

Art in Extremis: Creative Resistance during the Holocaust

Dr. Rachel Perry
Wednesdays 18:00-21:00, 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. Together, we will explore how victims used artistic expression as both a means of documentation and as a form of “creative resistance” to communicate their protest, despair or hope. 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 (like the Monopoly board from Terezin), carved tools, jewelry, clothing, wall decorations 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:

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|----|---|------|
| 1. | Lead one online discussion | 10% |
| 2. | Oral presentation (formal analysis) | 10 % |
| 3. | Discussion Posts including peer reviews | 30% |
| 4. | Digital Exhibition | 50% |

Lead One Online Discussion: Each week I will post a 45 minute powerpoint lecture I have prepared on the topic. In addition, I have invited a number of guest lecturers (Holocaust art specialists and curators) to speak briefly for 15 minutes. One or two students will research the invited guest and prepare some questions and comments to guide our discussion. Sign up on the first day of class.

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 uploaded to flipgrid (max. 10 min), offering reflections on the work's historical significance, the artist's background and possible meanings.

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

Students are required to write at least FOUR posts per week, (except for in week 3 and week 8, where you will write peer reflections and peer evaluations in response to the oral presentations and the final projects.)

- Two larger posts of 250 words answering one of the posted forum questions in relation to the recorded lectures, assigned readings, and questions of curation.
- Two shorter posts of 150 words responding to posts from other students.
- You are encouraged to post more than these four for each week, as well as to add other reflections, but please address first the two required forum questions.

Your first large post and one shorter post should appear no later than Wednesday midnight (11:59 pm EST) after our class, and the second one no later than Tuesday noon (11:59 AM EST) that finishes the unit, as you progress in your readings. For example, if the week's readings begin Oct. 1, the first posts are due Oct 5, and the final on July 7. 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. I will try to post the grades (with feedback) by the end of the following week, however, this will be done timely only if circumstances allow.

Digital Exhibition: You will identify the basic idea or theme of your exhibition. You will then 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 and annotated bibliography are due at mid-semester (week 4). Afterward, I encourage you to meet with me in a private video call (zoom) meeting to discuss your topic and plans. The submissions will be evaluated and peer reviewed at the end of the semester.

OPTIONAL VIDEO CALL DISCUSSIONS – While not for a grade, I strongly encourage each student to attend weekly, unit-based video-call discussion sections. They will cover the previous week's readings (those you have already made a Forum post for). Graduate level education relies on students producing their own understanding of texts and defending those understandings in conversation with each other. I will be using Google Hangouts in an attempt to replicate the classroom discussion experience.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Oct. 21 – **Introduction: Defining our Terms**

Guest speaker: Monica Bohm-Duchen

Review the Digital Exhibition Template and watch my Screencastify Tutorial

Week 2 Oct. 28 – **Art in Extremis/Art of War: Identifying and Placing “Holocaust” Art**

- 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.
- Rosenberg Pnina, "Art During the Holocaust," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Macmillan, 2006).
- Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War* (Princeton, 2014).
Selections

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

Brainstorming session – Digital exhibitions

Guest speakers: Michael Morris, Curatorial Associate, Museum Jewish Heritage

Artur Winiarski, Villa Lafleur, Warsaw

<https://mjhnyc.org/exhibitions/rendering-witness-holocaust-era-art-as-testimony/>

Week 4 Nov. 11 - **1938: Responses to Kristallnacht and Entartete Kunst**

Guest speaker: Lucy Wasensteiner

- 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).

Websites: *London 1938: Defending “Degenerate” German Art*.

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

Week 5 Nov. 18 – **Art in Exile**

Guest speaker:

Film Screening: Franz Weisz, *Charlotte Salmon*, 2012, *Through These Eyes*

- Griselda Pollock, *Charlotte Salomon and the Theater of Memory* (Yale, 2018).
- Mary Felstiner, “Charlotte Salomon’s Inward-turning Testimony,” *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Hartman (1994)
- Berger, Eva, et al., Felix Nussbaum: *Art Defamed, Art in Exile, Art in Resistance, a Biography*. Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY, 1997.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, “The Artist as Refugee,” in *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, ed. Mendelsohn and Cohen, New York, 1990.

Web sites:

<https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org/>

Griselda Pollock on Charlotte Salomon:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMhvoGhtkps>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l32AtDhZqO4>

<http://www.jhm.nl/collection/themes/charlotte-salomon>
<http://www.osnabrueck.de/fnh/english/default.asp>

Week 6, Nov. 25 – **Witnesses/Bystanders** Kokoschka, Grosz, Otto Pankok, Else Lasker Schuler, Hans and Lea Grundig, Jacques Lipschitz....

Guest speaker: Jurgen Kaumkötter, Center for Persecuted Art, Solingen

- Kampf, Avram. *Chagall to Kitaj, Jewish Experience in Twentieth Century Art* (Praeger, 1990). Selections
- Amishai-Maisels, Ziva. *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1993). Selections

Week 7, Dec. 2 – **France under Occupation, Art in Internment Camps (Gurs, Milles, Compiègne, Drancy)**

Guest speaker: Michèle Cone and Pnina Rosenberg

- Rachel Perry, “Nathalie Kraemer’s Rising Voice,” *Ars Judaica* (March 2020).
- Pnina Rosenberg, “Mickey Mouse in Gurs” *Rethinking History* (2002).
- -----, *L’art des indésirables: l’art visuel dans les camps français* (L’Harmattan, Paris, 2003).
- Kenneth Silver and Romy Golan, *Circle of Montparnasse* (Jewish Museum, 1985).
- Michele Cone, *Artists Under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution* (1992).
- Nieszawer, Nadine. *Jewish Artists of the School of Paris 1905-1939* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d’Art, 2015).

Web sites:

<http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/>
https://www.academia.edu/35307010/THE_GHEZ_COLLECTION_Memorial_in_Honor_of_Jewish_Artists_Victims_of_Nazism
https://vt.panovision.co.il/Hecht_museum/Hecht_museum/start.html

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

Guest Speaker: Eliad Moreh Rosenberg, Yad Vashem Art Museum and Anat Weiner on Friedl Dicker Brandeis, Maya Katz on Samuel Bak

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 9, Dec. 16 – **Art in the Concentration and Extermination Camps**

Guest Speaker: Sarah Wilson, Yveline Taslitzky and Ella Faldorf, Art in Buchenwald

- Sarah Wilson, *Picasso, Marx and socialist realism in France*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013, chapter 4: 'Le Charnier or Buchenwald? Communism and the Holocaust'
- Miriam Novitch and Lucy Dawidowicz. *Art from the Concentration Camps, 1940-1945*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981.
- Blatter, Janet and Sybil Milton. *Art of the Holocaust* (Routledge, New York, 1981).

Web sites:

<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/historical-collection/works-of-art/>
<https://www.yadvashem.org/museum/museum-complex/art/collection.html>

Week 10, Dec. 23 – Postwar Witnessing

Guest speakers: Katrin Hoffmann Curtius, Hannah Wilson, Art in DP camps, Cyprus, Carol Zemel, Nathan Diamant on J.D. Kirszenbaum

- Carol Zemel, reading tba
- Katrin Hoffmann Curtius, *Judenmord: Art and the Holocaust in Postwar Germany* (Reaktion, 2018).

Web sites: <https://www.kirszenbaum.com>

Week 11, Dec. 30 – Prepping our exhibitions

Week 12, Jan. 6– **Digital Exhibition Student Presentations**

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

To contact and save dates still:

Batya Brutin, Gender
Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw
Art Collection, USHMM kschuster@ushmm.org>
Art Collection, Auschwitz Museum

Web sites:

<http://www.ecoledeparis.org>
<http://www.jpost.com/Arts-and-Culture/Arts/From-Montparnasse-to-Auschwitz>
<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-fate-of-otto-freundlichpainter-maudit/>
<http://lastexpression.northwestern.edu/>
<http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/arts/art.htm>
<http://art.holocaust-education.net/>
<http://chgs.umn.edu/museum/>
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/99/>
http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/art_museum.asp
<http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/>
<http://www.bterezin.org.il/>

Lecture Series

Art in Extremis: Creative Resistance during the Holocaust

Unless otherwise specified, all lectures will begin at 19:00 pm on Wednesdays on Zoom. Please sign up in advance.

Week 1, Oct. 21 –

Dr. Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Creativity against the Odds; An Introduction*

Monica Bohm-Duchen is an independent writer, lecturer, and curator. Based in London, the institutions she has worked for include the Courtauld Institute of Art, Birkbeck, University of London, Sotheby's Institute of Art, Tate, the National Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts. The exhibitions she has curated or co-curated include *Art in Exile in Great Britain 1933-1945* (1985/6); *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art* (1990); *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art* (1995), *Rubies and Rebels: Jewish Female Identity in Contemporary British Art* (1996/7) and *Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theatre?* (1998). Her many publications include *Art and the Second World War* (2013). She was the initiator and Creative Director of *Insiders/Outsiders*, a nationwide, year-long arts festival celebrating the contribution of refugees from Nazi Europe to British culture (see <https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org/> for further details).

Week 2, Oct. 28 –

Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg, Director, Yad Vashem Art Museum

What is unique about the Art Museum at Yad Vashem? What kinds of research and exhibitions does it create and support? What is their mandate?

Kyra Schuster, Curator, USHMM

What art objects are in the USHMM's collection? What does the museum collect (just art or everything?), and how does it incorporate art into their exhibitions and building. How does their collecting mandate and exhibition of art differ from Yad Vashem's?

Week 3, Nov. 4 –

Michael Morris, *Rendering Witness: Holocaust Era Art as Testimony*

After completing a master's degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University, Michael A. Morris completed a second master's degree at the George Washington University in Experiential Education and Jewish Cultural Arts. He worked in the Collections and Exhibitions department at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust from March 2017 to March 2020, first as the Curatorial Assistant and later as Curatorial Associate. In addition to curating the exhibition, *Rendering Witness – Holocaust-Era Art as Testimony*, some of Michael's curatorial responsibilities included leading artifact

rotations, cataloguing and conducting historical research on objects in the museum's collection, and meeting with individuals in the New York City area interested in donating Holocaust-era artifacts.

Week 4, Nov. 11 –

Dr. Lucy Wasensteiner, *“An Exhibition as Activism: Answering Entartete Kunst in London, 1938”*

Dr. Lucy Wasensteiner studied Law at the universities of Bristol and Oxford and holds a PhD in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art. Her research focuses on modern art in German-speaking Europe from 1871, National Socialist cultural policy and provenance research. She has lectured at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and the University of Bonn. In February 2020, she was appointed Director of the Liebermann-Villa am Wannsee in Berlin.

Week 5, Nov. 18 –

Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, *Mickey in a mousetrap: Horst Rosenthal's calvaire as a German-Jewish refugee in French internment camps*

Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, who for many years served as the art curator at the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum (Israel), is a Senior Lecturer in the Technion (Haifa) where she teaches various courses on the art/legacy of the Holocaust. During her research on visual art in French internment camps (WW II) she was the first scholar to unveil Horst Rosenthal's graphic novels done in Gurs. She has presented her pioneering research on Rosenthal's life and oeuvre in several books, articles and at international conferences.

Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, *Art and "Judenmord" in Post War Germany: Five Findings*

Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius is an independent scholar in art history based in Berlin, Germany. Her professional fields of research include the representation of nation, German memorials to World War I & II, the German Avant-garde, art in National Socialism and "degenerate" art. She has taught at the universities of Hamburg, Tuebingen, Trier and Vienna and has received research grants from the German federal states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Brandenburg; she has organized and spoken at several congresses for gender studies in art history; she was a fellow at ifk Vienna in 2004 and has been a member of several committees for contemporary memorial politics, including the colloquium for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. The book “Judenmord” is the outcome of a long research process of widely unknown artworks. For a complete list of her publications (including recent English essays), please [visit www.hoffmann-curtius.de](http://www.hoffmann-curtius.de).

Week 6, Nov. 25 –

Jurgen Kaumkötter, *And Death Shall Have No Dominion: Art in Auschwitz*. The lecture will introduce artists and works of art that were created between 1940 and 1945 in the Auschwitz concentration camp, placing them in the context of the art that was made immediately after the liberation of prisoners. Not only in terms of content, but also formally, the works from the camp period and those that were created afterwards are very different.

Jürgen Joseph Kaumkötter MA, Director of the Museum Centre for persecuted Arts in Solingen is an Art historian. He is an expert in Holocaust art, Art in exile, persecuted art with extensive knowledge of private and museal collections of this period of art. In 2020, he realized the exhibition “David Olere. The One Who Survived Crematorium III and in 2015 he curated the exhibition “And Death Shall Have No Dominion”, both for the German Bundestag on the occasion of the 70th and 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.“ It was also shown in Krakow in the Museum for contemporary Arts in the former factory of Oskar Schindler. After years of researches in the State Museum Auschwitz he could realize 2005 the exhibition “Art in Auschwitz 1940 – 1945”, opened by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in the Centrum Judaicum – Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin, and subsequently shown later on in the Felix-Nussbaum-Haus Osnabrück and in the Museum of Polish Independence, Łódź, Poland.

Week 7, Dec. 2 –

Dr. Michèle Cone, *Artists under Vichy, Painting with the Enemy*. Cone will answer questions based on the television program “Painting with the Enemy” aired on Channel Four London. “Just what did Picasso do during the Occupation of France? Was Matisse just an old man happy to paint flowers and gardens or was he less than distant from the Vichy fascists? Who collaborated and who suffered?” Filmed in the 1990s when a number of participants in the art life of Paris during WWII were still alive, the program includes revealing interviews.

Michele C. Cone was first an art critic who taught theory at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She became an independent scholar when at age 56 she received her Ph.D. from New York University. Besides Artists under Vichy (1992) and Perspectives on art before during and after Vichy (2001), she has appeared in several anthologies, in the Art Bulletin, in Modernism /Modernity and, most recently in in the Museum of Modern Art travelling exhibition of Picasso’s art. (See Academia.edu) Born in Paris in a Jewish family, she went through WWII in France as a child and lost several close relatives. She lives in New York City.

Week 8, Dec. 9 –

Dr. Mirjam Rajner, *Artists in Internment Camps in Yugoslavia*

Mirjam Rajner, Ph.D., is an associate professor and chair of the Jewish Art Department of Bar-Ilan University. She is the co-editor of *Ars Judaica*, *The Bar-Ilan Journal of Jewish Art*. Her research and publications deal with the art and visual culture of the east-, central and southeast European artists of Jewish origin active during the nineteenth century, the interwar period and the Holocaust. She is the author of *Fragile Images: Art and Jews in Yugoslavia, 1918-1945* (Brill, 2019), and co-author with Richard I. Cohen of the forthcoming *Samuel Hirszenberg (1865-1908): The Ideological and Cultural Challenges of a Polish Jewish Artist* (Liverpool University Press/Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2021).

Week 9, Dec. 16 –

Professor Sarah Wilson, *Life, literature, politics. Boris Taslitzky and the war for 'truth'*. Boris Taslitzky, the Paris-born son of emigrés to Paris fleeing Russian pogroms, was deported to Buchenwald in August 1944; he drew both as a witness and as portraitist of his comrades. *Cent-onze dessins faits à Buchenwald* in 1945, offered the first graphic account of the camps in France; the history painting *Buchenwald*, 1946 followed. Nazi atrocity was first coopted by the French Communist Party, in the context of Resistance, witness accounts or analyses by figures such as David Rousset. However, 1949 saw the revelation of the Soviet atom bomb, debates around the memoirs of Victor Kravchenko, I chose liberty and, Rousset's publication of the Soviet penal code, hence the existence of the gulag. Far from 'unutterable', totalitarian atrocity became a currency for fake news and a propaganda war around 'truth', against the background of France's US Marshall Aid reconstruction and Cold War. By 1950, Taslitzky's *Death of Danielle Casanova* (in Auschwitz) was conceived from the start as a political intervention: yet his own mother perished there. His Buchenwald comrade, Maurice Halbwach's *Collective memory* (posthumous, 1950) avoided the personal and psychoanalytic, as did Jorge Semprun's *Literature or life* (first published 1994).

Sarah Wilson is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. She is author of *The Visual World of French Theory 1. Figurations* (Yale, 2010, French 2018) and *Picasso, Marx and Socialist Realism in France* (Liverpool, 2013, Russian for 2021) which explores the role of art in the context of the French Communist Party. She knew Boris Taslitzky for over twenty-five years ; this 'lived' introduction to the Holocaust and its repercussions preceded any analysis of its relationship with Nouveau réalisme, with Alain Resnais, Christian Boltanski, Georges Perec, or her work with Jochen Gerz at the time of his project in Coventry, UK. She took Jorge Semprun around her exhibition *Paris, Capital of the Arts, 1900-1968* where Taslitzky's *Les Delegués* attracted his attention and reminiscences. See www.sarah-wilson.london.

