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“And who will remember? And how shall we preserve a memory?”<sup>1</sup>

### NEW APPROACHES TO EXHIBITS ON THE HOLOCAUST

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«Και ποιος θα θυμάται; Και πώς θα διατηρήσουμε τη μνήμη;»

### ΕΚΘΕΣΕΙΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΟΛΟΚΑΥΤΩΜΑ – ΝΕΕΣ ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΕΙΣ

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#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το πιο περίπλοκο ζήτημα που έχει να αντιμετωπίσει κάποιος κατά τον σχεδιασμό εκθέσεων για το Ολοκαύτωμα είναι η πραγμάτευση του θέματος σε έναν κόσμο δίχως επιζώντες και δίχως τη δυνατότητα ανακάλυψης νέου πρωτότυπου υλικού. Πώς μπορεί κάποιος να δημιουργήσει μια έκθεση σε έναν κόσμο όπου οι επισκέπτες είναι όλο και πιο απαιτητικοί, ενώ έχουν εκτεθεί σε τόσα οπτικά ερεθίσματα φρίκης με τα συναισθήματά τους να αγγίζουν τα όρια; Ή όταν οι γνώσεις τους μειώνονται, καθώς το Ολοκαύτωμα από σύγχρονο, από γεγονός με αυτόπτες μάρτυρες μετατρέπεται σε ένα αποτραυματισμένο ιστορικό γεγονός; Προκειμένου να αποδοθεί με οπτικούς όρους ένα οδυνηρό, τραυματικό θέμα όπως το Ολοκαύτωμα, απαιτείται αλλαγή όσον αφορά

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τη φιλοσοφική οπτική της έκθεσης. Το κακό μπορεί να χρησιμεύσει για να καταλάβει κάποιος το πλαίσιο στο οποίο έλαβαν χώρα συγκεκριμένα ιστορικά γεγονότα, αλλά και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο το άτομο μπορεί να στραφεί προς τη «σκοτεινή πλευρά», εάν δεν καταφέρει να διατηρήσει ηθικές, ανθρωπιστικές αξίες. Πολλοί Εβραίοι, αν όχι όλοι, επέδειξαν εξαιρετικά ανθρώπινη συμπεριφορά κατά μήκος του δρόμου προς την εξόντωση. Ως επιμελητές, φορείς μνήμης της κληρονομιάς του Ολοκαυτώματος, πρέπει να αναλάβουμε «να δούμε τον «Άλλο» στο Ολοκαύτωμα και να αναδείξουμε τη σημασία του σήμερα, ειδικά σε σχέση με την αντιμετώπιση ρατσιστικών πράξεων. Για να το πετύχουμε αυτό, πρέπει να χρησιμοποιήσουμε αυτό που ονομάζω «μουσειολογική εργαλειοθήκη» ή να δημιουργήσουμε νέα και πιθανόν πιο σχετικά εργαλεία. Έτσι θα συνεχίσουμε να συμβάλλουμε στη μνήμη του Ολοκαυτώματος με τον, κατά το δυνατόν, πιο ανθρώπινο και ηθικό τρόπο.

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## ABSTRACT

The most acutely complex issue in curating exhibitions on the Holocaust is how to address the subject in a world without survivors and without the possibility of discovering new original materials. How can one build an exhibition in a world in which visitors have been exposed to so many visual horrors that their emotional threshold has been stretched to its limits? Or when their knowledge is decreasing, as the Holocaust turns from a contemporary, tangible, witnessed event into a de-traumatized historical event? The way to express a painful, traumatic subject like the Holocaust in visual terms relies on changing the exhibition's philosophical perspective. Evil can serve as the framework for understanding the context in which events took place, but also how each person can turn to the “dark side” if he fails to maintain moral, humanistic values. Many, if not all of the Jews, demonstrated extraordinarily humane behaviour along the road to annihilation. As curators, memory agents, and keepers of the legacy of the Holocaust, we must take up the banner of “seeing the ‘other’” in the Holocaust and show its relevance today, in relation to racists and their actions. To accomplish this, we must use what I call our “museological toolbox” or forge new and perhaps more relevant tools. This is the way to continue and contribute to commemorating the Holocaust in the most humane and moral way possible.

## Introduction

### The central importance of the Holocaust and its transformation into a representational model of major catastrophe

Seventy years after the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, roughly the same amount of time during which the Holocaust of European and North-African Jewry has been commemorated in various ways,<sup>2</sup> there is no doubt that the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were murdered, among them 1.5 million children, has become part of the Jewish, Israeli, and worldwide consciousness. In contrast to Yehuda Amichai's poem, quoted in my article's title,<sup>3</sup> in which he hints that the enfolding memory within forgetfulness is the way to preserve this consciousness, we can state that the Jewish people have indeed implanted the Holocaust into human collective memory.

The representation of the Holocaust is reflected in academe, education, media, literature, cinema, and more, but it seems that it has reached a peak in museology. Exhibitions on the Holocaust, both at the killing fields and in thousands of museums and monuments all over the world, are part of what has been defined in the 1990s by James E. Young as a “museum boom” (Young 1994: 19). Nearly every Jewish community as well as non-Jewish countries and cities around the world has erected a memorial or a museum and held an exhibition with record high attendance.

One small example of the major importance of the Holocaust in human consciousness worldwide could be seen recently at the opening of the exhibition focused on children during the Holocaust, *Stars without a Heaven* (Yad Vashem, April 2015). The media coverage of the opening and its echoes in print and digital media were almost too extensive for an exhibition –from a feature in the *New York Times* (Kershner 2015: A4) to European, South America and Asia press in the rest of the world, including locally.

The importance of commemoration of the Holocaust as a sociocultural process that inspired other people struggling with genocide's traumas was noted a decade ago by Nili Keren (2007) in her introductory article to the special issue of the journal *Massuah*, focusing on Holocaust museums in the 21st century. Keren depicts the function of commemoration as shaping national and other types of collective consciousness, and the impact of modes of Holocaust commemoration on them. Examples of this can be seen in the study delegations sent to Yad Vashem by countries and peoples where genocide took place, such as Rwanda. Representatives of the Tutsi and Hutu tribes arrived from Africa (through the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs) during the early years of 2000, to consult with Yad Vashem on modes of commemoration. I remember that I saw these representatives on the road leading to the museum, members of each tribe walking down opposite sides of the road. Later, we were asked to speak with each tribe

separately. Other countries or communities that have suffered from continuous trauma and desire to address it through a museum display have also studied the Yad Vashem model, as for example when a delegation from the African American Museum of the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. visited Jerusalem. A further instance was that of Suzanne Bardgett, who curated and was the director of the Holocaust Exhibition at London's Imperial War Museum and served as a consultant in setting up “The Srebrenica Memorial Room”, to commemorate where the Bosnian genocide of July 1995 began to unfold (Bardgett 2007).

I experienced this phenomenon, personally, when I was invited to a conference in Guatemala City in 2009,<sup>4</sup> in preparation for the establishment of a museum about the genocide that took place in Guatemala during the 1990s. Invited guests were directors of museums of catastrophes and genocides from all of South and Central America, and I was asked to give a presentation about the Holocaust History Museum.<sup>5</sup> It was evident during the lecture that everyone was looking to us as a model. We embodied disaster in its most extreme, and were the ones who knew how to remember, commemorate, and bring the Holocaust to the consciousness of the entire world.

The most acutely complex issue in curating exhibitions on the Holocaust is how to address the subject in a world without survivors and without the possibility of discovering new original materials. How can one build an exhibition in a world in which visitors have been exposed to so many visual horrors that their emotional threshold has been stretched to its limits? Or when their knowledge is decreasing, as the Holocaust turns from a contemporary, tangible, witnessed event into a de-traumatized historical event? This article aims at addressing these issues through my personal experience as a curator.

### **Turning one's gaze to the Holocaust as inspiration The exhibition *Stars without a Heaven* (Yad Vashem 2015)**

“Stars without a Heaven” was the third exhibition at Yad Vashem on the subject of the fate of children in the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup> While the two previous exhibitions, *No Child's Play* (Yad Vashem 1996),<sup>7</sup> and *Monument of Good Deeds* (Yad Vashem January 2013)<sup>8</sup> engaged in children's viewpoints through the subjects of play and creative art, this exhibition dwelt specifically on the fate of Jewish children. As in the exhibition *Spots of Light: To be a Woman in the Holocaust* (Yad Vashem 2007),<sup>9</sup> we selected 10 subjects not necessarily associated with the Holocaust: family, identity, play, work, study, birthdays, friendship, home, dolls and teddy bears. The exhibition designer, Chanan de Lange, structured an overall design policy: after the entrance area where the “The World that Was” was exhibited, with a short explanation on the subject of the exhibition, the visitor opened a door and entered the exhibition space. The feeling was

of leaving a protected home to enter a grove or a forest. The entire space was composed of 33 symbolic “trees” in which the exhibition material was “planted” (Picture 1). Visitors had no set route, but viewed the exhibition in any order they wished. At the end of the exhibition, there was a large glass case in which all of the dolls and teddy bears not displayed in the “trees” were seen in a kind of joint meeting, labelled with the story of the boy or girl who had owned them.<sup>10</sup> From there, by way of the text written by Professor Michal Govrin about her murdered brother Marek,<sup>11</sup> and the concluding text, the visitor left through a different door.



Picture 1. Display cases for objects and other material in the form of a symbolic ‘forest’.  
 “Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust” Exhibition (2015), Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.  
 (Photographer: Elad Zagman)

The lack of visual materials from the Holocaust was especially evident with respect to children. As Michal Govrin wrote about her murdered brother, “Marek left no trace”, the materials that could represent the stories of the few survivors, or of children who were murdered but about whom we do have some information, were few. Therefore, in this exhibition we took the stance that everything that could help to give those children a voice should be considered for display. In the first exhibition on children during the Holocaust, *No Child’s Play* (Yad Vashem 1996), the lack of experience and perhaps the lack of confidence was one component of the process, which is why the

work on the exhibition was conducted in stages - each time we progressed further beyond the current level of doubt about the content and the design. In contrast, in this exhibition, our cumulative and joint experience became basic components in our work on this exhibit, enabling the designer Professor De Lange and myself to attempt new and different modes of exhibition.<sup>12</sup>

The innovations in the exhibition may be classified into several categories:

(a) A different, more holistic museological approach. This was an exhibition, which integrated all of the Museums Division’s staff into the curatorial process.

(b) The design. It was symbolic. Usually, in permanent exhibitions and exhibits on the Holocaust, great caution is taken not to descend into kitsch. The subject is sufficiently loaded that there is no need to add drama or to encourage the visitor to feel that he must imagine himself as a Jew during the Holocaust. Instead, we created a very delicate transition from the home to the symbolic forest.<sup>13</sup>

(c) Collaboration with educators from Yad Vashem. In the exhibition *No Child’s Play* (Yad Vashem 1996), the two educators with whom we collaborated<sup>14</sup> gave me some invaluable advice: not to introduce visual material or information that is too horrific for a young audience. I believe that in exhibitions for adults, as well, we should exercise restraint, since there is no possible way to make the horrors concrete, and there is no need to do so. The facts are sufficiently difficult even when displayed in a subtle way. Shockingly gruesome photographs sometimes attract people for the wrong reasons. It seems to me that this insight is one of the strongest reasons for the exhibition’s success: it remained for 19 years, and was visited (also in a traveling exhibition around the world) by millions of people and justified the theory about including educators as “audience advocates”.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, in this exhibition we asked the administration of the International School for Holocaust Studies to add three representatives from their staff to our curatorial group. The three women participated in our curatorial meetings and expressed their opinions on the process, the issues, and the materials in which we were engaged. With their support, we modified the language of the texts. The epitome of the cooperative effort came when the designer adapted the exhibition spaces according to their needs and the subjects they would cover with the young people who would visit the exhibition.

(d) New approaches to exhibition materials. Due to the nature of the exhibition, what stood out especially were the toys and games collected or received as donations (Peled-Carmeli 2014) (Picture 2).<sup>16</sup> In like manner, the Art Collection presented works of art created by children during the Holocaust (see Kol-Inbar 2016), most in facsimile form due to their fragility. Alongside we displayed works by child survivors who created their artworks as adults, such as André Lifschitz (2012), who made a sculpture he called “Autobiography,” referring to the time he was in hiding in Belgium,<sup>17</sup> or painter Chava



Wolf-Wijnitzer (2006), constantly depicting her terrifying childhood in Transnistria in bright colors.<sup>18</sup> Additional innovations included the integration into the exhibition’s visual art and literary creations by second- and third-generation artists and authors based on their families’ stories. Some artworks were made specially for the exhibition, such as Sigalit Landau’s paintings and sculptures on her father Freddy’s life in Transnistria, as well as on his dog Tufik (2014);<sup>19</sup> Nava T. Barazani’s collages,<sup>20</sup> referring to her mother Julia’s stories from the Jado concentration camp in the Libyan desert (2014); and works such as that by Daniela Silberstein Aslan (2014) on her father Felix, who was a child in Belgium<sup>21</sup> and through the abovementioned literary text by Michal Govrin on Marek, the murdered brother she never knew. In addition, third-generation artists also contributed works, such as the animated short film made by Liran Kapel about her grandmother Nyusha (2012).<sup>22</sup>



Picture 2. Dolls belonged to child victims of the Holocaust.  
 “*Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust*” Exhibition (2015), Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.  
 (Photographer: Elad Zagman)

(e) Cooperative ventures with students of art and design. This is another way to enrich the exhibition and the children’s stories. We contacted the Department of Ceramic and Glass Design of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, and the Department of Visual Communication at The Holon Institute of Technology (HIT), to ask students to create works in glass and porcelain and short animated films.<sup>23</sup> The new

works were used to compensate for the lack of visual materials, although sometimes we had partial materials, and became a mode of display for the children's stories. Students were invited to study-days, at which we presented survivor stories; the students then chose which story on which to work. This was followed by a collaborative work process, whose outcome was 16 one-minute animated films and 14 artworks made of ceramic, glass, or porcelain. The clips were integrated into video films by video artist Niv Ben David and screened inside the “trees”. The glass creations were presented in glass-front display cases, with one at the entrance near the title sign.<sup>24</sup> We hoped that by doing so, we would attract young audiences to the exhibition.

(f) Enriching the collection of stories about children. In order to increase the number of children whose stories we would present in the exhibition, we chose the following method: children with more extensive materials were presented as a core story in one of the thematic sections of the exhibition. These stories were presented with original material or through students' works. On the other side of the “tree”, we installed a screen on which we added stories of other children related to the same topic. Ben David created 22 short films on the core stories and 27 on the associated stories, for a total of 49 videos. These were made from stills we located, clips from video interviews of survivors, clips from relevant films such as “The Children of Villa Emma” (1983),<sup>25</sup> animated films by the HIT students, and more.

One of the most heart-breaking stories concerned the Children's Block initiated by Freddy Hirsh in the family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Kol-Inbar 2017).<sup>26</sup> In the exhibition *No Child's Play*, the director Yvonne Kahan created a short film from testimonies, paintings, and more. The film was assimilated into the current exhibition in the “tree” “The Children's Block at Auschwitz-Birkenau”, through the story of Yehudit (Dita) Kraus, who was 14 at the time and one of the few who survived.

(g) Integrating music into the exhibition. The music chosen was not original music from the Holocaust, but a piece composed by a rock band (Kerach Tesha, 2005) for the poem “A Dream”, written by Abramek Koplewicz who was murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau at the age of 14.<sup>27</sup> The poem, set to music, was presented in the film as part of the displays of his two drawings, contributing to the contemporary appeal of Abramek's story as perceived by young visitors.

(h) The concentration and forced labour camp in the desert. An additional unusual topic both in terms of content and rich materials is the “tree” on Libya and the Jado camp. Although North Africa appears as a topic in the Holocaust History Museum, here it received a prominent place on one hand, while on the other hand it was integrated into the overall story. Children's games from the camp were reconstructed, songs were taped, a translation was made into Libyan Arabic, and a lexicon of the language used in the concentration camp was created by the exhibition consultant Nina Springer-Aharoni (2014-2015), and as we said above, artworks by Nava T. Barazani were



displayed, inspired by her mother’s stories of her childhood experiences in a concentration camp.

(i) The subject “The World that Was Before” (in the area of the entrance to the exhibition), and a Library space (at the exit) were elements I attempted to include in all of the exhibitions in which I have been involved.<sup>28</sup> In this exhibition, video-artwork by Ben David (2014-2015) opened the exhibition with a work using original footage showing children before the Holocaust.<sup>29</sup> At the exit of the exhibition, there was a shelf with books and a place for visitors to sit and write their thoughts. All of the texts were housed in a huge transparent two-sided container, visible from outside the entrance to the exhibition and from inside.

All of these elements were used to create a cluster of individual stories firmly ‘planted’ in themes, which, using and audio elements, composed a rich picture of the lives of children during the Holocaust. In contrast to the perception of the past –which Young described in his book referring to the children as the “victim-ideal”, the “unrealized potential”, as “Israeli citizens who were unable to reach Eretz Israel and never became part of it” (1993: 258)<sup>30</sup> – in the three exhibitions on children, especially the latter, I tried to give the children murdered and the few who survived the fullest respect for the short period of time they lived. The result was very moving, since it showed how children behaved during the most difficult situations imaginable, while reflecting the life force within them, their creativity in addressing the situation, their childlikeness alongside the maturity forced upon them, their optimism and desire to live despite everything. The behavior of children during the Holocaust can be an inspiration to our lives today. We should look up to them and not down on them as “wasted potential”. The exhibition slogan greeting visitors is a quotation from writer Aharon Appelfeld (2012): “I was alone in the world, a child alone in the world... but the light, there was always some sort of light there...”<sup>31</sup> This turned a spotlight onto the bitter fate of the children, but showed simultaneously the impressive path they took towards death.

### **“What Is Memory? Seventy Years Later” Exhibition, Meetings, and Discussions The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute 2015: Representing ideas in texts or “live”**

Visitors at the exhibition are invited to take part in exploring the open question of how to remember the Holocaust seventy years later. How, today, can memory encompass the rupture that irrevocably changed all the diasporas and all the ethnic groups of the Jewish people? How can we remember the Holocaust without succumbing to the feeling of victimization? How can we remember it individually, here and now? And how can we respond now and in the future to the demand embodied in the words “the responsibility to remember – to remember responsibly?”

This is the opening text of the Exhibition “*What is Memory? 70 Years Later*”, at The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, representing a statement by the *Transmitted Memory and Fiction* Study Group, initiated and headed by Professor Michal Govrin, who for three years discussed and studied at the institute the transmission of Holocaust memory (Govrin 2017). The exhibition was intended to reflect a different approach to the subject of the Holocaust, while simultaneously expressing the multiple voices of the groups, of visitors, and of the different approaches to memory (Picture 3). The group was comprised mostly of scholars, a composer and a singer, a film director, a curator, and a few visual artists (working in multiple styles). The texts also reflected the ideas of the group’s guests, Aaron Appelfeld, Dov Kulka and Saul Friedlaender, whose works formed the philosophical underpinnings of the exhibition (see below).



Picture 3. View of the Exhibition “*What Is Memory? Seventy Years Later*”. The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, 2015. (Photograph: Multimedia Van Leer)

A steering committee of people from the group was chosen to lead the project, and drafted the philosophical foundations of the exhibition as three circles: survivors, the group, and visitors.<sup>32</sup> The connection between the three was the big “question mark,” which is why we approached the designer Chanan de Lange.<sup>33</sup> After introducing him to the group, he made a request: he wanted to be an equal member of the steering

committee. The response was positive, reflecting the group’s approach of working together in recognition of each member’s expertise, while admitting that the total was greater than the sum of its parts.

The building allocated for the exhibition was not the older, more familiar building of the Van Leer Institute, but its new building for The Polonsky Academy, designated for postdoctoral fellows.<sup>34</sup> Not only did the space lack an exhibition infrastructure, but the building was decidedly ‘anti-museum’, with its open construction and transparent walls inside and outside (excluding the closed research scholars’ rooms, which were closed during the exhibition as well). The design solution that De Lange proposed was “talking heads,” giving a voice to members of the group as a response to the need to make the texts more communicative, since they formed the major component of the exhibition.<sup>35</sup> No one had any idea how to carry it out, since the tapes of the discussions were still very long and lacked structure. Furthermore, there were severe time constraints, with only a few months until opening. It was finally decided that filmmakers would be invited to interview everyone on the way they proposed to shape the memory of the Holocaust, and to state how it should be remembered. In addition, each member of the group would give a short talk on his or her own field of expertise, to take place in the building’s various spaces, plus panel discussions with audience participation in the main auditorium.

An accelerated work process begun by all involved interviewees, interviewers, and the Van Leer Institute’s financial and organizational divisions that accompanied the process. At the same time, the plan was structured to connect the abovementioned exhibition circles (survivors / the group / visitors). It was decided that the talks by the survivors who spoke to the group –Aaron Appelfeld, Dov Kulka, and Saul Friedlaender, who were all children or adolescents during the Holocaust– would form the cornerstone of the exhibit. Visitors were greeted at the entrance to the exhibition by three specially-constructed ‘gates’ on which quotations from the three authors were posted, reflecting the different memories of those who had been ‘there’: Friedlaender referred to the impact of the past on how we see the present, describing the major importance of survivor testimony in writing the history of the Holocaust. Appelfeld spoke about the love that existed during the Holocaust, love that gave him the capacity to write. Kulka spoke of how he viewed the deaths to have exceeded the bounds of history. After passing through these gates, visitors could proceed to the other exhibits.

The second section of the exhibition was displayed in the building’s space open on all sides, both from the outside (through its glass walls) and from the inside. Desks and comfortable armchairs were installed here, facing structures that looked like music stands, built especially for the exhibition. Screens were installed for viewing the films of the individual group members’ presentations. Headsets enabled visitors to concentrate on the video, while sitting comfortably (Picture 4).



Picture 4. Presenting people’s voices at the Exhibition *What Is Memory? Seventy Years Later.* The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, 2015. (Photograph: Multimedia Van Leer)

A third exhibition space was accessed by descending a broad staircase, where visitors could view selected artworks by the artists of the group (engaged in painting, drawing, photography, and video), and an entire room that included music and fabric curtains, on which texts recorded by group members were written.

The exhibition opened on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day in April 2015. The opening attracted a large audience. It remained open to the public for about three weeks, with visitors including high school students, university students, and professionals. A symposium was held with invited guests from all of the Holocaust remembrance institutes in Israel. The exhibition and the events enjoyed wide media coverage.

Although the exhibition’s approach was ‘anti-museum’, its solutions, which integrated curatorship with design, while breaking most of the rules of both spheres, created an event that expressed the dynamism of the ideas and innovations of the group’s work. Its path reflected a different kind of voice in terms of modes of exhibition, but also another voice in terms of content and ways to remember the Holocaust, 70 years later.

## Summing up: How to represent the Holocaust to contemporary audiences

The way to express such a painful, traumatic subject such as the Holocaust in visual terms relies on changing the exhibition's philosophical perspective. Museums and exhibitions reflect ideas, the “keystones” on which displays are structured (Inbar 1988: 5). The curator's function is to crystallize those ideas with the assistance of experts in the content on display, or project initiators from the museum, or educators, or others. The curator must emphasize that a museum is not a learning tool; its power lies in being able to enrich the visitor with an emotional and intellectual experience.<sup>36</sup> Evil can serve as the framework for understanding the context in which events took place, and how each person can turn to the “dark side” if he fails to maintain moral, humanistic values. There is nothing to learn from evil as such, and certainly not to display it in order to transmit an experience.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, when dealing with subjects that are especially difficult, the curator must seek points of light and illuminate them against the background of evil. Turning our gaze away from the evil and towards the hidden treasure of human goodness is the proper direction towards moving and inspiring visitors. This is why in exhibitions on the Holocaust one should take this approach, and the goodness in the case of the Holocaust is mainly the story of the Jews, the victims of the Final Solution. As early as 1965, this view was expressed by Frieda (Friedkeh) Mazia, a Holocaust survivor, member of a Zionist youth movement and an educator who wrote her thoughts in a letter to the Massuah Institute secretariat, expressing her opinion that the memorial planned to be built on the site should be a project that inculcated “humane and Jewish values” (Mazia 1965).

The Jews were unable to escape the fate that awaited them. They were encircled, with the death trap closing in on them from all sides. The question that should interest us is what the humanistic aspect of their journey towards death was. When curating an exhibition on the Holocaust we must represent the horrors of the Final Solution only as a framework, and transfer our gaze to how people looked at others. We would expect in such terrible situations that the subjects would be blind themselves to all humane behaviour and violently struggle for survival. However, here we see that the opposite took place. Not to say that all the Jews turned into ‘saints’ tolerant of each other, but taking into account everything they went through, many, if not all of the Jews, demonstrated extraordinarily humane behaviour along the road to annihilation. In practice, without such behaviour, no survival—even for a short time—would have been possible. People took responsibility for others, whether or not they were related. Adults took responsibility for younger people, providing support even during the most unimaginable moments. Religious and secular Jews helped each other at critical junctures.



It is important to have displays on the “Righteous Among the Nations” who rescued Jews while risking death for themselves and their families. Displays could also be included to highlight the behaviour of entire nations, such as the Danes, who succeeded in preventing the genocide of their Jewish citizens. Although Yad Vashem has recognized only 26.000 “Righteous”, undoubtedly a tiny number of people, each one shines doubly bright against this background as they show it was possible to behave otherwise.

This should be the direction in which we strive, what we should learn from the Holocaust. This is a pivotal moral lesson: how to address suffering and evil, not by adopting their tactics, but by responding humanely. The Germans and their collaborators made the decision to murder and torture, but the decision of how to respond and cope was the victims’ only. They understood that the decision to “see the ‘Other’” despite everything, even after having been deprived of culture, community and family, can intensify one’s power to stand up against evil (Kol-Inbar 2012, 2017).

As curators, memory agents, and keepers of the legacy of the Holocaust, we must take up the banner of “seeing the ‘Other’” in the Holocaust and show its relevance today, in relation to racists and their actions. To accomplish this, we must use our ‘museological toolbox’ or forge new and perhaps more relevant tools. We can use the “light” that Appelfeld spoke of, when referring to love that existed during the Holocaust, in order to reinforce the good in the world (Appelfeld 2012).<sup>38</sup> This is the position we are obligated to take on behalf of those Jews who were tortured, murdered, and of whom only a few survived; this is the way to continue and contribute to commemorating the Holocaust in the most humane and moral way possible.

Dunia Rosen was 10 years old when she was forced to go into hiding, concealing herself all alone in a pit in the forest. Dunia, thinking that she was the last Jew in the world, wrote in her will:

I wish you would build a monument for us, one that will reach the sky. A pillar that the whole world will be able to see –a statue not from marble and not from stone, rather from good deeds. I believe with complete faith, that only a monument made in this way, could secure a better future for you, and for your children (Rosen 1954: 5).<sup>39</sup>

Dunia thought that she wrote her testament for a world without Jews, but as for us, who consider ourselves to be the forthcoming generations continuing the Jewish people, it is incumbent upon us to work toward fulfilling Dunia’s will.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Yehuda Amichai, 1995:133-135, 1998: 177.

<sup>2</sup> Proposals to establish a site of memory in Palestine began to be formulated even during the war, in September 1942, when the first news about the death camps reached the Palestinian Jews.

<sup>3</sup> “But the best way of preserving memory is/to protect it within forgetting/ so that not even a single recollection/will be unable to penetrate and disturb the eternal rest of the memory...” (Amichai 1995: 133-5).

<sup>4</sup> International Meeting on Museums of Remembrance, Guatemala City, November 12-13, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> The title of my lecture was: “How to build an historical museum: The case of Yad Vashem –The invisible voice: “For the more I speak of him, the more I remember him” [Jer.31:19]”.

<sup>6</sup> Chief Curator: Yehudit Kol-Inbar; Contacts, Budget and Administration: Hedva Nachmias; Deputy Curator and Coordinator of Contacts: Maayan Zamir-Ohana; Consultant: Nina Springer-Aharoni; Educational Consultants: Inbal Kivity Ben-Dov, Masha Pollak-Rosenberg, Tamar Don, Rinat Maagan Ginovker, Yochi Nissani; Exhibition Design: Studio De Lange - Chanan de Lange, Catalogue Design: Michal Sahar and Naama Tobias, Catalogue edited by Yehudit Kol-Inbar. [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/exhibitions\\_pavilion.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/exhibitions_pavilion.asp) (retrieved 4/10/18).

<sup>7</sup> Yad-Vashem, Jerusalem (March 1996). Curator: Yehudit Inbar, Associate Curator: Shiri Peles, Design: Chanan De Lange, Catalogue Yehudit Inbar (Ed.), Catalogue Design: Pnina Fridman, Educational Consultants: Yona Gal and Naomi Morgenstern.

<sup>8</sup> Yad-Vashem, Jerusalem, N.Y. (January 2013). Curator: Yehudit Inbar, Deputy Curator: Tal Kobo, Design: Design Mill. The exhibit was inaugurated on the International Holocaust Remembrance Day in the U.N. USA and in Jerusalem. The name of the exhibition was taken from Dunia Rosen's will.

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/newsletters/general/newsletter.v1.asp?cid=122012> (retrieved 4/10/18).

<sup>9</sup> Yad-Vashem, Jerusalem (April 2007). Curator: Yehudit Inbar, Deputy Curator: Rinat Pavis, Assistant: Suzy Shor, Historical Advisor: Judy Baumel-Schwartz, Exhibition Design: Studio De Lange - Chanan de Lange, Catalogue: Yehudit Inbar (Ed.), Catalogue Design: Pnina Fridman.

<sup>10</sup> The toys and games and artwork made by the children, are the consequence of the special bonds we at Yad-Vashem formed over the years with children survivors. The toys were exhibited

in the three above mentioned exhibitions on children, and in the History Museum. As a result, numerous toys and games were collected, of course, relative to the opportunities. They now comprise the largest collection of this type in the world.

<sup>11</sup> Michal Govrin is an Israeli author, poet and theater director with significant action in the field of Holocaust memory studies (see below her work as director of the multidisciplinary research group ‘Transmitted Memory and Fiction’. Govrin’s mother, Regina-Rina Poser-Laub-Govrin (1912-1987) refused to join Oskar Schindler’s rescue of Jews in Cracow in order to stay with Marek, her son by her first marriage. Marek died in an *aktion* (a roundup of the Jews for deportation). This past has deeply affected Michal Govrin’s life and work.

See: <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/govrin-michal> (retrieved 1/29/2018).

<sup>12</sup> Besides the exhibitions mentioned above we worked on the exhibition *Spots of light, to be a woman in the Holocaust* and on *Shoah, Block 27 – The Jewish Pavillion at Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Poland, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> One of the ways to progress is by error. Many times I was warned not to try new ways, especially in the temporary exhibitions – but there is no choice but to dare. In contrast to a permanent exhibition, which is heavily invested and designed to last for many years, a temporary exhibition leaves more leeway for the extremely important dialogue between curator and designer to decide together on the risks to take to obtain the best possible results.

<sup>14</sup> Yona Gal and Naomi Morgenstern.

<sup>15</sup> The expression was coined by Elaine Heumann-Gurian, one of the most productive curators in the field of historical exhibitions. She was curator at the Museum of the Holocaust in Washington D.C., the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington and other places in the world.

<sup>16</sup> When I began working at Yad Vashem (1994), the relatively few artifacts at the museum collection were received originally from the Archives. In 1995, I suggested to the late Haviva Peled-Carmeli to come and be the head of Artifacts Collection department at the Museums Division. The museum currently holds approximately 38,000 items. About the story of the Artifacts Collection, and the way it was built, see Peled-Carmeli 2014.

<sup>17</sup> André Lifschitz (2012). *Self-portrait as a child* (Autobiography), Yad Vashem, Museum Division, Art Collection: Sharkskin, 50x20x20. *Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust* (2015). Yad Vashem, The Catalogue, p.157.

<sup>18</sup> Chava Wolf-Wijnitzer (2006). *The Forest*, Acrylic on canvas, 25x40, the artist’s collection. *Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust* (2015). Yad Vashem, The Catalogue, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Sigalit Landau (2014). *Father and Tufik*, Yad Vashem, Museums Division, Art collection: Bronze 22x27x13; Ink on paper 18x25.5. Gift of the artist. *Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust* (2015). Yad Vashem, The Catalogue, pp. 150-151.

<sup>20</sup> Nava T. Barazani (2014), Untitled. Collage, 20.5x28.5; Collage glue to book cover, 24x16.5, private collection. *Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust* (2015). Yad Vashem, The Catalogue, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> Aslan D. Silberstein (2014). *Untitled*. Mixed media. The work was created for M.Sc degree, Department of Industrial Design, Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem. *Stars without a Heaven, Children in the Holocaust* (2015). Yad Vashem, The Catalogue, pp. 158-159.

<sup>22</sup> Liran Kapel and Yael Dekel created the film for their animation studies at the Sapir Academic College in 2012. They titled it “Nyusha,” the name of the grandmother who was a child survivor, and whose voice they used on the soundtrack (taken from her filmed testimony as part of the Spielberg Archives project, since grandmother Nyusha passed away).

<sup>23</sup> Head of the Department at Bezalel: Dr. Eran Ehrlich; Head of the Department at HIT-Holon Institute of Technology: Tamir Sheffer; Project Mentor: Dana Ben-David.

<sup>24</sup> Artwork by Esther Anavian was inspired by the story of her grandfather Menachem Koegel and Lena Kuchler-Silberman’s book *My Hundred Children* (1987).

<sup>25</sup> Villa Emma (1983). A documentary film, directed by Nissim Dayan, Israel Film Service, about a group of Jewish children that were saved in an Italian village.

<sup>26</sup> Fredy Hirsch was one of the unique heroes of the Holocaust, deputy head of the youth ghetto at the Terezin ghetto and subsequently. In September 1943 he was deported to Birkenau with some 5,000 men, women and children. In the so-called *Family Camp*, probably created by the Germans in anticipation of a visit from the Red Cross, Hirsch took care of the imprisoned children until March 1944, when they were murdered (including Hirsch) in the gas chambers. [https://www.yadvashem.org/sites/default/files/yv\\_magazine41.pdf](https://www.yadvashem.org/sites/default/files/yv_magazine41.pdf) (retrieved 30/1/2018).

<sup>27</sup> The disk was launched on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, 2005,

<sup>28</sup> In the exhibit “*No Child’s Play*” there was a bookshelf with children’s books and a desk with hundreds of notebooks which were filled in by visitors’ responses. In the exhibition “*Spots of Light*” we built an entire room which was a library and space for visitors who wanted to write their impressions of the exhibition.

<sup>29</sup> Niv Ben-David created the “The World that Was” in Block 27 at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

<sup>30</sup> Eretz in Hebrew, the country of Israel.

<sup>31</sup> The same slogan opens my introduction (2015: 7) for the Catalogue of the exhibition *Stars Without a Heaven: Children during the Holocaust* (Kol-Inbar 2015).

<sup>32</sup> The Steering Committee comprised Prof. Michal Govrin who initiated and headed the group, Dr. Yochi Fischer, Deputy Director of the Van Leer Institute, Yehudit Kol-Inbar, Director of the Museum Division at Yad Vashem, and Prof. Chanan de Lange. Design: Studio de Lange; Graphics: Tamar Garama-Inbar; Films: Ron Ofer and Yochai Rosenberg.

<sup>33</sup> C. De Lange, one of the leading designers in the field, is also Professor of Industrial Design at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem.

<sup>34</sup> Designed by Chyutin Architects and inaugurated in July 2013, a gift of the Polonsky Family.

<sup>35</sup> Even if there were past exhibitions such as “Voices from the Holocaust” throughout the world, the “voices” were metaphorical.

<sup>36</sup> In 2010, author Mario Vargas Llosa visited Yad Vashem as the head of a delegation from Peru. As head of a committee charged to establish a museum of the history of Peru, he sought to see and learn how we established the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem. After explaining the purpose of his visit, I told him that he, as the person who at age of 26 wrote a book on life in a military boarding school (*The City and the Dogs*, 1959), a book on a subject seemingly local and specific yet which touched so many hearts, surely had the talent and the passion to lead the process that would express the broad human insights drawn from Peru’s historical narrative. I noted that the rest was museology – curators would translate the ideas into an exhibition with relevant creative displays.

<sup>37</sup> I am also critical of exhibitions in which the visitors are led to feel they are in the victims’ place, such as putting visitors in a cattle car. This is emotional manipulation, which is not incorrect, but in no way contributes to a deeper understanding.

<sup>38</sup> In the talk Appelfeld gave at the Van Leer Institute, I asked him what is his strongest memory from the Holocaust as a child survivor, and he answered one word: “love”.

<sup>39</sup> The name of the exhibition *Monument of Good Deeds* (Yad Vashem, January 2013) was taken from Dunia Rosen’s will.