

76 (01/2024)



MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



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HOLOCAUST
MONUMENTS AND
MEMORIALS IN
CENTRAL EUROPE

AT YAD VASHEM

MUSEUM
COLLECTION

„BIGGER THAN ME”

NEW EXHIBITS IN
THE STUTTHOF

„GUIDE TO THE
FORMER WARSAW
GHETTO”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVIL DOES NOT BEGET GOOD, BUT GOOD CANNOT BE
CONQUERED. 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION
OF AUSCHWITZ

HOLOCAUST MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS
IN CENTRAL EUROPE

„BIGGER THAN ME“ AT YAD VASHEM

MAPPING THE HOLOCAUST

NEW EXHIBITS
IN THE STUTTHOF MUSEUM COLLECTION

„GUIDE TO THE FORMER WARSAW GHETTO“

We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

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All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org

EVIL DOES NOT BEGET GOOD, BUT GOOD CANNOT BE CONQUERED. 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

On 27 January 2024, twenty Auschwitz and Holocaust Survivors took part in the commemoration of the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp. The event was held under the honorary patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda.

The witnesses of history were accompanied, among others, by the Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska, the Vice-Marshall of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Dorota Niedziela, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, Minister Wojciech Kolarski from the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, as well as other representatives of state authorities from Poland, ambassadors and diplomats, representatives of the clergy, regional authorities, local governments, museum staff, and memorial sites.

The commemoration event was led by Marek Zając, Chairman of the Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. The theme of the anniversary was a human, symbolically visualised by the faces of the people imprisoned at Auschwitz, immortalised in drawings made during the existence of the camp and after the war.

At the beginning of the anniversary an Auschwitz Survivor Halina Birenbaum took the floor.

Halina Birenbaum was born in 1929 in Warsaw. During World War II, she was imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto and then in several German concentration camps, including Majdanek, where she lost her mother, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, and Neustadt-Glewe. Her father was murdered in Treblinka. Out of all her relatives, only her brother survived the war. In 1947, she emigrated to Israel, where she pursued literary work.

"I stand here today deeply moved together with you – in a place from which one could exit only as smoke from the chimney. The anniversary commemorations are taking place this year in front of barracks number 27, my barracks, where I slept on the upper bunk opposite the entrance door," she said.

"Since my liberation at the age of 15, until today's present 94 and a half, I have been telling and writing, describing these stories, retelling them in different countries and different languages. I lived to see liberation and a long life during the subsequent wars. I am painfully aware of the sufferings and tragedies of the present wars and of the present people. Russia's attack on Ukraine. In our country, terrorist attacks, barbaric attacks by Hamas, and war from all sides. The sons and daughters of the few survivors of the Holocaust are falling. Already having rebuilt a new life, in the new homeland of Israel," she stressed.

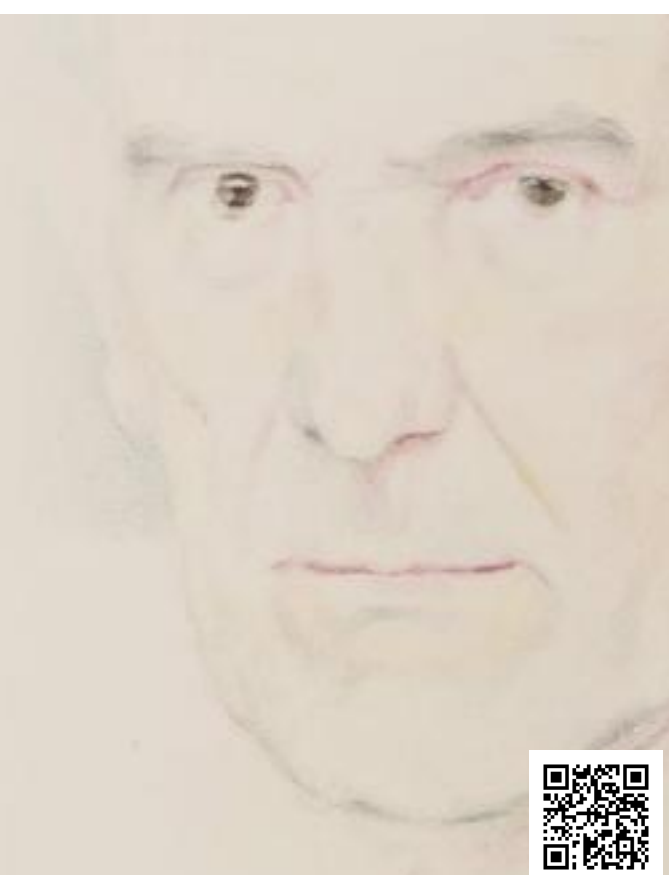
"Evil does not beget good, but good cannot be conquered. The world cannot be exterminated,

79.

ROCZNICA
WYZWOLENIA
AUSCHWITZ



27 stycznia 2024



has become more dangerous and less predictable," Dr. Yacov Livne said.

In conclusion, the director of the Auschwitz Museum, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, spoke.

"We believed in a world that is more just, more friendly and more humane. In a world to be founded on human rights. We believed in memory while living in the post-war era. Today, we are witnessing a complete shift in the world as we know it," he said.

"We are all standing at a significant turning point in history. Currently, some liberators attack other liberators. They commit acts of rape and murder. In Israel, the land of the Shoah survivors, peace seems to be nowhere in sight. Conflicts and wars have flared up on a global scale. Today, the international security system created after the war is a mere shadow of itself. Europe has been unable to unite its efforts and protect itself against the return of antisemitism, racism, xenophobia," Piotr Cywiński said.

"Acknowledging that the post-war period has not faded into oblivion, the constructed post-war identity is a constant reminder, amplifying its warnings. As the times become more complex, it is crucial to recognise the complete inseparability of memory and identity. We may have difficulty predicting the future. However, its creation begins with the choices made today, by each of us," he emphasized.

The second part of the anniversary commemorations took place at the Monument to the Victims in the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, where rabbis and clergy of various Christian denominations recited prayers, and participants of the ceremony placed candles, commemorating all the victims of Auschwitz.

Earlier on 27 January, Survivors together with the directors and staff of the Auschwitz Memorial laid wreaths in the courtyard of Block 11 at the Auschwitz I site.

Until the liberation of the camp by soldiers of the Red Army, German Nazis murdered approx. 1.1 million people in Auschwitz, mostly Jews, but also Poles, the Roma, Soviet prisoners of war and people of other nationalities. Auschwitz is to the world today, a symbol of the Holocaust and atrocities of World War II. In 2005, the United Nations adopted 27 January as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.





**THE ADDRESS OF DR. PIOTR M. A. CYWIŃSKI
DURING THE 79th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ**

We stand here with you, dear ones, on the 79th anniversary of the liberation.
One of the most challenging anniversaries to observe.
Just as we have stood here for years to give a sign of our memory.

We believed in a world that is more just,
more friendly and more humane.
In a world to be founded on human rights.
We believed in memory while living in the post-war era.

Today, we are witnessing a complete shift in the world as we know it;
we are all standing at a significant turning point in history.
Currently, some liberators attack other liberators. They commit acts of rape and murder.
In Israel, the land of the Shoah survivors,
peace seems to be nowhere in sight.

Conflicts and wars have flared up on a global scale.
Today, the international security system created after the war is a mere shadow of itself.
Europe has been unable to unite its efforts and protect itself
against the return of antisemitism, racism, xenophobia...
That irrational and cursed fear of all that is different.
And yet, we know that only a weak identity fears otherness and diversity.

Values that became the foundation of the rebuilt world after the war:
peace, openness, dialogue, interdependence, solidarity, subsidiarity...
are weakening in the face of fear and indifference,
withering in the face of new gusts of populism and demagogy.
Perhaps we are currently witnessing the end of the post-war era.





HOLOCAUST MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

This conference is organized by the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the National Heritage Institute (Czech Republic) and the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel).

This international conference will focus on the expert evaluation of the topic of Holocaust monuments and memorials in Central Europe. The aim of the meeting is to present the historical, political, social and art historical circumstances of the creation of these often neglected works and their theoretical starting points, as well as the subsequent reception of Holocaust monuments and memorials.

In the broader social and cultural context, they are interested in the problem of the formation of Jewish and Roma identity; and, at the same time, the topic of the individual, collective and cultural memory of the Holocaust tragedy and its projection into specific monument and memorial realizations.

Submissions are invited from those interested in active participation in the form of a proposal (the title of the contribution and a brief résumé – max. 800 characters) by 31 May 2024 at the latest to the address: janacova@udu.cas.cz.

Additional information can be obtained from the same address.

The length of the contribution should not be more than 15 minutes; the conference language is English.

Prague, Academic Conference Center | 17-8 September 2024 | Deadline for Submission: 31 May 2024

CALL FOR PAPERS

Preserving Memory. Holocaust Monuments and Memorials in Central Europe

Prague,
Academic
Conference
Center

17-18
September
2024

„BIGGER THAN ME“

On 25 January 2024, Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, opened a new art exhibition titled “Bigger than me” featuring 6 oil paintings and some 10 additional sketches created by renowned artist Shai Azoulay over the last month and a half. The exhibition will be on display in Yad Vashem’s Museum of Holocaust Art on the Mount of Remembrance through Holocaust Remembrance Day observed this year 5-6 May 2024.

This is the first time Yad Vashem has exhibited artwork that was not created by Holocaust victims or survivors and does not consist of art that depicts the atrocities of the Holocaust. The focus of the exhibition is the personal expression of how the artist connects to the Holocaust through Yad Vashem. In the fall of 2023, Yad Vashem inaugurated its Residency Program with artist Shai Azoulay. During his time at Yad Vashem, Azoulay walked around the campus and explored its monuments and collections, including those dedicated to art, artifacts, photographs and documents. In the wake of this journey of discovery, he created the body of artwork currently on display in this exhibition.

“Azoulay’s artworks beckon us to join him on a quest in search of how we today connect to the memory of the Holocaust and its impact on our collective Jewish identity. The exhibition’s title, “Bigger Than Me”, reflects Azoulay’s trepidation when navigating the subject of the Holocaust in the framework of his Residency Program at Yad Vashem”, remarks Yad Vashem Director of the Art Collection and Museum Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg and this new exhibition’s curator.

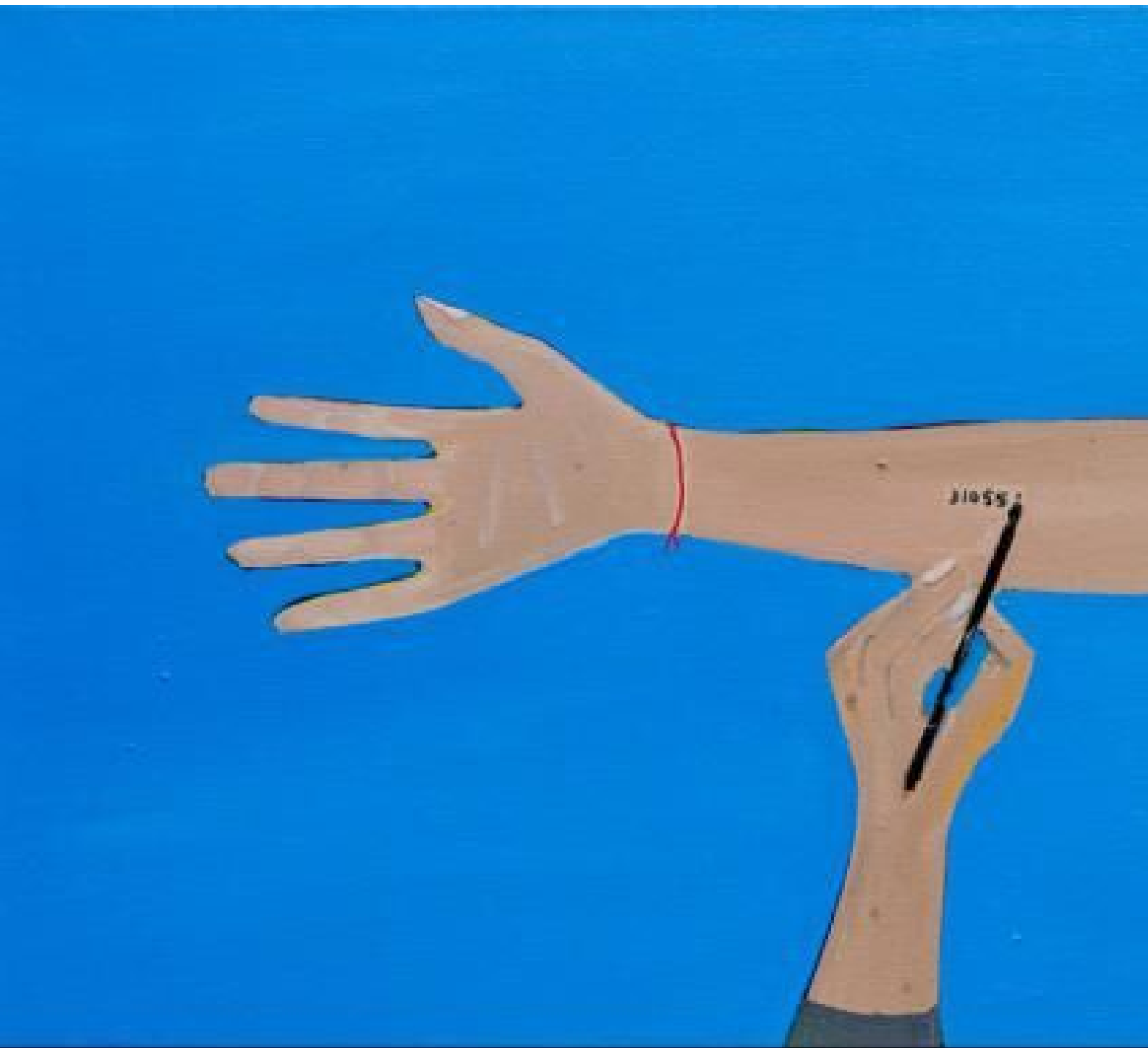
While visiting Yad Vashem, the enormity of the tragedy of the Holocaust and weight of memory made him feel “that he had stepped into shoes that were several sizes too big

for him”. This was compounded by his apprehension and sense of disconnection to the Holocaust in light of the fact that his family’s heritage is not related to the Holocaust.

Of the several artworks in the exhibition, one of his paintings is his artistic interpretation of the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem. His encounter with the victims’ faces in the Hall of Names draws him up into a vortex, a black hole beyond the laws of gravitation where he floats hand in hand with his wife, in a nod to the world-renowned artist Marc Chagall. “This residency at Yad Vashem has been an opportunity for me to discover my identity, in a very intimate and revealing way, something I have never done before. It addresses the levels of my Jewish identity and my Israeli identity, how I relate to my nation and the people around me. The experience of creating these pieces opened a journey into the unanswered question of who am I? In my opinion, every artist goes through such an experience, an endless journey trying to discover whom he can relate to, what defines him, and what he struggles to face. This collection of artworks is an amalgam of all of those aspects, but at large is my personal interpretation of the expression of memory of the Holocaust” explains, Azoulay.

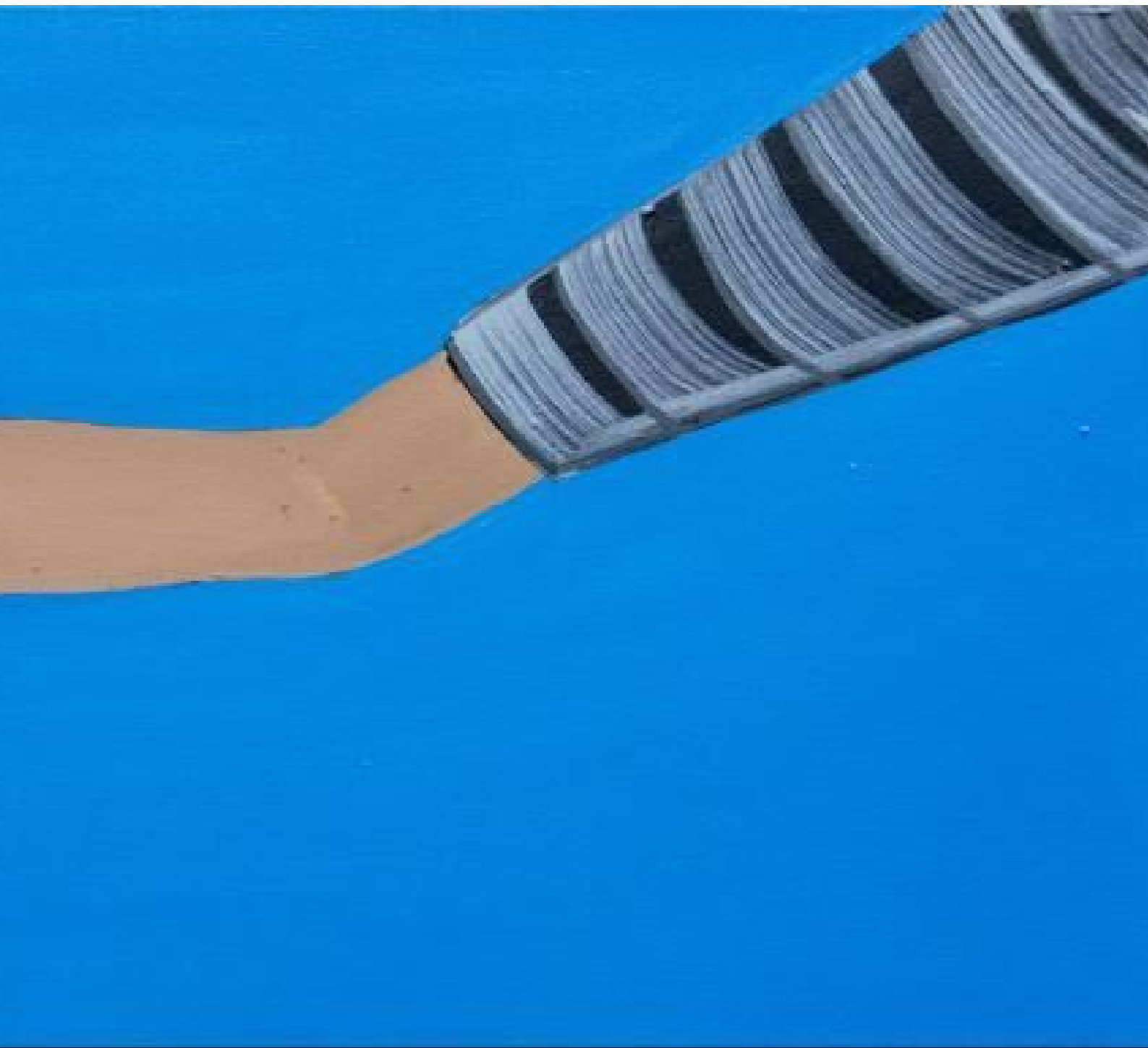
“In the beginning, I was hesitant to take on this project, I wasn’t sure in





what way, as an artist I could portray the memory of the Holocaust," Azoulay expresses. "Furthermore, the national tragedy of October 7 paralyzed me. I felt unable to paint and incapable of adequately expressing myself during this horrific time of sadness for the Jewish people. In a manner of speaking, this initiative with Yad Vashem, evoked something powerful within me, it brought me back to paint; it brought me back to life."

"Shai Azoulay's 'Bigger Than Me' exhibition is not just a remarkable display of art, but a profound testament to the evolving nature of Holocaust remembrance," remarks Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan. "Azoulay's journey of discovery, as he found his connection to the Holocaust, mirrors the path future generations will tread in a world without direct ties to Holocaust survivors. Azoulay's work beautifully demonstrates that while the subject may initially seem 'bigger than them,' the connection persists, reminding us that the legacy of the Holocaust is not only historical but deeply personal for us all."



MAPPING THE HOLOCAUST

The University of Manchester's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, the University of Oxford's Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and the Institute of Historical Research invite applications for a one-day workshop on Mapping the Holocaust.

In examining the routes taken by people, objects, and ideas during and after the Holocaust, this workshop highlights the connections and diversions (geographically, temporally, topically, etc.) when attempting to 'map the Holocaust'.

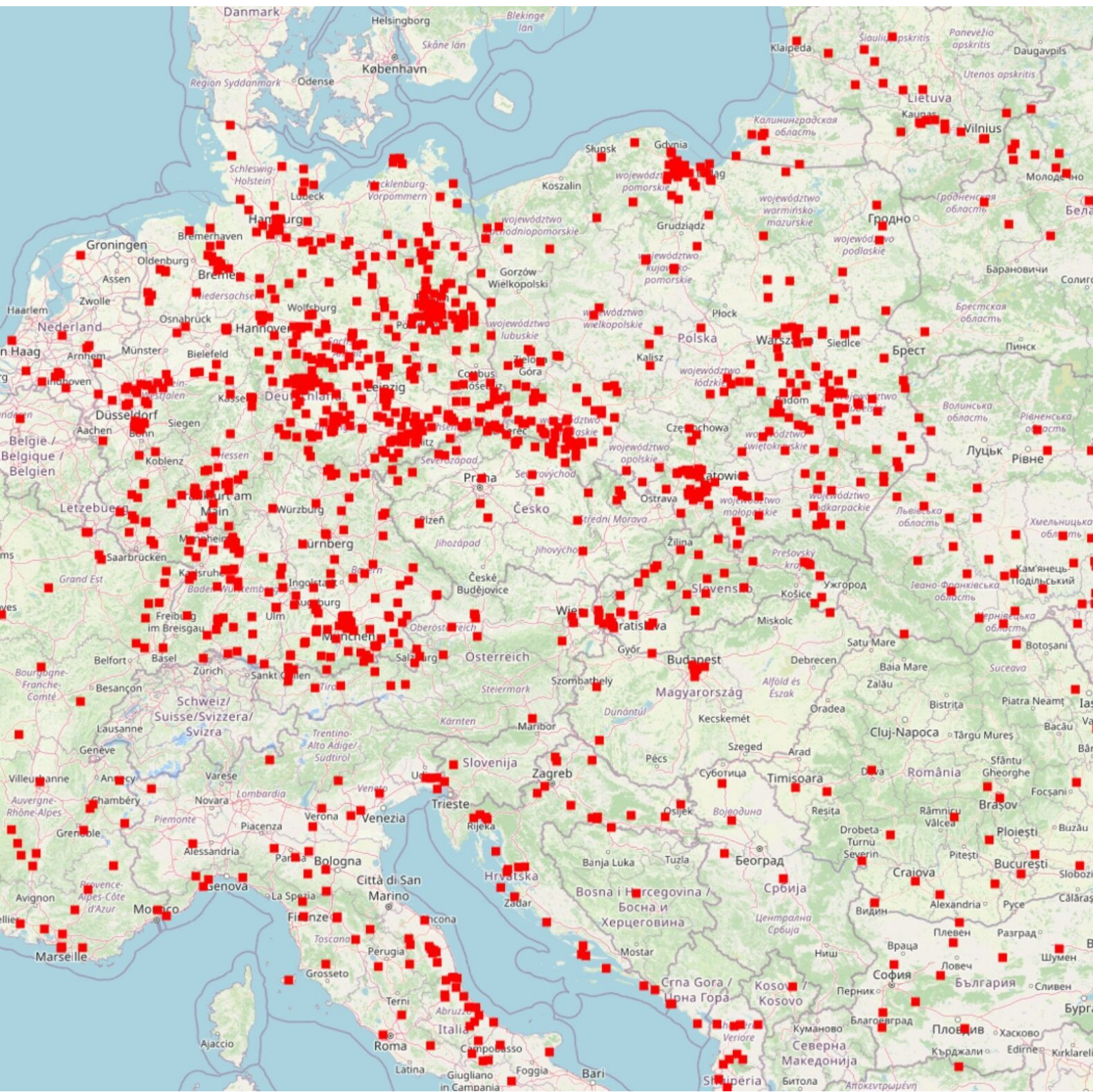
This workshop asks participants to challenge how they conceptually view their own work and how historiography has understood the physicality and mapping of the Holocaust. Moving beyond transit routes and migration, this workshop considers both empirical and theoretical approaches to mapping, asking:

- 'What movements of the Holocaust have been under-explored?'
- 'How do we examine issues of returns/remaining?'
- 'What role does mapping have in shaping Holocaust memory, representation, and research?'
- 'How can we establish temporal or geographical boundaries when mapping the Holocaust?'

This workshop, open to PhD students and early career researchers, offers participants an opportunity to share works in progress in a collaborative and engaging environment. We will actively examine how our research relates to methods of mapping movement, gaining a further understanding of research currently being conducted within the discipline. As the purpose of the workshop is to re-investigate traditional notions of mapping the Holocaust, we invite applicants to bring their current work – regardless of whether it directly involves mapping or movement – to the workshop. The sessions will then be spent actively interrogating how the applicants' work engages with or is influenced by movement and Holocaust mapping.

Suggested areas of interest include (but are not limited to):

- Human movement (refugees, military forces, anticipated journey making, forced movement/displacement)
- Movement of objects (letters, photographs, suitcases, etc.)
- Movement of finances (humanitarian aid, religious financing, private funding)
- Mapping memory (museums, memorials, media)
- Mapping knowledge (i.e. how can we trace movements of what was (un)known?, through newspapers, letters, etc.)
- Direction and time (returning, remaining, pre- and post-war movement)



NEW EXHIBITS IN THE STUTTHOF MUSEUM COLLECTION

Three metal crosses have recently been added to our museum's collection. They were made illegally by Jan Wąsicki, who risked his life to create them in secret at the Stutthof concentration camp.

Who was the author who risked his life to create them? How did he end up at the Stutthof concentration camp? What happened to him there? These are some questions we can ask ourselves while viewing these extraordinary exhibits.

The archives and recollections of his closest relatives provide us with information. Jan Wąsicki was from the small town of Skępe near Lipno. He was a shoemaker by trade. In June 1943, he was arrested by the Germans and imprisoned at the Stutthof concentration camp. The reason was his membership in the underground (Polish Armed Organisation). The Germans even recorded in their documentation that, as a "stubborn and fanatical Pole", Jan Wąsicki should stay in the camp to avoid the risk of harming the Third Reich. He was given the number 24426 at KL Stutthof.

He remained in the camp until January 1945. When the Germans ordered the evacuation of the prisoners, Wąsicki participated in the death march. According to his family members, shortly after leaving the camp, an SS man





Jan Wąsicki's wife with her sons, 1943. In the middle stands the youngest of the boys, Jerzyk, for whom Jan Wąsicki made one of the crosses in the camp.

„GUIDE TO THE FORMER WARSAW GHETTO“

We entered the new year with a recent publication. "How do you conduct a tour of a place that doesn't exist? Can we take a moment to imagine Warsaw, either non-existent or hidden beneath layers of rubble on which new life has sprung? Can commemorations tell the history of what is non-existent?" - ponders the author of the guide, Masha Makarova.

The ghetto walls separated the Warsaw Ghetto Jews from the rest of Warsaw. They made daily navigation in the city difficult - they were positioned such that they fenced off the streets. Not only did the walls obscure the life and suffering of the ghetto residents from the eyes of witnesses on the Aryan side, but they also prevented them from having access to the other side of their city. "I often look at the sky and conclude that the sky in the ghetto is also beautiful and delightful; it is no uglier than the sky in Rome or elsewhere," - Abraham Lewin wrote in his diary in the Warsaw Ghetto on 20 June 1942. "One thing our ghetto sky lacks is a horizon. The ghetto is so small and surrounded by walls and ruins. There is insufficient open space for the eye to take a broader view of the sky and horizon. We can only see them as prisoners do from their cells. It is unfortunate and depressing."

The walls of the Warsaw Ghetto were mostly destroyed during the liquidation of the district and in the post-war years. In a few places, however, one can still see preserved fragments. In most cases, these are walls of pre-war buildings or the Jewish cemetery, which became the border between the ghetto and the so-called Aryan section. However, there are also walls dating back to the spring of 1940, built by the Judenrat (Jewish Council) at the behest of the occupying German authorities. Monuments to the ghetto borders appeared on some surviving walls in 2008. It was then that the boundaries of the enclosed district were clearly marked for the first time in contemporary Warsaw. At the end of the guide, we include a list of all the ghetto border monuments accompanied by a map. The ghetto encompassed one of Warsaw's most densely built-up areas and the city centre. The boundaries of the ghetto were constantly modified - both during the district's creation and after its closure on 16 November 1940. The most extensive boundary change occurred a year after this event - in the late autumn of 1941. To mitigate the smuggling of food and other goods, the borders were moved from the inner courtyards of tenement houses to the middle of the streets.

At the time, Chlodna Street was one of the most important thoroughfares in Warsaw and divided the ghetto into two parts: the 'small' in the south and the 'big' in the north. The passage from one section to the other was through a narrow isthmus at the intersection of Chlodna and Zelazna streets. It was often the site of violent scenes against Jews by the German police. In January 1942, on the orders of the Judenrat and approval of the occupying authorities, a wooden footbridge was built at the intersection to allow relatively fast and safe movement between the so-called small and large ghetto. The footbridge existed until mid-August 1942. It became redundant when the small ghetto was liquidated as a result of the so-called Grossaktion, the mass deportation in the Warsaw Ghetto. Within two months, from 22 July to 21 September 1942, the Germans deported some 265,000 Warsaw Jews from Warsaw to the Treblinka II extermination camp. About 50,000 people remained in the ghetto; some worked in German factories - the so-called sheds, and some - mainly children and the elderly - lived illegally in the district. After a short period of relative calm, the Germans resumed deportations from the ghetto on 18 January





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Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

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