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The Third Generation: the Holocaust in Family Memory

From September 18, 2024, the Jewish Museum Vienna, a member of Wien Holding, is presenting the exhibition *The Third Generation: the Holocaust in Family Memory*. It is the first exhibition to be devoted to the grandchild generation of Holocaust survivors and deals with their handling of the trauma compared with the Second Generation. It sheds light on the different approaches by the various generations to their family history and examines the effects of the Shoah on their life and identity. Apart from historical objects, the exhibition also features artist interpretations and mementos. The emotional impact and content are enhanced by the striking design of the exhibition by koerdtutech (Irina Koerdt and Sanja Utech), who turn the fragmentary memories, the question of language in the process of remembering, and the various layers of identity into a sensory experience.

"With diverse objects—high-quality art, a street sign, and even a view of a Lower Austrian vineyard—the exhibition shows what it means to be descendants of Holocaust survivors: the constant need to know about, understand, and preserve the history of their forebears, and the corresponding desire to define their own role in this story."

Sabine Apostolo

Curator, Jewish Museum Vienna

"Every response by descendants to their family history and the losses and violence in it is justified—be it radical, forgiving, ironic, creative, despairing, or religious."

Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz

Curator, Jewish Museum Vienna

Between silence and revelation: the legacy of the Holocaust

"Not a day in my life passes when I don't think about the Holocaust." These words sum up a reality for many descendants of Holocaust survivors. More than eighty years after the Shoah, the last eyewitnesses are disappearing, but their trauma has been passed on to their children and grandchildren's generations. While the Second Generation grew up with their parents' psychological and physical scars, the Third Generation can look with greater distance at the often fragmentary family history. The exhibition offers an introduction to the subject and also looks at the relationship of the generations to one another. Inherited trauma, seeking and identifying traces, journeys of remembrance, and memory play a major role in this. As a result of the awareness of being alive because of the survival of others, memories and silence, family myths and secrets, suppressed or absent family heritages become omnipresent.

Diverse perspectives on memory and trauma

The exhibition brings together loan items from the USA, Canada, Israel, and several European countries. It looks at the Jewish perspective but also the experience of Roma and Sinti, and thus underlines the diverse points of view and trauma reflected in the works on display.

The exhibition features works by reputed artists such as Bracha L. Ettinger, and Christian Boltanski. The story of Ziva Postec, the editor of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* offers hitherto unknown insights into the making of this monumental film. Other highlights include objects from the film set of *Everything Is Illuminated*, and the series *I Am My Family* by Rafael Goldchain, who documents the inherited trauma and memory in a highly personal manner.

The works tell of archiving and conscious memory, of silence and appropriation, of the omnipresence of the Shoah, the large gaps in family histories, and the attempts to fill them. They address the personal and collective confrontation with the Holocaust and show the enduring effect on subsequent generations.

Future of eyewitness accounts and the social context

With the disappearance of the last survivors, the preservation of the cultural memory becomes a task for society as a whole. Subsequent generations cannot replace the eyewitnesses or the specific memories and perspectives that they talk about, but by providing a link between the past and the present they have a decisive role to play in the process of remembrance. The exhibition fills an important gap by focusing comprehensively for the first time on the perspectives of subsequent generations and investigating the aftermath of the Shoah today.

Events such as the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the reawakened trauma of Jews of all generations throughout the world are also considered. This adds a further dimension to the confrontation with the legacy of the Holocaust and provides a connection within the exhibition with present-day challenges faced by society.

The Third Generation: the Holocaust in Family Memory can be seen from September 18, 2024, to March 16, 2025, at the Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna. It is curated by Sabine Apostolo and Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz, with architecture by koerdtutech and graphic design by BFBW – Bernhard Faiss & Barbara Wais. It is a cooperation between the Jewish Museum Vienna and the Jewish Museum Munich, where the exhibition will be shown next year.

An extensive accompanying program with talks, workshops, and discussions will look in greater depth at the issues raised by the exhibition and enable visitors to actively confront the legacy of the Shoah.

An exhibition catalogue in German and English with a foreword by Jutta Fleckenstein and Barbara Staudinger is published by Hentrich & Hentrich Verlag and costs €29.90. It includes contributions by Katja Petrowskaja, Cilly Kugelman, David Slucki, and the curators Sabine Apostolo and Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz.

The Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Friday from 10 am to 6 pm. The second museum site, Museum Judenplatz, Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 am to 6 pm, and Friday from 10 am to 2 pm (winter time) and 5 pm (summer time).

Further information can be found at www.jmw.at or [by mailing info@jmw.at](mailto:info@jmw.at).

Photo and press material on current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna website under www.jmw.at/presse. Press photos may be printed free of charge with indication of copyright.

Information for the media

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