

**Art After Auschwitz: Representing the Holocaust**  
**Dr. Rachel E. Perry**

**Class Time:** Tuesday/ Thursday 12-2:00

**Class Location:** TBA

**Course Description:**

More than half a century later, the Holocaust remains one of the most traumatic events of modern Western experience. Drawing from a wide variety of media and genres, from high and low culture, directed at private and public spaces of reception, we will examine some of the many drawings, paintings, multimedia installations, graphic novels, video performances, sculptural monuments and conceptual counter-monuments, photography, and architecture used to represent the Holocaust both during the event and afterwards.

The first half of the semester surveys the art created during the period of the Holocaust by individuals in exile or in hiding, in the camps and ghettos. We will explore how victims used artistic expression as both a means of documentation and as a form of “creative resistance” to communicate their protest, despair or hope. In addition to artistic responses to Fascism, we will examine Nazi aesthetics and cultural politics and their campaign against “degenerate art.” The second half of the semester will cover artistic representations “after Auschwitz.” Despite Theodor Adorno’s injunction that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” artists have struggled over the past 70 years with the paradox of trying to represent the unrepresentable. We will analyze how artistic representations vary geographically and across generational lines, between the victims and survivors and the second and third Post-Holocaust generations for whom the Holocaust constitutes a mediated, “vicarious past.”

In addition to developing visual, analytical skills, we will encounter ethical, pedagogical, theological and philosophical dilemmas such as: What is the relationship between the historical event and representations of it, between what happened and how it is passed down to us? How has memory and awareness of the Holocaust been produced and transmitted through representational practices and cultural forms? What is—or should be—the primary role of art about the Holocaust: didactic, redemptive, cathartic? Are some media or genres more, or less, suitable to the task? What strategies have been and are being used to represent the Holocaust in the visual arts? What place does comedy or parody have? When does representation fall prey to sentimentality or melodrama, and at what costs? Can a representation of the Holocaust be beautiful, sublime or enjoyable or does aesthetic pleasure trivialize and exploit the pain of others?

**Course Requirements:**

In addition to frontal lectures with PowerPoint presentations, this course requires active participation. It is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss and respond to course readings. It is strongly suggested that you print copies and bring these texts to class with you as we will devote a portion of each class to close textual and visual analysis.

**Film Screenings:** Film screenings are scheduled throughout the semester both in class and as homework assignments. If you cannot make a screening, you must inform me in advance.

**Required readings:** PDF files of assigned articles and other documents may be downloaded or printed directly from the Moodle website under Course Library. Because this class only meets once a week, it is critical that you leave yourself enough time to read the material each week so that you will be able to discuss new concepts and arguments in class discussions.

**Grade Distribution:**

- Midterm 40%
- Final Take home exam 40%
- Attendance, participation and short response papers 20%

**Office Hours:** By appointment. I can be reached at 054-772-1169. Email: [perryrub@bezeqint.net](mailto:perryrub@bezeqint.net)

## Course Schedule:

### Week 1: Introduction: Facing the Holocaust

#### Week 2: The Rise of Fascism: Artistic Responses and Fascist Aesthetics

Film Screening: *Good Morning Mr. Hitler*, *The Eternal Jew*, *Triumph of the Will*

Readings:

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1991), pp. 138-153, 180-181.
- Peter Adam. "The Great German Art Exhibit" in *Art of the Third Reich*, 1992.
- Rachel Perry, "Hitler's Sculptor" International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem. <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/germanys-sculptor.html>

#### Week 3: Nazi Campaign against Degenerate Art

Film Screening: *Architecture of Doom*, *Degenerate Art*

Readings:

- Lynn Nicholas, "They Had Four Years" in *The Rape of Europa*, 1995.
- Neil Levine, "Judge for Yourselves!"-The "Degenerate Art" Exhibition as Political Spectacle," *October*, Vol. 85 (Summer, 1998).
- Stephanie Barron, *Degenerate Art*, LACMA, 1991.

Web sites: <http://www.greatestheft.com/> and <http://therapeofeuropa.com/>

#### Week 4: Art in Exile (Charlotte Salomon, Felix Nussbaum etc.)

Film Screening: Franz Weisz, *Charlotte Salmon*, 2012

Readings:

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

#### Week 5: Art in the Ghettos, Internment Camps and Concentration Camps

Film Screening: *The Führer Gives the Jews a City* (Theresienstadt, 1944)

Reading:

- Sybil Milton, "Culture under Duress"
- Pnina Rosenberg, "Art During the Holocaust" *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Macmillan, 2006. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/art-during-holocaust>
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Complexities of Witnessing," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Pp. 123-147.
- Pnina Rosenberg. 2004: "Mickey au camp de Gurs by Horst Rosenthal: Humour in the Art of the Holocaust", Stirling French Publications: University of Stirling (10), pp. 1-16.

### Week 6: MIDTERM

#### Week 7: Cinematic Representations: Fact or Fiction?

Film Screening: *Holocaust* miniseries, *Night and Fog*, *Shoah*, *Schindler's List*

Reading:

- Imre Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz?"
- Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, 1998
- Claude Lanzmann, Seminar at Yale 1990; "Why Spielberg has distorted the truth" *Village Voice*, 3/29/94, "Schindler's List is an Impossible Story"
- Elie Weisel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," *NY Times*, 1989

Week 8: **Is the Shoah Comic? MAUS and Beyond** (*Deuxieme Generation, The Search, Pascal Croci, Episodes from Auschwitz, Snow White in Auschwitz*)

Reading:

- Terrence Des Pres. "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust*. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. 1-2. Selections from *MetaMaus*.
- M. Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*. Ed. Zelizer, Rutgers, 2001
- James Young, "Maus" in *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale Press, 2000.

Week 9: **Photography's Dilemma: Is Seeing Believing?**

Film Screening: Hersonski, *Film Unfinished*, 2011. Jablonski, [Fotoamator, 1998](#).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvUdffAhFH4> selections

Readings:

- Selections from Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. Picador, 2001. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images Malgré Tout*, 2003.
- Young, "Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 3
- James Young, "David Levinthal," *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 2.

Recommended :

- Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, Minnesota, 1998.
- Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*
- Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*, Chicago Press, 2000.

Week 10: **Memorialization and Monuments**

Reading:

- James Young, "Memory, Countermemory and the End of the Monument" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 4, 5.
- Nathan Rapoport, "Memoir of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument"
- Hans Haacke, "Und ihr habt doch gesiegt"
- Matthew Baigell, "George Segal's Holocaust Monument"

Week 11: **Mirroring Evil/Fascinating Fascism**

Reading:

- Norman Kleeblatt, "The Nazi Occupation of the White Cube" in *Mirroring Evil*, The Jewish Museum, 2002.
- Stephen Feinstein: "Zbigniew Libera's Lego Concentration Camp"
- Alan Schechter, [www.dottiecommies.com](http://www.dottiecommies.com)

Week 12: **The Future of Holocaust Memory: Normalizing the Holocaust?**

- Dalia Manor, "From Rejection to Recognition: Israeli Art and the Holocaust," in Stephen Feinstein, Ed. *Absence/Presence*, 2005.
- Tami Katz-Frieman, "Don't Touch My Holocaust," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein. New York University Press, 2003
- Adi Ophir, "On Sanctifying the Holocaust," An Anti-Theological Treatise', Tikkun 2, 1987.

**Final Take Home Exam Handed out on last day of class**