

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, Bialystok, Kovno, Terezinstadt**

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 Diament 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/>