

SUBMIT EXHIBITION PROPOSAL/ Curatorial statement

Week 9, Dec. 8 – **Art in the Ghettos:** Warsaw, Białystok, Kovno, Terezin

Readings:

- Langer, L. L., "Painters of Terezin," in *Art in the Ashes, A Holocaust Anthology*, New York, 1995, pp. 663-689.

- Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence* "Art in Ghettos"
- Makarova, L., "Friedl Remembered," *Jewish Art*, vol. 16/17, 1990/91, 122-129.
- *Seeing through "Paradise": Artists and the Terezin Concentration Camp*, exh. cat., Mass. College of Art, Boston, 1991.

Web sites:

<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos/video-toolbox/hevt-terezin-haas.html>

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

<https://www.jmberlin.de/fritta/en/>

Week 10, Dec. 15 – **Art in the Concentration and Extermination Camps**

Readings:

- Mary Costanza, *Living Witness*
- Sybil Milton, *Art and Auschwitz*. In Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton. *Art of the Holocaust* (Routledge, New York, 1981).
- Dora Appel, "The Auschwitz Memorial Museum and the Gypsy Portraits" *Other Voices*, 2002.
- Knigge, "Paul Goyard, Art in Buchenwald"

Web sites:

<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/historical-collection/works-of-art/>

<https://www.yadvashem.org/museum/museum-complex/art/collection.html>

Week 11, Dec. 22 – **Postwar Witnessing**

Readings:

- Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, *Judenmord: Art and the Holocaust in Postwar Germany* (Reaktion, 2018), ch. 1 and 2.
- *Mirjam Rayner*, "Zinovii Tolkachev's Jesus in Majdanek" and "Flowers of Auschwitz"

Week 12, Dec. 29 – **Digital Exhibition Student Presentations**

Submit Wall Texts, list of works and labels

Prepping our exhibitions, review technical issues and presentation skills

Week 13, Jan 5 – **Digital Exhibition Peer Evaluations**

Students will describe their museum exhibition to the class and justify their formal and thematic choices.

Week, 14, Jan. 12 – **Opening Night for Your Exhibitions, Final Lecture**

Students will evaluate (critique and assess) the projects of their peers.

Peer and Self- Evaluations due last class

Web sites:

<http://www.ecoledeparis.org>

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

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

http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/art_museum.asp

<http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/>

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

Surveys:

Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence: The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory*. London : Philip Wilson Publishers, 2001.

Miriam Novitch and Lucy Dawidowicz. *Art from the Concentration Camps, 1940-1945*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981.

Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton. *Art of the Holocaust* (Routledge, New York, 1981).

Mary S. Costanza, *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*. The Free Press, 1982.

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

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

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