MIRRORING EVIL: NAZI IMAGERY/RECENT ART features recent work by thirteen internationally recognized artists who use imagery from the Nazi era to explore the nature of evil. Their works are a radical departure from previous art about the Holocaust, which centered on tragic images of victims. Instead, these artists dare to invite the viewer into the world of the perpetrators. The viewer, therefore, faces an unsettling moral dilemma: How is one to view these menacing and indicting images, drawn from a history that can never be forgotten? The artists represented in MIRRORING Evil impel us to examine what these images of Nazism might mean in our lives today.

Essays in the catalogue explore themes of moral ambiguity in makers and viewers of art, institutional responsibility in exhibiting controversial artworks, and the complicated issues of representing or even imagining the perpetrators. Entries about the individual artworks discuss in greater depth the artistic, ethical, and historical complexity of the images that the artists dare to engage.

NORMAN L. KLEEBLATT is the Susan and Elihu Rose Curator of Fine Arts at The Jewish Museum in New York. He has organized exhibitions such as John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family and, Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities (accompanying catalogue from Rutgers University Press).


A COPUBLICATION WITH
The Jewish Museum, New York
Rutgers University Press
New Brunswick, New Jersey

CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDE ESSAYS BY
SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI
REESA GREENBERG
NORMAN L. KLEEBLATT
LISA SALTZMAN
ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ
ERNST VAN ALPHEN

AND A FOREWORD BY
JAMES E. YOUNG

ARTISTS INCLUDE
ROAZ ARAD
CHRISTINE BORLAND
MAT COLLISHAW
RUDOLF HERZ
ELKE KRYSUFKEK
MISCHA KUBALL
ZBIGNIEW LIBERA
ROEE ROSEN
TOM SACHS
ALAN SCHECHNER
ALAIN SéCHAS
MACIEJ TOPOROWICZ
PIOTR UKLAŃSKI
DISTANCED MIRRORS
Reflections on the Works of Art

Keeping One’s Hands Clean:
Six Commissioned Portraits of a Perpetrator
Christine Borland’s L’Homme Double, 1997

Male Fantasies of Hitler:
Confusing Gender and Identity
Roee Rosen’s Live and Die as Eva Braun, 1995

Transforming Images Into Symbols
Mischa Kuball’s Hitler’s Cabinet, 1990

The Conflation of Good and Evil
Piotr Uklanski’s The Nazis, 1998

A Feminist Rejoinder to Uklanski’s The Nazis
Elke Krystufek’s Economical Love series, 1998

Impersonating the Victim:
Consorting with History
Alan Schechner’s Barcode to Concentration Camp Morgh, 1994, and It’s the Real Thing—Self-Portrait at Buchenwald, 1993

Impossible Bedfellows:
Adolf Hitler and Marcel Duchamp
Rusolf Herz’s Zugzwang, 1995

The Villain Speaks the Victim’s Language
Boaz Arad’s Slafom, 2000, and Marcel Marcel, 2000

Fascinating Fascism: Then or Now?
Maciej Toporowicz’s Eternity #14, 1991

Mirrors of Innocence and Violence
Alain Séchas’s Enfants Gâtés, 1997

Toying with Terror
Zbigniew Libera’s LEGO Concentration Camp Set, 1996

Fashioning Terror

Staging Depravity
Mat Collishaw’s Burnt Almonds (Gustav and Helga), 2000

Artist Biographies
137
Contributors
155
Bibliography
157
Credits
164

Contents
vi

DIRECTOR’S PREFACE

Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art focuses on thirteen contemporary, internationally recognized artists who use imagery from the Nazi era to explore the nature of evil. Their works are a radical departure from previous art about the Holocaust, which has centered on tragic images of victims. Instead, these artists dare to invite the viewer into the world of the perpetrators. The viewer, therefore, faces an unsettling moral dilemma: How is one to react to these menacing and indicting images, drawn from a history that can never be forgotten?

The artists are often two generations removed from the Nazi era and are descended from families of both victims and perpetrators. Obsessed with a history that they seem impelled to overcome, they ask us to examine what these images of Nazism might mean in our lives today. These artworks draw us into the past, leading us to question how we understand the appalling forces that produced the Holocaust. These works also keep us alert to the present, with its techniques of persuasion that are so easily taken for granted, its symbols of oppression that are too readily ignored.

Mirroring Evil is the most recent of many exhibitions at The Jewish Museum that have addressed the period of the Holocaust. In 1994 The Jewish Museum mounted an exhibition on the memorialization of the Holocaust and the complexities surrounding the commissioning, creation, use, and meaning of memorials. It focused on the preservation of memory and the intent and effect of physical memorials created as sites of mourning and contemplation. The works included in that exhibition referred to classical, poignant, and reverential buildings and sculptures and to events. That exhibition also showed contemporary art that challenged the very idea of the Holocaust monument. In Mirroring Evil, the artists dismiss classicism, edifices, and memorial rituals. They replace them with a disquieting, demanding, and jolting approach, which asks us over and over again to look deeply into human behavior.

vi

Director's Preface vii
The museum collects and exhibits art that provides visitors with many approaches that inspire thought about the period of the Holocaust. For example, in 2000 The Jewish Museum mounted the exhibition, Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theatre? Like the works in a 1985 Jewish Museum retrospective of another young artist who perished in the Holocau—Felix Nussbaum—Salomon's paintings and drawings present the intimate chronicle of a life during the Nazi period. The cumulative effect of these works draws the viewer into the experience of living through the Nazi era.

Norman L. Kleeblatt, Susan and Elihu Rose Curator of Fine Arts, conceived of this project. As in the past, he has brought together works by a diverse group of artists to create a groundbreaking exhibition and a wonderfully informative publication. The catalogue essays provide an extensive and invaluable frame of reference for the works in the exhibition. Among other topics, this book provides a background on transgressive art, a critical analysis of the individual works in the exhibition, and an exploration of the context of the museum as the presenter of the individual works in the show, and an exploration on transgressive art, a critical analysis of the individual works in the exhibition, and an exploration of the context of the museum as the presenter of work that may be considered taboo, in addition to a discussion of the psychological devices of Nazi oppression.

This exhibition was made with the support of devoted Jewish Museum staff, the contributions of generous donors, collectors, and museums, the advice of insightful consultants, and the loans of art by the remarkable artists whose work is the subject of this project. In addition to Norman Kleeblatt, I thank Maurice Berger, Rabbi Irwin Kula, Luisa Kreisberg, Stuart Klawans, and Reesa Greenberg for their thoughtful and sensitive work as consultants; Sidra DeKoven Ezriel for her advocacy and thoughtful contextualization of the exhibition; and James E. Young, Ernst van Alphen,isa Saltzman, and Ellen Handler Spitz for their insightful essays. I am additionally grateful to those institutions that have worked in cooperation with The Jewish Museum to create and host educational and public programming. In particular, I would like to thank Peter Nelson and Facing History and Ourselves; Sondra Farganis and The Vera List Center for Art and Politics; Harvey Caperino and The University of Missouri in Kansas City for their accommodation of the context of the museum as the presenter of work that may be considered taboo, in addition to a discussion of the psychological devices of Nazi oppression.

JOAN ROSENBAUM
Helen Goldberg Menschel Director,
The Jewish Museum
Zawatsky, director of education at the museum. I continued to question the logic and the ethical questions raised by these works.

Professors Barbara Mann and Leora Batnitzky invited me to participate in a conference at Princeton University titled "Icon, Image and Text in Modern Jewish Culture" in March 1999. When asked what I might speak about, I knew that it was the moment to focus on this group of complicated and disturbing works. Before that presentation, my meeting with James Young and my telephone conversations with Catherine Soussloff were enormously helpful, and I thank Catherine for reading and commenting on a draft of my paper. Indeed, the Princeton forum provided me with the first academic reactions to these pieces, and I am indebted to the organizers for offering me that opportunity. In the interim, I have presented additional papers on aspects of this subject: at the February 2000 meeting of the College Art Association in a panel chaired by Matthew Baigell and Marty Kalb; at the conference "Representing the Holocaust" at Lehigh University, in May 2000, organized by Laurence Silberstein; at "Images, Identities, and Intersections," a conference in November 2000 organized by Nicholas Mirzoeff and Karen Leibovitz; and at various museums internationally who have been especially helpful and supportive: Lisa Corrin, chief curator at the Serpentine Gallery in London; Francesco Bonami, senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago; Peter Frieze at the Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen in Germany; Jill Snyder, executive director at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art in Ohio; Friederike Wappler at the Kunstverein Ruhr in Essen, Germany; Suzanne Landau and Yigal Zohna at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; Marcia Arollo, director at the Musée d’Art Moderne in São Paulo; Thomas Sokolowski, director at The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh; Murray Rome, director at The Wood Street Galleries in Pittsburgh; Helmut Braun, curator at The Jewish Museum Berlin; Dahlia Levin, director of the Herzlilaya Museum of Israeli Art in Israel; Laurence Sigal, director of Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris; Didier Schulmann, curator at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris; Valerie Smith, curator at the Queens Museum of Art in New York; Paul Wombell, director, and Jeremy Millar, former curator, at the Photographers’ Gallery in London. On different levels and at different times, each reviewed the exhibition’s issues—artistic and ideological—with me and offered names of other artists I might consider. It was a pleasure to work with the two talented minds who have fashioned the exhibition design. These two talented minds have created a wonderful book sensitive to both the artists’ challenging works and to this complicated subject. Jennifer Doslin, the designer of the book, and Trudi Gershonov, the designer of the cover, have created a clear and attractive publication.

The contributions to the volume by Lisa Saltzman, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, Ellen Handler Spitz, Ernst van Alphen, Reesa Greenberg, and James E. Young are rich and thoughtful and offer greater insight into the art presented. Not only do they address issues raised by the works shown, but also reflect on new territory in the way the history of the war and the Holocaust has been absorbed and presented. I thank them all for their intelligence and interest and for managing to live with our tight deadlines. My gratitude goes to John Alan Farmer for having read and commented on a version of my texts for the book. I would also like to thank Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi for taking part in subsequent meetings with the museum’s staff and Reesa Greenberg, who served as a consultant for the exhibition interpretation. Maurice Berger advised us on many facets of the exhibition, and with his usual sensitivity and flair created contextual spaces that well matched interpretive needs.

Other scholars and curators were enormously helpful in discussing both the project and the artists I have chosen to show. Although they are too numerous to mention, I must single out colleagues and friends at various museums internationally who have had a great deal of gratitude for their honesty, courage, professionalism, and, often, their concern and friendship. Their dealers and representatives have also played important roles in providing information and intellectual, practical, and moral support—many thanks to Mary Boone; Elena Bartolucci at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris; Georg Karpi and Karina Simbuecker at Georg Karpi Gallery in Vienna; Leah Fried at Lombard-Fried Fine Arts in New York; Tonya Bonakdar and Ethan Sklar at Bonakdar Jancou in New York; Cecile Panzieri at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York; Mina Wolfs at the Migros Museum in Zurich; Paulina Kolczynska; Dorothee Fischer at the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf; Jennifer Flay in Paris, and Emmanuel Perrotti and Peggy Leboeuf at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotti in Paris; and Gavin Brown and Kirsty Bell at Gavin Brown’s Enterprise in New York. As this book goes to press, I have been working with Daniel Kershaw and Allan Wexler on the exhibition design. These two talented minds have offered great stimulation and helped with ideas that will provide an intelligent, thoughtful, and appropriate installation and interpretive context for these complicated and provocative works.

Deepest thanks go to the colleagues in my department who have listened, offered constructive criticism and support, both practical and intellectual, Susan Chevolow, associate curator; Mason Klein and Karen Levitt, assistant curators; Irene Z. Schenck, research associate; Michelle Lapine, former curatorial assistant; Johanna Goldfield and Valerie von Voitz, exhibition assistants; and former exhibition assistant Rachel Natalison, in various ways, were key to the success of the exhibition. I wish to thank Marie Rubet, another former exhibition assistant, who devoted unstinting energy and made time to
work on this project despite her many other obligations in the department. Special gratitude is due Rebecca Robbins, former project assistant, who organized the first scholars’ meeting and helped in the initial planning and research for the exhibition and the book. Additionally, I am grateful to intern Celia Farselov, who came to New York from Frankfurt, Germany, to assist with the show at a particularly critical point in the catalogue production.

I am wholeheartedly indebted to Joanna Lindenbaum for her intelligence and devotion to the project. Although she arrived quite late in the progress of the exhibition, the art I was presenting and the ideas it raised coincided perfectly with her own interests and research. She has been a wonderful colleague, who has supported the project in intellectual and practical ways too numerous to list. I benefited greatly from our continuing honest and sensitive conversations on the subject, and I am delighted that she has contributed three highly intelligent pieces about the artists Boaz Arad, Mat Collishaw, and Alan Schechner for the catalogue.

The efforts and enthusiasm of many other Jewish Museum colleagues have been invaluable in the execution of the exhibition and catalogue. The expertise of Carole Zawatsky, director of education, has been instrumental to the interpretive process of this exhibit. I am continually grateful to Anne Scher, director of communications, and her staff, who have adeptly planned the publicity strategies for such a complicated exhibition. I am also grateful to Grace Rapkin, director of marketing, and Jill Katz, marketing manager, who have patiently and thoughtfully helped to develop a website for this exhibition. As usual, many thanks to Aviva Weintraub, director of media and public programs, who has developed an excellent schedule of public events in conjunction with the show; and to Andrew Ingall, coordinator of broadcast archive, whose practical knowledge of film and related media has been useful. Special gratitude goes to our registrarial department, who intelligently and creatively coordinated all of the details of shipping and museum installation for this show. I am also indebted to Al Lazarte, director of operations, for his insightful suggestions and skillful coordination of the design of the exhibition, and to Alessandro Cavadi, audio visual coordinator, who creatively prepared the different media components in the exhibition. Finally, many thanks to Marc Dorfman, former deputy director for external affairs, for his sensitivity and concern, and to Lynn Thommen, current deputy director for external affairs. Many thanks to Elana Yerushalmi, director of program funding, and Gabriel DeGuzman, coordinator for program funding, who both wrote the highly intelligent proposals and helped procure the financial support for this exhibition.

I would also like to thank all of the junior staff members who attended focus groups: Leslie Friedman, Seth Fogelman, Katharina Garrelt, Jody Heher, Jill Katz, Sage Litzky, Laura Mass, Lionel Nanton, Marie Rupert, Eliane Snow, and Sri Steinberg. Their reactions and suggestions were important to the directions we were considering for the interpretive elements of the exhibition.

Certain consultants have proved invaluable to our efforts. Here special thanks go to Ann Appelbaum, counsel to the Jewish Theological Seminary; Jeremy Nussbaum at Kay Colyer & Boose; Rabbi Irwin Kula, president of CLAL—the Center for Learning and Leadership; and Luisa Kreisberg and Stuart Klawans of the Kreisberg Group. Each in his or her own area of expertise has provided highly specific information and advice that has been crucial to various aspects of planning.

Numerous artists, art historians, and friends have listened carefully to me in speaking about the project. They have offered insights and criticisms, assistance and encouragement. I thank Shimon Attie, Deborah Kass, David Levinthal, Rona Pondick, Dinos and Jake Chapman, TsLil ben Nevat, Jacqueline Friedman-Klugman, Mark Godfrey, Ken Aptekar, Eunice Lipton, Carol Zemel, Kenneth Silver, Shelley Hornstein, David Joselit, Stuart Hughes, Catherine Rice, and Patrick Palmer. Peter J. Prescott has listened to the evolution of the exhibition and book, read numerous texts, offered sound advice, and continuing support. As with his role in earlier projects, I am very grateful.

I am indebted to the support, intelligence and not least the friendship of Ruth Beesch, deputy director of program, who continued to champion this project and has assisted me in my thinking about the art displayed and issues raised by the works. Joan Rosenbaum, director of The Jewish Museum, is a strong believer in the importance of contemporary art in helping to raise public awareness about complex social, historical, and political issues. She has provided enormous support for the project in general and for me personally. At the same time, she has encouraged sensitivity and caution for this challenging material. Our conversations together and with groups both inside and outside the museum have provided substantive insights into the issues confronted by the artists and scholars involved in the project. In view of the difficulties that some viewers will, no doubt, have with this art, she has nevertheless spearheaded an effort toward a sensitive display and interpretation of the work.
A notorious Nazi once said that when he heard the word "culture" he reached for his revolver. Now, it seems, every time we hear the word "Nazi" we reach for our culture. Thus might we protect ourselves from the terror of the Nazi Reich, even as we provide a window into it. It is almost as if the only guarantee against the return of this dreaded past lies in its constant aesthetic sublimation—in the art, literature, music, and even monuments by which the Nazi era is vicariously recalled by a generation of artists born after, but indelibly shaped by, the Holocaust.

Until recently, however, this has also been an art that concentrated unrelentingly on the victims of Nazi crimes—as a way to commemorate them, name them, extol them, and bring them back from the dead. By contrast, almost no art has dared depict the killers themselves. It is as if the ancient injunctions against writing the name of Amalek or hearing the sound of Haman's name have been automatically extended to blotting out their images as well. Of course, such blotting out was never merely about forgetting the tormentors of the Jews. It was, in fact, a way to remember them. By constantly condemning these tormentors to oblivion, we ritually repeat an unending Jewish curse that makes us remember the enemies of the Jews by enacting the attempt to forget them. A new generation of artists sees things a little differently, and the results are as unnerving as they are taboo breaking.

"You can't shock us, Damien," are the words artist Elke Krystufek has pasted over one of her collages. (The reference is to the English artist Damien Hirst, whose vivisected animals floating in glass vats of formaldehyde caused an enormous sensation in the early 1990s in London.) "That's because you haven't based an entire exhibition on pictures of Nazis." Is this to say that the point here is to shock? Or, that in a culture inured to the images of vivisected animals, only images of Nazis can still shock? Or is Krystufek after something else altogether? I think it's something else. Rather than repeat the degrad-
ing images of murdered and emaciated Jewish vic­tims, thereby perpetuating the very images the Nazis themselves left behind. Artists like Krystufek now turn their accusing gaze upon the killers themselves. For these artists, the only thing more shocking than the images of suffering victims is the depravity of the human beings who caused such suffering.

To the traditional art that creates an empathetic nexus between viewers and concentration camp vic­tims, these artists would add an art that brings us face to face with the killers themselves. Rather than allow the easy escape from responsibility implied by the traditional identification with the victims, these artists challenge us now to confront the faces of evil—which, if truth be told, look more like us than do the wretched human remains the Nazis left behind. In the process, we are compelled to ask: Which leads to deeper knowledge of these events, to deeper understanding of the human condition? Images of suffering, or of the evildoers who caused such suffering? Which is worse? The cultural com­modation of victims or the commercial fascina­tion with killers? These artists let such questions dangle dangerously over our heads.

Victimized peoples have long appropriated their oppressors’ insidious descriptions of themselves as a way to neutralize their terrible charge. But what does it mean to appropriate images of the Nazi killers into the contemporary artistic response to the terror they wrought? Is this a way to normalize such imagery in the relationship between Nazi murderers and their Jewish victims? What does it mean to “play” Nazis by building your own model concentration camp out of LEGOS? Is this different from “playing” Nazis in the movies? Was Nazis beautiful? And if not, then to what aesthetic and commercial ends have they been depicted over the years in the movie-star images of Dirk Bogarde, Clint Eastwood, Frank Sin­atra, Max von Sydow, and Ralph Fiennes? What does it mean for Calvin Klein to sell contemporary perfumes and colognes in the Brekerian images of the Aryan ideal? And, if this is possible, is it also possible to imagine oneself as an artist drinking a Diet Coke amid emaciated survivors at Buchenwald? Just where are the limits of taste and irony here? And what should they be? Must a depraved crime always lead to such depraved artistic responses? Can such art mirror evil and remain free of evil’s stench? Or must the banality of evil, once depicted, lead to the banalization of such images and become a banal art?

If these questions are problematically formalized in this exhibition, they are also profoundly elabo­rated in the unflinching catalogue essays. All of the writers are acutely aware that exhibiting and writing about works such as these may be regarded by some to be as transgressive and disturbing as the art itself. In this vein, both the curator Norman Klee­blatt and literary historian Sidsa DeKoven Ezrati have probed deeply into what Ezrati presciently calls the “barbaric space” that tests the boundaries of a “safe” encounter with the past. Cultural critic Reesa Greenberg reminds us that “playing it safe” is no longer a viable option for museums, curators, and viewers when the questions at hand are, necessar­ily, so dangerous. For, as art historian Lisa Saltzman shows in her reconsideration of the avant-garde, since “All the verities are [now] thrown into ques­tion,” such transgressions require an art that makes excruciating demands on both critics and viewers. It is almost as if the more strenuously we resist such art, the more deeply we find ourselves implicated in its transgressions.

In a parallel vein, child psychiatrist and art histo­rian Ellen Handler Spitz explores the perilous boarder between in violation childhood and absolutely violated children, that inner terror of children devastated by a cruelty whose name they cannot pronounce. What can children do with such trauma? Ernst van Alphen persuasively argues that to some extent the child has come to stand “for the next generations, who need to learn a trauma they have not directly lived,” who instead of talking about such terror, or looking at it, will necessarily “playact” it as a way to know and work through it.

For a generation of artists and critics born after the Holocaust, the experience of Nazi genocide is necessarily vicarious and hypermediated. They haven’t experienced the Holocaust itself but only the event of its being passed down to them. As faithful to their experiences as their parents and grandparents were to theirs in the camps, the artists of this media-saturated generation make their sub­jects the blessed distance between themselves and the camps, as well as the ubiquitous images of Nazis and the crimes they committed found in commercial mass media. These are their proper subjects, not the events themselves.

Of course, we have every right to ask whether such obsession with these media-generated Images of the past is aesthetically appropriate. Or whether by including such images in their work, the artists somehow affirm and extend them, even as they intend mainly to critique them and our connection to them. Yet this ambiguity between affirmation and criticism seems to be part of the artists’ aim here. As offensive as such work may seem on the surface, the artists might ask, is it the Nazi imagery itself that offends, or the artists’ aesthetic manipulations of such imagery? Does such art become a victim of the imagery it depicts? Or does it actually tap into and thereby exploit the regnant power of Nazi imagery as a way merely to shock and move its viewers? Or is it both, and if so, can these artists have it both ways?

Years ago, the German artist Gerhard Richter openly broached the question as to whether the popular dissemination of Holocaust images amounted to a new, respectable kind of pornography. In his installation ATLAS, Richter juxtaposed photo­graphs of naked, tangled corpses next to sexually explicit images of naked and tangled bodies copulating.1 His aim was not to eroticize the death camp scenes so much as it was to force viewers to ask uncomfortable questions of themselves: Where is the line between the historically inquiring and the eroticly preoccupied gaze?

Where is the line between historical exhibition and sensationalist exhibitionism? In fact, here we might even step back to ask whether any exhibition, even the most rigorously framed, can ever merely show such sensationalist imagery without descen­ding into sensationalism. Can the artists, curators, or even we, as viewers, objectively critique such sensa­tionalist images without participating in the sensa­tion itself? In the end, viewers of the exhibition and readers of this catalogue will have to decide for themselves—and even here the answers may depend on just how self-aware each of us is when it comes to understanding our own motives for gazing on such art, or our own need to look evil in the face even as we are repelled by what we see.

In reference to Germany’s Holocaust memorial problem, I once wrote that after the Holocaust, there could be no more “final solutions” to the dilemmas its memory posed for contemporary artists; there can be only more questions.2 For these artists, the issue was never whether or not to show such images, but rather, what to ask of them: To what extent do we always reobjectify a victim by repro­ducing images of the victim as victim? To what extent do we participate in the degradation of vic-
tions by reproducing and then viewing such images? To what extent do these images ironize and thereby repudiate such representations? And to what extent do these images feed on the same prurient energy they purportedly expose? To what extent does any depiction of evil somehow valorize or beautify it, even when the intent is to reveal its depravity?

For artists at home in their respective media, questions about the appropriateness of their forms seem irrelevant. These artists remain as true to their forms and chosen media as they do to their necessarily vicarious “memory” of events. But for those less at home in the languages of contemporary art, the possibility that form—especially the strange and new—might overwhelm, or even become the content of such work, will lead some to suspect the artists’ motives. Historian Omer Bartov, for example, has expressed his sense of “unease” with what he describes as the “cool aesthetic pleasure” that derives from the more “highly stylized” of contemporary Holocaust representations. Part of what troubles Bartov is that such work seems more preoccupied with being stimulating and interesting in and of itself than it is with exploring events and the artist’s relationship to them afterward. Also implied here is an understandable leeriness of the ways such art may draw on the very power of Nazi imagery it seeks to expose, the ways such art and its own forms are energized by the Nazi imagery it purports only to explore.

Even more disturbing may be the question Saul Friedlander raised several years ago in his own profound meditations on “fascinating fascism,” in which the historian wonders whether a brazen new generation of artists bent on examining their own obsession with Nazism adds to our understanding of the Third Reich or only recapitulates a fatal attraction to it. Friedlander writes:

Nazism has disappeared, but the obsession it represents for the contemporary imagination—as well as the birth of a new discourse that ceaselessly elaborates and reinterprets it—necessarily confronts us with this ultimate question: Is such attention fixed on the past only a gratuitous revelry, the attraction of spectacle, exorcism, or the result of a need to understand; or is it, again and still, an expression of profound fears and, on the part of some, mute yearnings as well?

As the artists in this exhibition suggest, these questions remain open—not because every aesthetic interrogation of Nazi imagery also contains some yearning for “fascinating fascism,” but because neither artist nor historian can positively settle such issues. In fact, by leaving such questions unanswered, these artists confront us with our own role in the depiction of evildoers and their deeds and the ways we cover our eyes and peek through our fingers at the same time.

NOTES

1. For a reproduction of this installation, see Gerhard Richter, *ATLAS* (New York and London: Marlan Goodman and Anthony d’Offay, 1997), 16-23.
2. See James E. Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust: Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), for a study of these issues as they arise in more public art and architecture.
We want to get near to the toxin [of Nazism] in order to get as far away as possible.

Barbara Ehrenreich¹

Tell me, my dear Anna, what would you do if Adolf Hitler walked into the room?

George Steiner

The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H.²

The Nazi Occupation of the White Cube

Transgressive Images/Moral Ambiguity/Contemporary Art

NORMAN L. KLEEBLATT

Focus on the use of racist stereotypes by contemporary African-American artists. At the conference, this generation of African-American artists who emerged in the 1980s and deliberately play with black stereotypes were pitted against an earlier generation that advocates the use of affirmative...
imagery. Reports and reviews of this two-day meet­
ing made it clear that the meaning and function of
racist imagery in art was still a contentious subject.
Also at issue was the considerable white patronage
of this ambiguous work. Moral considerations were
particularly acute, given the current position of
multiculturalism and the fragile state of affirmative
action. Writing in Artforum, Ronald Jones related the
debate to the divergent Interpretations of Anselm
Kiefer’s art, which plays with images from German
nationalist mythology and Nazi ideology. Comparing
the two situations, Jones pointed out that to equate
Kiefer's work with a “celebration of Nazi mastery”
would be simplistic and absurd. 3

Such racist representations intentionally carry
multivalent meanings. The controversy they have
spawned follows the debates about explicit sexual
imagery that fueled the culture wars in the United
States during the late 1980s and early 1990s. 4 With­
out a doubt, the artistic representation of Nazis and
the symbols associated with them has caused a
similar debate on the international stage.

Like the contested subject matter that the
Harvard conference explored, the entry of Nazi repre­
sentations into the supposedly pristine aesthetic
sanctum of the “white cube” was as taboo as the
artists’ confrontational aesthetic strategies. The
hotly debated work of Kara Walker and others marked
a 180-degree turn from the art centered on personal
identity and multiculturalism that thrived in the
United States during much of the 1980s and 1990s.
Work depicting Nazi villains, art, and architecture
stands in sharp contrast to politically motivated
identity art. Clear moral imperatives have been
exchanged for purposely conflicting messages that
hold the viewer captive to situations in which any
sense of moral certitude seems impossible.

Work about the Nazi and Holocaust era is part of
a larger body of contemporary art that reflects
today’s historical amnesia and how current events
have rewritten what we had assumed to be historical
gospel. Francesco Bonami explored these issues in
his 1998 exhibition Unfinished History at the Walker
Art Center. In the catalogue, he astutely com­
mented, "History is not working any longer... noth­ing really matters when Leningrad changes its
name, erasing the mesmerizing power of an entire
revolution, or when teenagers have no clue as to
how Pol Pot changed the world. History washes away
hubris and pain, sorrow and power.” 5 Distance from
historical events and divergent attitudes among dif­
ferent generations are clearly central to the chang­
ing and contentious definitions of experience and
memory. These have become the subjects so many
contemporary artists engage.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Such works from the past decade continue a dialectic
that began in the early 1970s. Nearly thirty years
after World War II ended, ambiguous Nazi imagery
began to emerge with greater frequency, especially in
fiction and film. In the early 1980s this phenomenon
intensified, especially in Germany, where artists used
ironic or satiric strategies to produce works with
hermetic, often intentionally deceptive meanings.
Anselm Kiefer’s Occupations (1975; fig. 1) stands out
for its unwillingness to resolve its implied meanings
or the political position of its maker.

In this series of photographed “performances,”
Kiefer posed on top of various German monuments or
in assorted German Romantic landscape settings per­
forming Hitler’s Sieg heil salute. Dwarfed in scale
and distanced from the foreground, Kiefer’s image in
these photographs left many viewers suspicious of
his intentions. The critic Gotz Adriani, for example,
described the Kiefer of Occupations as a “ridiculously
lonely, Chaplinesque figure” and his pose as “sarcast­
ically pointing up the false pathos of the occupiers
before an empty backdrop... shadowboxing with
the past.” 4

Fig. 1. Anselm Kiefer, Occupations, published in
Interjunktionen, Cologne, 1975, photo 9. Courtesy
of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.
From a more self-consciously problematized position, Andreas Huyssen suggests that Kiefer was satirizing these gestures of occupation. While Huyssen rhetorically questions whether satire and irony are appropriate for dealing with this history, he demonstrates that the best of Kiefer’s work derives its power precisely from the “unbearable tensions between the terror of German history and the intense longing to get beyond it.” Nevertheless, the ambiguity of Kiefer’s art, be it his early photo works or his later monumental paintings centering on German myth and tragedy, reflects a complicated historical situation that is often glossed over by art that focuses on the victims of the Nazi era and proposes redemptive messages about the Holocaust. Questions regarding the moral integrity of Kiefer’s work raise issues about collective German guilt, the historic myths that still resonate in contemporary life, and the seduction and repulsion experienced in confronting Nazi aesthetics and subject matter. Two inextricably linked questions emerge: Do we trust Kiefer, and can we trust our own responses to his work? These questions launch a trajectory of conflicting reactions applicable to the works of the artists in this volume. Kiefer’s art, and work like it, tests viewers.

Kiefer was not the first artist whose work probed the taboo confines of Nazi or Holocaust subject matter, nor was he the only one to use transgressive modes of presentation. Until about 1990 the phenomenon remained largely German or Austrian. In works such as *Zwei Osterreicher oder Geschichte determiniert Interpretation* (Two Austrians or History Determines Interpretation) (1976), the Munich-based, Austrian-born Flatz had himself photographed in poses composed and lit identically to Heinrich Hoffmann’s official shots of Hitler. Like Kiefer’s Occupations, these works proved to be disturbing images for Germans. Other works, such as Hans Haacke’s *Und ihr habt doch gesiegt* (And You Were Victorious after All) (1988; fig. 2) and Jörg Immendorf’s Café Deutschland series (late 1970s; fig. 3) have flirted dangerously with images from Nazi history in general or of Hitler in particular.

The discourse at the intersection of such subject matter and the Neo-Expressionist style that began to emerge internationally in the early 1980s was tense. So tense, in fact, that some works, such as Georg Baselitz’s *Model for a Sculpture* (1980; fig. 4), a centerpiece for the German Pavilion at the 1980 Venice Biennale, may have been misread as an image of Hitler. In light of this evolving critique, it is not all that coincidental that Moshe Gershuni’s project for the 1980 Israeli Pavilion dealt with fascist/Nazi themes.

Like artists in Germany and Austria, some artists in the United States have deployed similarly taboo images. Robert Morris’s much debated poster of 1974 of a chain-bedecked, naked male torso sporting a Nazi helmet provoked more than aesthetic curiosity (see page 60). The collision of its allusions to taboo politics, sadomasochism, and male chauvinism pushed buttons inside and outside the art world. Morris’s poster became one of the cornerstones for Susan Sontag’s inquiry into this ideologically complicated subject. In her essay “Fascinating Fascism,” first published in 1974, Sontag expressed grave moral concern about the meanings inherent in, and audiences served by, a spate of fascist aesthetics and Nazi imagery in contemporary photography and film. As with Kiefer, such representations, particularly because of their intentional political and moral ambiguity, proved troubling. Sontag and other critics condemned them, knowing full well that the possibility of constraining freedom of expression actually mirrored fascist politics. Six years later, as German Neo-Expressionism arrived on U.S. shores, certain art historians, especially those associated with the journal *Octobert* no longer focused on Sontag’s concern about the meanings and intentions of such taboo images.
The work of Christian Boltanski and Art Spiegelman has also been interpreted as potentially exploitative. Both have become internationally renowned for their work relating to the Nazi era and the Holocaust. A half-Jew who spent the war in hiding, Boltanski has created a host of works that transform photographs of ordinary citizens into allusions to Holocaust victims. His work, like Kiefer’s, has been questioned because of the multiple readings it encourages. **Sons Souci** (1991; fig. 5) is one of his more difficult works. Here he rephotographed the family album of a Nazi officer, showing the perpetrators in their seemingly harmless domestic bliss.13 Traditionally, borders between the moral and the immoral have been carefully guarded, offering sure footing for representations of the Nazi era. Boltanski’s depiction of the positive aspects of a villain’s family life complicates the secure divide between good and evil that Western culture so comfortably assumes. Spiegelman, the child of Holocaust survivors, challenges boundaries both aesthetically and ideologically. First, he dares to tell his own father’s “survivor’s tale” in the seemingly banal, pop-cultural form of a comic book, using different animals to represent this true story as Orwellian allegory. But even more disturbing is the way he portrays his father. As victims, survivors are usually shown as morally unblemished. Yet Spiegelman has chosen to portray his own father as unsympathetic, cold, misogynist, and—even more paradoxically—racist (fig. 6).14

Boris Lurie’s large-scale collages Saturation Paintings (Buchenwald) (1959–64; fig. 7) and Railroad Collage (1963) are earlier, less well-known examples of transgressive art about the Holocaust era that place the viewer at the highly uncomfortable intersection between desire and terror. Lurie appropriates the harrowing, iconic photographs taken by Margaret Bourke-White and others in the weeks following the liberation of the camps. He juxtaposes her images of the piles of victims’ bodies and the emaciated survivors clinging to barbed-wire fences with prurient nude pinups. Simply put, as we look at these opposing scenes of defilement, Lurie forces us to confront our own voyeurism. The artist equates our looking at representations of victims with viewing pornography. Given Lurie’s personal history, it is more difficult to condemn his artistic production than that of Kiefer, Flattz, or Morris. It is perhaps because he raises irreconcilable issues at extraordinarily high stakes that his works, unlike Kiefer’s, have seldom been shown or discussed. Lurie, a radical left-wing artist who was part of the highly politicized No!art group, expresses this unpopular, even shocking view not only as a Jew, but also as a Buchenwald survivor. Therefore, he cannot be charged easily with two of the common accusations often leveled at art that deploys taboo Nazi or Holocaust imagery: dispassion with the subject or distance from the events.15 In Lurie’s case, the visual representations are so horrific that it is easier to ignore them than to engage in the many terrifying issues they bring forth. After
nearly forty years, his collages sustain the power to shock. One would think their aesthetic and ideological edge might have mellowed after the extensive controversies that surrounded the sexually charged images by Robert Mapplethorpe and Andreas Serrano and the more recent ones related to the exhibition of Chris Ofili's The Holy Virgin Mary (see page 89). Lurie's collages crossed boundaries. But who sets these boundaries, and who dares to traverse them? Not least, who has the right to? Whatever the answer, most ideological boundaries—especially those regarding representation—have a way of dissolving with time. What has seemed shocking, transgressive, or inappropriate in one decade becomes normalized by repeated exposure and by distance, not so much from the events represented, but from the societal attitudes that prevailed at the time of their creation. Transgressive art questions assumed proprieties and often attempts to change society's standards and behaviors. Breaking one set of assumptions opens a set of questions to be broached. But Lurie's simultaneous crossing of forbidden boundaries—ones that have to do with sexuality, voyeurism, and the Holocaust—creates an entanglement that few historians or curators have chosen to engage. Through nonengagement, however, we remain at an impasse, and serious issues proposed by this survivor are left unresolved.

David Levinthal's highly composed photographs of Nazi military spectacle and violence to Jews and women have fewer explicitly sexual connotations than Lurie's collages. Yet the sensuality of his images has been called into question for their intentionally ambiguous meaning. In this case, the usual concerns about exploitation of the live subject are evidently not at issue. However, the possible misuse of his implied subjects has been posited by both critics and other artists. As a student at Yale, Levinthal, already a collector of antique toys, played with images of Hitler. In the series Hitler Moves East (see page 67), he sets up battle scenes that are at once aggressive and playful. Like a number of artists discussed in this volume, Levinthal shows how toys and children's games are anything but harmless and how society reflects its values in the playthings made for juveniles.

While in Austria, Levinthal was stunned to find toys from the Nazi era, especially miniature figures of Nazi soldiers and the paraphernalia of their pageantry and violence. He uses these materials to make miniature stage sets, adding other elements to enlarge the repertoire of his narratives. Levinthal photographs them in voluptuous colors. Self-consciously exploiting the sexuality of Nazi aesthetics, he accomplishes for photography what filmmakers like Pier Paolo Pasolini in Salo—The 120 Days of Sodom (1975) and Liliana Cavani in The Night Porter (1974) have done in film. But something about the photograph as innate luxury commodity seems to provoke more discomfort than experiencing the similar, more fleeting imagery of a film. It is precisely for plumbing the oft-discussed sexuality of Nazi aesthetics that Levinthal's photographs, like numerous films, have often been attacked. Levinthal captures us in the moral quandary that philosopher and social critic Georges Bataille has called the dual impulses that sway humans: violence and desire. Following Bataille's logic, Levinthal's photographs of Nazi pageantry and racist violence drive us away by their inherent terror, yet they pull us in by an awed fascination. Bataille observes that "taboo and transgression reflect these two contradictory urges. Taboo would forbid the transgression but fascination compels it."
art and morality. It also extended one of the most pressing issues for modern and contemporary art: the connection between art and life. In proposing his "rally," Cattelan wanted the public to realize how this very negative social element remains, nevertheless, a serious product of modern society's failings. He was attempting to examine the primitive emotion of fear, but somehow expected that such advertisements might not actually result in a rally. He observes how the "skin[head] introjects [sic] his existential negativity" and feeds his "emptiness with the nightmares of recent history." The highly controversial and indeed suspicious nature of Cattelan's proposal poses pivotal questions for art and for society. Through what the artist feels to be an ultimate betrayal of his fellow beings, he (like Barbara Ehrenreich) asks us to use such "representations" to "search to understand, understand to grow up to be more civilized." And Cattelan demonstrates that art can expand understanding intuitively, but cautions us that it cannot provide answers.

Realizing the potential danger this proposal may have posed for the population of Arnhem, curator Valerie Smith boldly opposed the plan. In the communication between artist and curator lies the notion, perhaps even her hope, that Cattelan's project was meant to be left as a concept. However, its conceptual daring, and the potentially tragic results it may have wrought, force us to confront not just what the limits of representation might be, but also what the limits may be today for increasingly adventurous artworks. The issue was the social responsibility of artists, but also the dangerous confusion between the real and the represented. All of the artists mentioned have all dared to flaunt controversy. Some, like Lurie, have suffered critically and commercially for their positions. Others, like Kiefer, have succeeded in part because of the ambiguous narrative disruption of their work. James E. Young has effectively considered some of the ideological problems presented by recent work about the Holocaust. He shows how many issues are raised by those who make the works and by those who dare to look at or write about them. These works are often criticized as evasive and self-indulgent. However, condemnations of representations are often posed across the same generational divide that rocked the African-American community discussed at the start of this essay. In these cases, distance from World War II and the Holocaust seems to increase the artist's experiment with transgressive representations or strategies. However, the distance does not necessarily make viewers more tolerant of its challenges.

Although he does not write about visual art per se, Saul Friedlander has dealt with problematic Nazi imagery more extensively and for longer than many. In the early 1980s, he coined the term "new aesthetic discourse on Nazism" to investigate fiction and film using Nazi images and the ambiguous strategies that surround them. For example, Friedlander trains his lens on George Steiner's novel The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H. (1981) and examines Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's highly nuanced, brilliant, and provocative Hitler, A Film from Germany (1977; fig. 8). Friedlander lays out the moral and aesthetic problems such imagery poses. On one hand, he is concerned that transgressive images and ironic stances may simply revoke all meaning. On the other, he understands that the postmodern probing of the limits of representation may ultimately yield a fuller grasp of the dilemmas intrinsic to this onerous subject. He realizes that "Nazism represents an obsession for the contemporary imagination" and ponders whether attention given to its imagery functions as "a gratuitous review, the attraction of the spectacle, exorcism, or the result of a need to understand." And he worries whether the seduction of Nazi imagery operates as "an expression of profound fears . . . and mute yearnings as well."
wonder the inclusion of this work in the Royal Academy's show Apocalypse has been criticized for attempting to shatter Holocaust taboos.

With its lens on the depiction of perpetrators and its appearance in the aesthetic "white cube" of the art gallery, such photo-based appropriation differs considerably from the reverential art that Andreas Huyssen has called "an often facile Holocaust victimology." "Holocaust art" has become increasingly prevalent during the past two decades and tends to be shown in exhibitions and programs that teach straightforward moral lessons, attempting to heal the wounds of the remaining survivors and to keep memory of the tragedy alive. References to and interpretations of its victim-oriented imagery remain mostly historical. The artists included in this exhibition, and others working in a similar vein, approach the subject in a radically different way. Their divergent concentrations on victim and perpetrator and their differing positions on moral rectitude and moral ambiguity illustrate Holocaust historian Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's "fundamental distinction between a static and a dynamic appropriation of history and its moral and social legacies." The artists in this exhibition are offspring of both victims and perpetrators and come from a variety of national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. All have shown their work internationally during the 1990s. They practice in Austria, France, Germany, Israel, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States and have exhibited these works in Düsseldorf, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Essen, London, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Lisbon, and New York. A substantial number of these presentations were surrounded by controversy. As a group, these provocative works use Nazi-era images to probe issues at the center of prevailing cultural and aesthetic discourses, among them desire, commodification, and spectatorship. Virtually all of them capitalize on the way art and, by extension, visual culture at large confuses the represented and the real. As their focus shifts from victim to perpetrator, they follow the complex issues about memory recently outlined by Thomas Lacquer. As a cultural historian, Lacquer asks us "to concentrate on the task of representing temporal contingencies rather than spatial absolutes, on the history of political and moral failures, for example, that produced the Holocaust rather than the memory of its horrors." The artists in the exhibition place us precisely in the former position, asking us to look at cause rather than effect. Aside from their use of images of Nazis and Nazi-era aesthetics, the unifying premise for the works is how they force us onto morally ambiguous terrain. Such theoretical positions and aesthetic strategies cogently reflect Geoffrey Hartman's assertion that it is incongruous for contemporary society to reverently teach about past atrocities while observing present ones tolerantly, at a distance.

NOTES

Fig. 9. Dinos and Jake Chapman. Mail (installation shot from the Royal Academy exhibition Apocalypse), 2000. Courtesy of the artists and The Saatchi Gallery, London. Photograph by Norbert Schoener.


because the curatorial framework is not immediately self-evident and determining it is an interactive process. The personal engagement demanded of the spectator may be greater than in any other exhibit on themes related to World War II and the Holocaust. There will be as many responses as there will be visitors to this exhibition, but one thing should be shared by everyone who passes through these portals: a destabilized sense of the discontinuity of the worlds addressed—of the radical disjuncture between a world we designate as normal (if infinitely vulnerable) and the space of the barbaric.

The degree of trespass involved in creating and exhibiting this work is a kind of visual-visual condition of Theodor W. Adorno’s much (mis)quoted dictum about Auschwitz is barbaric.”2 “Barbaric” has a number of dimensions of barbarism, as subject and as artistic categories.

BISOCIATION

Our immediate physical sense of discomfort or outrage in the presence of this art, that nervous laugh or shudder, betrays an instinctive understanding that every installation has been chosen for what Arthur Koestler calls its “bisociated context,” the simultaneity of incompatible worlds, the safe and quotid-ian with the barbaric and monstrous.1 We do not, however, stand securely on this side gazing over an abyss at the other; the assumed identification with the victimizer undermines any sharp demarcation between that side and this. As we encounter each of the works in this exhibition, it may not even be immediately clear how—or where—the precipice has been reached, since contemporary culture provides the material for representation of the past, and the continuities may appear at first more salient than the discontinuities; paradoxically but inevitably, these artifacts confuse by self-consciously mirroring aspects of material culture that we thought had been “safely” contained in the barbaric space of the discarded past. If the spectator feels the burden of having to redraw the lines of representation, it is by recognizing how fluid they are, given the insidiousness, seductiveness, and immanence of the forces that gave rise to Nazism. In the work of Roe Rosen, Zbigniew Liberka, and Alain Séchas, childhood as an innocent “nature preserve” has been violated in—and illuminated by—the “toys” or portraits of children tainted by association with Hitler, Hitler Youth, Nazi Insignia, and concentration camps. Civil society as the marketplace of ideas and commodities has been defiled by—and challenged in—the presence of Nazi cultural artifacts or fascist aesthetics in the works by Tom Sacis, Alan Schechner, and Maciej Toporowicz. Hollywood as laboratory of the democratic imagination—an extension of the sculptor’s and the photographer’s studio that captures the faces of the times—has been subverted in the portraits appropriated by Rudolf Herz and Piotr Ulakhivski and the sculpture commissioned by Christine Horland; Borland’s invitation to her fellow artists to sculpt the face of Mengele is matched by Roe Rosen’s “summons” to the viewer to enter the mind of Eva Braun. There is, then, we begin to realize, a relationship between a world we designate as normal (if infinitely vulnerable) and the space of the barbaric.

IMPERSATION AS BOUNDARY-CROSSING

The last boundary to be crossed in the evolution of a postwar moral discourse was that which kept the Nazi beyond the pale of human imagination. Mirror­ing Evil suggests that it is through acts of impersonation that this boundary is finally crossed—and demonstrates the price of such crossings. As spectators, we know that when we walk out of the exhibition we can shed the costumes and gestures and retrieve our (safe) lives, our distance from these monstrous figures, but only after having subjected ourselves to the danger of imagining ourselves among the perpetrators. There will be many who will prefer not to engage in such a self-indicting activity and will either avoid the exhibition or leave it in disgust. Those who choose to stay the course are participating with the artists themselves in a transformative event, the imagination of oneself as metaphorically “other.”3

This essay argues that what is at stake here is not so much the representation of Nazism or the Holocaust, as the various languages through which societies recreated in the shadow of Auschwitz formulate their post-Holocaust legacies. That process, whose most transgressive visual expressions we encounter here, actually spans nearly thirty years of literature and theater in America, Europe, and Israel. If the visual media come somewhat belatedly to this engagement, the lag may be in part attributable to the salience of the visual in Nazi aesthetics and the taboo that extended to all iconographic representa­tions of Nazism in the postwar period. That this taboo has been attenuated is part of the internal dialogue taking place within each culture, as we shall see below. The artists participating in this exhibition are all working at a distance of nearly fifty years and one or two generations from the events themselves. At the center of their work are acts of impersonation that enter the contemporary ethical debates on very specific terms: they are predicated on an acknowledged distance from the character or event impersonated, and on an inter­changeability of historical roles that both separates and conflates victim and perpetrator.

It is relatively easy to follow the imaginative pro­jections of the self as victim on the part of those at one or more removes from the events. To be a victim is morally safe even if it is morally dangerous. And one can more easily, imperceptibly almost, from empathy to impersonation. Over the years
have been a number of intriguing instances of impersonation of the victim by non-Jewish European writers—the most scandalous of which is Birjamin Wilkomirski's so-called memoir, *Fragments*. Critical opinion over what turned out to be an invented memoir of infancy and young childhood in Riga and then in Majdanek and other camps in Poland has been divided between those who condemn the impostor and his act and those who embrace what they consider to be the remarkable literary achievement of a deranged mind. Only by pathologizing Wilkomirski do readers spare him the opprobrium of fraud.

The Wilkomirski case illustrates the potential overlap between impersonation and imposture. In ordinary usage, "impersonation" can connote either a fraudulent assumption of identity or the appropriation of the identity of an other for heuristic purposes. At the collective level, both impersonation and imposture may function as touchstones of the state of innocence or grace not unlike that enjoyed by the victims and their impersonators. The first well-known example of a public boundary-crossing through Jewish impersonation of the Nazi was Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940)."Shooting of the film began just after that other shooting had begun, after the German invasion of Poland and the declaration of war by England and France. Although Chaplin himself said, much later, that he had known of the atrocities of the concentration camps, he could never have made the same film, the masquerade at the heart of this film is a significant chapter in the history of representation and empowered future filmmakers ranging from Mel Brooks to Woody Allen to Roberto Benigni. One of the more powerfully explicit and self-conscious acts of identification with the Holocaust victim through impersonation is Jaroslaw M. Rymkiewicz's *The Final Station: Umschlagplatz*. In this narrative, part fiction, part documentary, the non-Jewish Polish narrator reinvents his own childhood in wartime Warsaw and indulges in a gesture of solidarity with the boy from the Warsaw Ghetto by mimicking his iconic act of submission, lifting his own hands in the air to relieve the boy's desperate loneliness. The theatricality of such retrospective acts of conscience and expiation, particularly for German, Polish, and French writers and artists, consists in revisiting the very place we live, now perceived as "the site of one of the greatest crimes in history"—and enacting a redemptive scenario.

**THE SHLEMIEL: BUTTONS, HATS, AND MUSTACHES**

Impersonating the perpetrator is far more complex undertaking, as this exhibition demonstrates. But in its earliest manifestations, it was performed in a state of innocence or grace not unlike that enjoyed by the victims and their impersonators. The first well-known example of a public boundary-crossing through Jewish impersonation of the Nazi was Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940). Shooting of the film began just after that other shooting had begun, after the German invasion of Poland and the declaration of war by England and France. Although Chaplin himself said, much later, that he had known of the atrocities of the concentration camps, he could never have made the same film, the masquerade at the heart of this film is a significant chapter in the history of representation and empowered future filmmakers ranging from Mel Brooks to Woody Allen to Roberto Benigni. One of the more powerfully explicit and self-conscious acts of identification with the Holocaust victim through impersonation is Jaroslaw M. Rymkiewicz's *The Final Station: Umschlagplatz*. In this narrative, part fiction, part documentary, the non-Jewish Polish narrator reinvents his own childhood in wartime Warsaw and indulges in a gesture of solidarity with the boy from the Warsaw Ghetto by mimicking his iconic act of submission, lifting his own hands in the air to relieve the boy's desperate loneliness. The theatricality of such retrospective acts of conscience and expiation, particularly for German, Polish, and French writers and artists, consists in revisiting the very place we live, now perceived as "the site of one of the greatest crimes in history"—and enacting a redemptive scenario.

can be viewed as the prototype to which the photographic installations of both Piotr Uklański (*The Nazis*) and Rudolf Herz (*Zugzwang*) are postwar parodic responses. There are three levels of impersonation in *The Great Dictator* analogous to the projections demanded of the visitor to *Mirroring Evil*: Chaplin impersonating the Jewish barber (explicitly taking on the identity that he equivocally embraced throughout his life); Chaplin impersonating the "Furor" Adenoid Hynkel, dictator of Tomania (Figs. 1, 2, 3), delivering a garbled Teutonic diatribe ("frei sprochen stark") and performing a ballet of world-historical leaps and bounds before his country's banner, the Double Cross, to the strains of Wagner's prelude to *Lohengrin*; and, finally, Chaplin imperson-
ating the barber impersonating Hynkel. But the final act of impersonation remains incomplete. In this, Charlie Chaplin's first talking motion picture, the third impersonator "loses voice." The circumstances that catapulted the Jewish barber onto the grandstand allow him to become, in Chaplin's words, the "clown" turned "prophet." In place of Hynkel's incendiary speech, the barber's language of decency, pacifism, and voluntary disempowerment based on a utopian social vision prevails; the address with which the film ends is an unabashedly wishful dictate to the dictator:

"I'm sorry but I don't want to be an emperor, that's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone—if possible—Jew, Gentile, black man, white. We all want to help one another—human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness, not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another. In this world there is room for everyone .... The inventions of the airplane and the radio have brought us closer together. The very nature of these inventions cries out for the goodness in men, for universal brotherhood, for the unity of us all."

Speaking truth to power, Chaplin—as-Jew spoke to an as yet unwritten chapter of history, even to Hitler himself, as America was bracing for war and the British were in the midst of the Blitz (The Great Dictator opened in London on 16 December 1940), what has appeared to some as na'ive utopianism or knee-jerk communism on Chaplin's part, or as shameless romanticism from the master of cinematic illusion, is hardly credible. Having witnessed the atrocities of World War I and the Spanish Civil War, Chaplin should rather be seen here as invoking a strategy employed by some of his predecessors in the art of the comic: the appeal to a vision of radical innocence at a moment when the scales of history are about to tip.

That innocence remains a primary resource for any regenerating postwar culture; for us, however, in reference to World War II and the Nazis, it involves a self-conscious act of denial. Every similar act of impersonation on our part, such as Benigni's masquerading as an Aryan in a local school or his "translation" of an SS officer's speech (fig. 4)—or, for that matter, his address to his wife over the loudspeaker in the concentration camp—is both a quotation from The Great Dictator and a counterhistorical, counterfactual reference to an edenic vision and a universal ethic that can be apprehended only against the backdrop of historical devastation, suffering, and evil—the tainted birthright of every survivor of the twentieth century.

For those pawns of history who do not seem to be addressing themselves so directly and dramatically to history's tyrants, what might be the objectives and the effects of such (tentative) border crossings? They serve, in the first instance, as an expose of conventional norms on the part of society's outcasts and strategies of self-empowerment for its helpless victims. Mikhail Bakhtin explores a rich history of border-crossings through self-masking in western narrative and performative traditions. Within the precincts of Jewish humor, such masquerades belong to an engagement with Jewish powerlessness that accepts inherent divisions between Jews and non-Jews and constructs a circumscribed moral space for the Jew based on those divisions. They derive their poetic license from the "Purim spirit" of inversion, in which, for a day each year, saints and villains become interchangeable through an exchange of clothing and other theatrical gestures. These mas-querades inform what we now associate with a distinctly Jewish expression of the comic based on both self-mockery and self-congratulation; its master practitioner was the Yiddish fiction writer, Sholem Aleichem (1859–1916).

Sholem Shachnah is the central character—not exactly a "protagonist," hardly a figure who plots or cuts his way into the world—in Sholem Aleichem's story Iber a hitl (On Account of a Hat). He has just completed a modest business transaction and is waiting for a train to take him from Zolodievka to his hometown of Kasrilevke, where most of Sholem Aleichem's shtetl Jews live. He sits down next to a man asleep on the bench—in a "uniform full of buttons [and a] military cap with a red band and a
Yeremei the porter, he inadvertently takes Buttons's hat and weaves his identity out of whole cloth:

"He could have been an officer or a police officer," thinks Shoelm Shachnah. "It's not such a bad life to be a Gentile, and an official one at that, with buttons... Nowadays you never can tell whom you're sitting next to. If he's no more than a plain inspector, that's still all right. But what if he turns out to be a district inspector? Or a provincial commander? Or even higher than that? And assuming this is even Purishkevitch himself, the famous anti-Semitic (may his name perish)!

Before he can elevate Buttons to the status of the arch enemy of Israel—Hamran or Amalek—Shoelm Shachnah falls asleep. Awakened some time later by Yeremei the porter, he inadvertently takes Buttons's hat and runs to catch his train. Treated deferentially by all the officials in the station and on the train, he is in a state of utter confusion until he catches sight of his image in a mirror in the first-class carriage to where he has been ushered:

He sees not himself but the official with the red band. That's who it is! "All my bad dreams on Yeremei's head and on his hands and feet, that lug! Twenty times I tell him to wake me and I even give him a tip, and what does he do, that dumb ox, may he leave me asleep on the bench! Twenty times I tell him to wake me and I even give him a tip, and what does he do, that dumb ox, may he leave me asleep on the bench!"

"If I am other, I cannot be myself."

Granted, what has been introduced into the psychic space of self-representation is the imagination of otherness. But the shlemiel, in the form of Chaplin's barber or Shoelm Aleichem's petty merchant, becomes only a tyrant-for-a-day, never sharing the victimizer's mysterious power, appropriating the regalia of brutality only for the purpose of showing his radical alienation from that power and encountering none of the moral dilemmas of identifying with it. "Mirroring evil" in these fictions is a clear case of mistaken identity.

This form of masquerade is relatively innocuous and fairly continuous with comic Yiddish self-representations in the pre-Holocaust era. The characters are in a state of mortal danger but remain morally safe. In the second half of the twentieth century, some of the most charming, and "redemptive," of post-Holocaust counter-narratives—such as Life Is Beautiful or Train de Vie (Train of Life)—are founded on similarly provisional acts of impersonation, allowing for the same comic spirit to preside even in the face of imminent death.

At the same time, other acts of impersonation based on disguise, imposture and deception are "dead" serious and contain none of the charm of the innocent masquerade. Although they may include elements of the grotesque or black humor, they provide us with a transition to the more radical forms of appropriation represented in this exhibition. One of the best examples is Agnieszka Holland's film Europa, Europa (1990), in which Sliomo Perel, a young and very beautiful Jewish male, succeeds in passing himself off as Ayman and is adopted as a kind of mascot by a series of German military units and Nazi institutions. Standing in for countless children who lost their identity while saving their lives by hiding as their own nomes, the "impersonated" self will become an agonizingly inextricable part of their reconstructed postwar identity.

From the antics of the temporarily empowered shlemiel and the blood-curdling self-disguise of the victim, there is a short but significant distance to acts of imagination premised on an assumption of power, on a sense of empowerment in the world sufficient to envision oneself as a potential abuser of power. Impersonation in this context becomes one of the most dramatic gestures in a counternarrative of denial that denies immunity to any individual or collective. The rest of this discussion will focus on works of art that demythologize Nazism by demonizing the Nazi—the final step toward reconstructing a post-Enlightenment humanism after World War II.

In Explaining Hitler, Ron Rosenbaum argues that "the shapes we project onto the ink Rorschach of Hitler's psyche are often cultural self-portraits in the negative. What we talk about when we talk about Hitler is also who we are and who we are not." The works I am about to consider, which constitute the atmospherics for the present exhibition, explore the psyche of the Nazi the way (mutatis mutandis!) we explore the brain of Einstein: to detect not only its unique folds and turns, which set the genius apart from the rest of humanity, but also its familiar, phylogenetic patterns.

This process evolved as a series of public encounters. Its first and most natural venue was the film industry. Hollywood's Nazis were, as Plate Ukulefski's photographs show, initially poster boys for the war effort. In both the fictional (1948) and cinematic (1958) versions of Irwin Shaw's The Young Lions, the Nazi Christian Diestl (portrayed by Marlon Brando in Ukulefski's rogue's gallery) is typical of the Marichean approach to the Nazi—the invidious stereotype of evil as otherness. The act of impersonation takes place here not within the drama, where all empathy lies clearly with the American soldiers, but for the actors themselves in the masquerade and the limited degree of internal accountability that it seems to invite. The role of the actor who impersonates the Nazi in films such as The Young Lions is akin to the first stage encounter of the spectator with Mirroring Evil: one feels drawn but still internally immune to the summons to enter the Nazi psyche. But what is natural for an actor whose provisional identity is constructed of acts of impersonation, what is natural for Brando as Christian Diestl, or for Chaplin when as an actor he is playing the role of the dictator Hynkel, is qualitatively different from what the "barber" does when he assumes the identity of Hynkel/Hitler (however tentative he may be in that role)—or for that matter, from what as spectators we are asked to do as we go further into this looking glass.

For many years after the war, the deeper levels of self-exposure were unthinkable in the public sphere. But while historical research and testimonial projects began to make the victims visible, a series of trials, beginning with those at Nuremberg, were the "performative" context that eventually made the Nazi available to more radical acts of imaginative projection. Largely informed by Hannah Arendt's reinterpretation of the Eichmann trial—culminating in her controversial book, Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil—demonization gave way to a measure of "humanization" of the Nazi in American culture, from poems like Denise Levertov's "During the Eichmann Trial" ("He stands/isolate in a bulletproof cage, where we may view ourselves") through novels and dramas like Robert Shaw's The Man in the Glass Booth (1967), in which a presumed Nazi is actually a Jew masquerading as a Nazi masquerading as a Jew, the cumulative effect has been both to deflate the menace of a demonic force and to project this entire history into a universal, and therefore accessible, moral space.

It has engendered political and cultural theories throughout a world that defines itself by the legacies of
World War II, but it has affected no communities more powerfully than those in Germany and Israel.

**Germans and Jews**

As he waited in front of the new invention, Danton said, "The verb to guillotine (this brand-new verb of ours) is limited in the tenses and persons of its conjugation: for example, I shall not have a chance to say I was guillotined."

Acute and poigniant, that sentence, but naive. Here am I (and I’m nobody special), I was beheaded I was hanged I was burned I was shot I was massacred. I was forgotten (But why give an opening to Satan?—he might still recall that, morally at least, for the time being, I’ve won.)

Dan Pagis, "An Opening to Satan"[25]

To be a victim is to acquiesce in—while lamenting—the literary representations of the Holocaust are icy. Morally, at least for the time being, I’ve won. (But why give an opening to Satan?—he might still recall that, morally at least, for the time being, I’ve won.)

For a German like Kiefer or Hans-Jürgen Syberberg or Rainer Werner Fassbinder to impersonate, imagine, or invoke the Führer or any of his henchmen, whether or not their daring rituals of “occupation” or “possession” succeed as exorcism, highlights the haunting continuities that persist in Germany after Stunde Null—the zero hour of a new calendar, beginning in 1945, that was meant to allow Germans to “start over.” For a Jew to engage in such an act can be even more far-reaching because it is, in a sense, gratuitous. The Israeli exploration of this territory dramatically demonstrates how images of Nazism test the boundaries of a “safe” encounter with the past.

For many years the Nazi had remained invisible in Hebrew culture either through effacement or denial, as in poet Uri Zvi Greenberg’s reference to a separate species called “Ha-German” (the German) or in novelist K. Tzetnik’s (Yehiel Dinur’s) reference, in his testimony at the Eichmann trial, to Auschwitz as the “Other Planet.” In both cases, the Nazi inhabited a never-revisited barbaric space. Nevertheless, a slow process of engagement ensued, beginning with the exploration of the landscape of insanity and continuing with more self-indicting questions of collective agency and the discarded notions of the (diasporic) self. Direct acts of impersonation that deprived the (Israeli) Jew of the shield of moral immunity would transform the ethical vocabulary.

It was Yoram Kaniuk’s Adam ben kelar (Adam Resurrected) that first directly challenged the categorial separation between Nazis and their victims. The setting of this novel is an asylum in Acre, in the Negev desert (“Mrs. Selzling’s Institute for Rehabilitation and Therapy”), to which a group of survivors has been committed. The reenactment of the effects of Nazism as psychic “possession” are reminiscent of the work of Kiefer and Gary, but with particular resonances for postwar Israeli society. This narrative invokes the space vacated by the Nazis at the liberation as the space of madness, both in the abiding pathology of those who survived the atrocities and in the place beyond the pale to which these misfits are relegated by principles of social engineering, by the intolerance of an emerging Israeli society for any forms of deviant memory that could undermine the utopian categories of the new order. At the center of this novel is a Purim party in which the inmates masquerade as the monsters they have internalized—as Elie Koch, Rudolf Hess, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich. One of the main characters in the novel, Adam Stein, engineers the Purim pageant from the recesses of his psychotic state. The voice of Commandant Klein, the Nazi officer who saved Adam’s life by forcing him to assume the posture of a dog, continues to speak in the echo chamber of his victim’s mind: “You understand Adam, that you are me, because I am you, both of us dogs but I have a whip and you don’t.” Rehabilitation and therapy recede like the desert landscape: Adam shrieks: “There is here, Here is there,” and turns to his fellow inmate:

"Wolfovitz, who are you? ... Raise your hand, roll up your sleeve, look, what’s written there? Wolfovitz reads slowly, “8 . . . . 9 . . . . 9 . . . . 9 . . . . 7.”

“Well, then, who are you?”

---

26 Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi

Act of Impersonation 27
Wolfovitz: "Yes, I am not Wolfovitz. I never was and never will be. I am 81987."

An orgiastic frenzy ensues, culminating when the tattooed arms of the masked inmates freeze in a massive "heil Hitler" salute.27 In such a world, Jews are experientially linked to their oppressors in a danse macabre, a series of interlocking mirages, from which neither can be fully extricated. Kaniuk's novel drew little critical notice when it first appeared in 1969. But by 1981, when it was adapted for the stage and presented as Mesibat Purim (The Purim Party),28 it entered into a culture that was coming to be self-defined not only as post-Holocaust but, more importantly for the issues of power and powerlessness at the core of this exhibition, "post-Zionist." The term as I am invoking it refers to the Israeli engagement in a critical self-examination of the sources of Jewish power that are commensurable with power wielded by other human communities, and therefore subject to the same standards. The impersonation is not the exchange of clothes for an image but, more importantly for the issues of power and powerlessness, an image and the ability to sacrifice; the one with power has image and the ability to sacrifice; the one without is smoke, eternally sacrificed.

What is radical in this highly textured poem is the recognition that Nazi and Jew are both historical particulars and tropes of power and powerlessness. And the more responsible are the powerful ones, those who in the presence of the world, an image (tselem), the ability to make and break worlds, imagining the Jew and his perpetrator not as part of a theodicy with Jewish martyrdom at its heart, but as part of the ongoing tale of fratricide and free will, Dan Pagis, himself a survivor of Nazi labor camps, presents the sons of Adam as interchangeable players in a paradigmatic human drama; Cain and Abel are at the center of a lifelong meditation on the most naked acknowledgment of the human condition as one of inevitable inequality. The one with power has image and the ability to sacrifice; the one without is smoke, eternally sacrificed.

While for a writer like Kaniuk, Nazism is a pathology that sends its venom coursing through the veins of victims as well as perpetrators, for Pagis, the Nazi exemplifies the unbridled exercise of will. Both sensibilities will shape the poetics of the "second generation" encounter of Jews with Nazis, of Israelis with Germans, a generation whose Holocaust scars are a legacy but not a direct experience. Distance is built into the encounter, the freedom to imagine counterposed against the force of memory. As a palette of colors but not forms, the past is claimed into the encounter, the freedom to imagine counterposed against the force of memory. As a palette of colors but not forms, the past is claimed as the artist's omnipresent yet unstable resource. The canvas is the post-utopian society of post-1967 Israel.

\[\text{Dan Pagis, "Testimony"}^{29}\]

\[\text{ISRAELIS AND ARABS}\]

In the twenty-five years preceding the turn of the millennium, a series of fictions and theatrical performances brought German-Jewish and Arab-Israeli enmity into a kind of dialogue in Israeli culture.29 In the political arena beginning in the late 1970s, archetypal language of victimization was invoked among hard-line nationalists and religious fundamentalists, identifying the Arab enemy as descendant of Amalek or Haman or—Hitler.30 At the same time, and partly in response to such fatalistic notions of collective destiny and responsibility, a group of artists began exploring parallel structures, working within the same conceptual framework. The universal propensity for evil is acknowledged, but there is something stronger: the inexorable stranglehold of Nazi and Jew, of Margarete and Shulamith, that, in its reverse logic, automatically renders any Jew who is not a victim a victimizer. Acts of impersonation based on this logic reflect inherited patterns of relating to self and other but engage in a significant leap of imagination: unlike Sholem Shachnah, the Israeli Jew not only behaves or looks like but actually imagines himself as the oppressor. His fascination with what Marx called "names, battle cries, and costumes" becomes more than a Purim masquerade; terrifyingly, the hat fits. If I am no longer in mortal danger, I am in deep moral danger. Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which was a watershed in popular perceptions of the mandate of Israel's defense forces, several plays were produced in which Israeli Jews assumed postures iconically suggestive of the images of Nazis circulating in the mass media. Samuel Hasfari's play, Tashmod (Nineteen Thirty-Four), which carries the same apocalyptic overtones in the Hebrew original as in the English, focuses on the messianic fantasies of a group of Jews living in a settlement on the West Bank. The Jewish inhabitants, who are about to be expelled by the Israeli army as part of the implementation of a peace agreement, take on the symbolic gestures of Nazism, a swastika and a "heil Hitler" salute. In Hanoki Levin's Ha-patriot (The Patriot) (1982), which the playwright defines as a "satirical cabaret," the Arab boy Mahmud assumes the capulatory pose of the Warsaw Ghetto child in the photographic image that has become an icon of Jewish martyrdom and Nazi bestiality. Lahav, the Israeli soldier in Levin's play, addresses his own mother while aiming his revolver at Mahmud's head:

He will avenge your blood and the blood of our murdered family, as then, mother, when your little brother stood alone in front of the German at night, in the field, and the German aimed his revolver at his head, and your little brother, trembling with fear, said [and he sings as he aims the revolver at Mahmud]:

\[\text{Don't shoot.}^{31}\]
\[\text{I have a mother.}^{32}\]
\[\text{She is waiting for me at home.}^{33}\]
\[\text{I haven't eaten yet.}^{34}\]
\[\text{Dinner.}^{35}\]
\[\text{Don't kill me.}^{36}\]
\[\text{I am a child.}^{37}\]
\[\text{I am a human being like you.}^{38}\]
\[\text{What did I do?}^{39}\]
\[\text{What difference would it make to you?}^{40}\]
\[\text{If I yet lived?}^{41}\]

\[\text{BEYOND THE DIALECTICS OF MEMORY}\]

Impersonation as a reversal of roles in which the Arab plays the Jew and the Nazi-infected survivor his oppressor culminated in the context of the Intifada. As the political event that transformed the Palestinianans from a powerless collective into a strategically empowered nation, the Intifada evoked in Israeli brazen acts of projection that began to move beyond the mechanistic Nazi-Jew dialectic represented by...
Levin and Hasfari into something far more nuanced and philosophically challenging. Foremost among these was the Acco Theater production, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, directed by Dudi Ma'ayan (1991–94). The title, that inscription seared into the Jewish soul like the numbers on Jewish flesh, also points to another form of Arbeit: the Twain—Arbeit or work of mourning that Jews, like Germans, are—or are not—engaged in and how such “work” affects the moral challenges in the present. The performance lasted five hours, incorporating a visit to the Holocaust museum at Kibbutz Lohamel Ha-getta’ot, a meal, conversations between actors and audience, a musical cabaret, and elaborate stage effects. The four actors who carried the whole production represent the entire spectrum of Israeli identity: Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews and a Palestinian from northern Israel. The role of the Palestinian, Haled (Haled Abu ‘Ali), encompassed the two “repressed others” in Israeli society: as both “tour guide” explaining the model of Treblinka to visitors at the museum, and as the hired-hand of the main character, Selma (Semadar Ya’aron-Ma’ayan), he is the reincarnation of the Arab as Galut Jew. In the penultimate scene of the play, after having been humiliated and mistreated at the hands of his employer, herself a survivor of Hitler’s worst atrocities, he is seen dancing naked on the “torture table” that was earlier identified as an artifact from Treblinka, beating himself and inviting the spectators to beat him (which, in some performances, they did). The last tableau reveals Selma and Haled in a naked duel, the Israeli answer to Kiefer’s Margarete Patriot, also becomes a debate over power and powerlessness—a subject only gingerly touched upon heretofore in Holocaust representations—is starkly explored through the figure of Gens, Chief of the Ghetto, and his council. Ghetto is a self-conscious drama with a theatrical production as its centerpiece and acts of impersonation and imposture as its structural elements. In his introduction to the printed version of the play, Uri Rapp describes Sobol’s vision of theater as the epitome of the human community: “Oppressors and oppressed, murderers and martyrs, Germans and Jews, are inextricably bound together, by hatred, by contempt, by fear, by unwilling admiration—puppets on strings from somewhere outside the stage, the puppet master unseen and inscrutable.” Does this make both Germans and Jews pawns—or agents—of history? The question is explored on both stages. When the casts of Ghetto and Arbeit Macht Frei traveled to Germany, where they were enthusiastically embraced, the implicit dialogue between today’s Germans and Israelis became explicit in a joint performative context.
That dialogue continues as a more internal exploration on the repercussions of transgressive leaps of imagination in David Grossman's Ayen eenekh: 'ahava' (See Under: LOVE, 1986). Here the encounter of Jew and Nazi is a counterhistorical fantasy emanating from the mind of Shlomo, an Israeli writer who grew up in Jerusalem in the 1950s as a child of survivors. Its iconoclastic power lies not only in imagining the Nazi, and imagining oneself as Nazi, but also in reclaiming discarded diasporic forms of Jewish self-empowerment through storytelling. The four sections of the novel are grounded in four different literary conceits; in the section entitled "Wasserman," the eponymous character, Anshel Wasserman, has miraculously (and piteously) survived the gas chamber and all subsequent attempts to deliver him to his "rightful" death. When it is discovered that this recalcitrant Jew is none other than a great writer of children's stories, the commandant of the camp, Obersturmbannführer Neigel, makes a pact with him, promising to try to put him out of his misery in exchange for a story. This continues day after day: Wasserman finishes another episode of his saga, "The Children of the Heart," and Herr Neigel shoots him. But the Jew, the most mortal—and combustible—material of the Third Reich, becomes immortal, reverting in a way to his mythological position in the Christian imagination as the eternal lost soul, while the Nazi is humanized and particularized.

Here, as in Aribert and Ghetto, the existential struggle goes beyond the Nazi/Jew dialogue to posit the human psyche as the place that can be as easily invaded by the poison of acquiescence to fascist doctrine as by the milk of human kindness and respect. Shlomo, the narrator of the story, engages in a prodigious act of impersonation that breathes life into Herr Neigel: "In the White Room (where Shlomo writes and confronts the ghosts from "Over There"), everything comes out of your own self, out of your own guts, victim and murderer, compassion and cruelty." But there are moments when his German character tries to assert too much humanity and such moments are enlisted in an ongoing meditation on the character's "autonomy" vis-à-vis his creator. Struggling over the degrees of control he can or must exercise in the creation of his Nazi character, Shlomo reflects on what comes to be referred to acronymically as "the Little Nazi in you (LNIY)":

That night, on a narrow bed in a rented room in a strange city, a dream was dreamed. Neigel was dreamed in the guise of a certain person. Neigel's children were also in the dream, and were encountered without enmity. They were even deemed 'sweet.' They were cared for gently and with devotion by Neigel (who was a certain person). In the aftermath of the dream, the dreamer awakened with the following thought: A certain person has been dreamed of as a Nazi, and all this evoked was a mild depression, which soon lifted, having nothing much to hang on to. The strange thought occurred that they always say the Little Nazi in you (henceforth LNIY) with reference to the wrong things, the obvious things like bestial cruelty, for instance, or racism of one sort or another, and xenophobia, and murderousness. But these are only the superficial symptoms of the disease . . . The real problem, the disease, lies much deeper. And it may be incurable.

Diagnosing the "disease" and agonizing over degrees of contamination and control are inherent to this enterprise in all its forms. Transgression does not involve an abandoning of the idea of limits; as we have already seen, the danger that the invention will exceed the grasp of the inventor, or that while the character of the Nazi may become more human than his creator intended, the bacillus of Nazism may escape into the open air, is never far from the artist's mind. But there is an implicit disclaimer here, which Mirroring Evil is meant to highlight: whether the unseen forces are imagined as puppeteers or deadly bacteria, and their creations Frankenstein's, Golem, or diseased organisms, the challenge to free will and historical agency is what is at stake. The medicalization or pathologization of both the creative and the critical discourse endangers the ethical concerns it is meant to address.

IMAGINING HITLER

There remains an important distinction in all the works under consideration between the appropriation of a kind of "generic" Nazi, the banal bureaucrat now become available to our imagination, and the two masterminds of the "Final Solution" who are singled out for the most daring projections: Mengsle and Hitler. Both are represented in this exhibition, and both have received literary and dramatic treatments that either maintain a clear divide between human and demonic (as in Rolf Hochhuth's The Deputy or Franklin J. Schaffner's The Boys from Brazil) or invest them with an eminently human voice—and defense. George Steiner's Portage to San Cristóból of A. H. is one of the most controversial examples of the latter and illuminates the cultural frames that mirror evil.

As perhaps the ultimate act of trespass of the late twentieth century, George Steiner's is a novel-turned-play whose central conceit is the myth that Adolf Hitler never actually committed suicide (see Ron Rosenbaum's ambiguous rendering of the "double" suicide), but managed to escape to South America. In this fantasy, he (designated as A. H.) is eventually captured by an international espionage team in the jungle and, because of his frailty and age, tried on the spot. The appearance of the novel caused something of a stir—especially given Steiner's herebefore critical advocacy of a kind of restraint on the unbridled use of language in representing the Holocaust. But it was the novel's dramatic adaptation, giving body and voice to Hitler, that caused an uproar. What some have argued is Steiner's own polemic with Zionism, ventriloquized through Hitler's voice as the Fuhrer's defense, bears resemblance in many ways to the apotropaic debates on power and powerlessness in Sobol's plays and the Acco Theater's production of Arbeit Macht Frei. The differences are, however, more instructive than the similarities. And they relate primarily to the performative context, the primary audience to which this work is addressed, like Kiefer in Germany, Sobol and the Acco Theater in Israel are part of a lacerating collective self-examination. Ghetto and Arbeit in Germany, like Celan and Kiefer's Margarete/Shulamith in Israel, enter the space of the polemic other. To the extent that the artistic works and performative events we are discussing are evidence of a collective dialogue with the legacy of the past, Steiner's drama was not really part of such a conversation; his voice remains a phantom of some unidentified "we." At the beginning of Ghetto, the walls of the Tel Aviv apartment where the survivor-narrator lives collapse to make way for the Vilna Ghetto. But Tel Aviv remains the primary reference and bisociative corrective for the ghetto. If, as Ron Rosenbaum writes, in Steiner's Portage "a character named A. H. escapes from its famous literary creator," it may be because the jungle in which the capture of A. H. takes place is a no-place; the creator's laboratory has no walls. Hitler's defense, the last speech in the play, is not only left unanswered; it is cast not in a social or moral engagement with the temptations of Nazism or even with the incarnation of absolute evil but, as Rosenbaum so convincingly shows, as an ontological engagement with Judaism. It remains unbridled, uncontrolled by irony or bissociation, free to escape and free as reproach not of LNIY but of LJIY, the Little Jew in You, whose very existence is a cosmic flaw.

In that regard the work of Toee Rosen, Live and Die as Eva Braun, which bears close resemblance to...
Steiner's Portage in other respects, stays just within the collective bounds that allow for a roundtrip ticket to barbaric spaces. The first gatekeeper is the psychic of Hitler's lover, sharing her experience of Hitler's bodily fluids and the moment that he grabs her to... murder her. The final scenes trace the residue of that afterlife consciousness through the acoustics of shouting voices in the Judean desert. But such a context, as amorphous as it might seem, makes all the difference. The visitor should bear in mind that even when invited into the psyche of Eva Braun without the protection of that space, the sentences of the dramatic world, when the desire for acceptance forces the unfolding of one's difference, are not escaped in their ethereal, religious, or class identity. One cannot escape these labels because of the privileged group's myth that these categories are immutable. The portrait of the shlemiel in Jewish literature is seen by Gilman as having originated in the internalization of German stereotypes of Jews on the part of Enlightenment Jewish writers and thinkers who were trying to assimilate into the surrounding culture. Whether or not one would agree that the shlemiel is a product of Jewish self-hatred and mimicry, its counterpart, the self-representation of the Jew as oppressor, must herald the very opposite. It is too facile, then, to label the impersonation of the Nazi in Israeli culture as an act of self-hatred. The appropriation by a privileged group of a universally despised image of otherness would, rather, be a sign of enormous self-affirmation and confidence in the claim of one's own group to a responsible (response-able) stake in the world, of a determinism to undermine the myth that these categories are immutable, that anyone is immune to the abuses of power and the temptations of claims to racial superiority.

**THE SIXTH ACT**

Finally, the act of Impersonation must give way to the impulse out of which it was created. The barber mistakes for the "Führer" by Hynkel's own soldiers, slips out of that character and back into his own when he alights the podium and addresses the Nazi audience in words against tyranny and oppression—creating a desideratum that, for all of us who view it in the tragedy of hindsight, is the scenario of a history that should have been. The theatricality of our distance from these events allows us to reclaim our own past lives:

For me the tragedy's most important act is the sixth:

- the raising of the dead from the stage's battlegrounds,
- the straightening of wigs and fancy gowns, removing knives from stricken breasts, taking nooses from lifeless necks, lifting up among the living to face the audience. . . .

But the curtain's fall is the most uplifting part, the things you see before it hits the floor: here one hand quickly reaches for a flower, there another hand picks up a fallen sword. Only then one last, unseen, hand does its duty and grabs me by the throat.

From "Theatre Impressions," by Wislawa Szymborska

Mirroring Evil, like a theater production, ends with the merciful return of the protagonist. As an invisible curtain descends, we can imagine the artist putting down her tools, the model shedding the paraphernalia of the Third Reich for his ordinary street clothes. And we, the audience, straighten a skirt here, a tie there, and prepare to exit. But as we are about to leave, perhaps—just perhaps—an invisible hand grips our throat and we realize that something of these acts of impersonation will continue to haunt us even into the sunshine of a world after Auschwitz.
than relegating it, as many have done, to the dustbin of "fiction"; she suggests labeling Arguments a "false—or better, a deluded—memoir." Ibid.

The depiction of madness and the Holocaust goes back at least as far as Bruno Bettelheim's essays in the early 1940s, when he identified structural similarities between concentration camp behavior and schizophrenia. We shall see below how this discourse informs the Israeli encounter with the disturbing presence of survivors who cannot be "inhabituated." Wilkornrib describes the sinister implications of such a discourse. He seems to be saying that the only sufficient "objective correlate" for his psychosis is the Holocaust: "If I am so crazy, I must have been spawned in Majdanek ..." See also the more recent controversy over the "fiction" of Wolfgang Koeppen.


13. In Europe, the line between imprisonment and torture is again blurred, with grave psychological consequences. In this case, the confinement is systematic and underscores the cultural dimensions of visibility: the boy's act of delusion is matched by the self-delusion of the perpetrators; even when they use their "scientific measurements," the Nazis simply don't "see" the Jew in front of them, so that intent are they on having him as a perfect specimen of Aryan beauty. See also Jaroslav Rymkiewicz, ed. Charles Fullman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).

14. Quoted in Robinson, Chaplin: His Life and Art, 503.

15. There is a report that Hitler watched the film. On this, and also on the question of Chaplin's "Jewish" origins, see John McCabe, Charlie Chaplin (London: Routledge, 1988), 180-200.

16. For Bialystok, the town, the fool, and the rogue are the precursors of the novelist in exposing social conventions. Their masks "grant the right not to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; ... the right to not be taken literally, not to be oneself; the right to live a life in ... the context of theatrical space, the right to act off masks ... and finally, the right to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and purest little secrets." ibid.


22. For a discussion of the public rhetoric under Menachem Begin's government that reintroduced archetypal references to the Arab enemy (during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, for example, Begin claimed to have seen Arafat in Beirut as a reincarnation of Hitler in Berlin), see Tom Segev, The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust (Jerusalem: 1991), 396-404.


24. From the program notes of The Peasant (New York: The Yiddish Theatre Troupe). It was this very passage that the board of censors, which still operated in Israel in 1982 under an antiquated code enacted during the British Mandate, excised from the play.

25. For an illuminating discussion of Amit Motel Fein, see Amnon Raz-Karkazti, Gaiyet be-tashlil rimonot ("Exile within a Sovereign State"). Te'oria u-vikorit (Theory and Criticism), no. 4 (Fall 1993): 122-24. He develops the idea that...
together, Selma and Haled represent the two repressed forms of memory precipitated by the formulaic Israeli engagement with the Holocaust: its repression of the “European” memories of its victims and its impact on the Israeli-Arab encounter. He also points to the edifice, postmodern structure of the performance as a critique of the linear narrative that establishes causality between events as complex as the Shoah and the construction of the State of Israel.

35. This can also be seen as an inversion of the trope of the Jewish Jesus, which has appeared in Jewish art and literature since early in the twentieth century and culminated in Marc Chagall’s series of crucifixes.

36. Joshua Sobol, Ghetto, trans. Miriam Shlesinger (Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1984), 55. In his introduction to the English version of the play, Uri Rapp writes: “The impossibility of staging the events of the Holocaust derives from the impossibility of viewing the German mass murderers as part of our common humanity, although this is exactly what should be done in order to confront the murderer lurking in all of us.” Ibid., 6. The three plays, Ghetto, Adam, and Ba-morfej (In the Cellar), were produced between 1984 and 1990.

37. Sobol, Ghetto, 8.

38. Asher Tallim produced a film about the performance, Al ni (Do Not Touch My Holocaust), which documented the meeting between the Israeli actors and Germans of their generation, self-defined as “children of murderers.” See also Bajagan, A. Vetal, director, 1993.


40. Ibid., 211-92.

41. Surveying the subject of a determination to avoid the “dubious pathologization of historical processes or personalities,” Dominiek LaCapra attempts instead to “link ... historical inquiry to explicit ethical and ethicopolitical concerns bearing on the present and the future.” History and Memory after Auschwitz (Zurich, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 180.

42. This subtitle is borrowed from Alvin Rosenfeld, Imagining Hitler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). I have deliberately avoided a discussion of kitsch, pornographic, and its manipulation of material culture in relation to the Shoah discourse. “The handling of Hitler’s body through the exercises to which Rosen invites the spectator are interpreted by Azoulay as a kind of mocking Jewish response to Hitler’s last will and testament, that his body not fall into the hands of Jews, and a (temporary) answer to the relentlessly haunting presence of the unbathed dead. See Azoulay’s definition of the process of imagination/identification with the perpetrators as that of “becoming” (In Gilles Deleuze’s sense of devenir), “Shoah in the Eyes, Hitler on the Wall”—or “Would you believe that you can read German!” [Hebrew]. Telo y u-kilh, No. 15, Winter, 1999, 49-62. The radical shift in position of Yehiel Dinur (“Ka-tzetnik”) provides another “public” site for measuring the transformation of the moral discourse in Israel. The original spokesperson for Auschwitz as the “other planet,” (safely) removed from the human arena, Dinur, in his later work, made a complete about-face. As Omer Bartov writes, “Ka-Tzetnik had set the terms of the Holocaust more than sixty years ago, and we are only now becoming conscious of his importance.” Omer Bartov, “The Origins of the Holocaust: Auschwitz and the Holocaust,” in The Holocaust: Memory, Representation, and History, ed. Robert Jan van Pelt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 204, 207. See also Bartov’s exploration of the implications of the increased humanization of the Nazi in Israeli and western culture, ibid., 185–212.

43. The Pottey in San Cristobal of A. K. originally appeared as a short novel in The Kvenyan Review, 1979; it was later performed in London.


45. Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler, 300. For an interesting presentation of this work, based on interviews with Steinri, see ibid., 300-18.

46. On Impersonation as cross-dressing, see Marjorie Garber, Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (New York: Routledge, 1997).

47. On the fascination with Hitler’s baby pictures, see Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler, 38.

48. Even the fact that such an installation was shown at the Israel Museum is a measure of how open certain public institutions in Israel have become to the most painful reexaminations of the past. Rosen’s exhibit provides the context for Arlela Azoulay’s exploration of the “museological space” and its manipulation of material culture in relation to the “Shoah discourse.” “The handling of Hitler’s body through the exercises to which Rosen invites the spectator are interpreted by Azoulay as a kind of mocking Jewish response to Hitler’s last will and testament, that his body not fall into the hands of Jews, and a (temporary) answer to the relentlessly haunting presence of the unbathed dead. See Azoulay’s definition of the process of imagination/identification with the perpetrators as that of “becoming” (In Gilles Deleuze’s sense of devenir), “Shoah in the Eyes, Hitler on the Wall”—or “Would you believe that you can read German!” [Hebrew]. Telo y u-kilh, No. 15, Winter, 1999, 49-62.

49. On the fascination with Hitler’s baby pictures, see Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler, 38.

50. Even the fact that such an installation was shown at the Israel Museum is a measure of how open certain public institutions in Israel have become to the most painful reexaminations of the past. Rosen’s exhibit provides the context for Arlela Azoulay’s exploration of the “museological space” and its manipulation of material culture in relation to the “Shoah discourse.” “The handling of Hitler’s body through the exercises to which Rosen invites the spectator are interpreted by Azoulay as a kind of mocking Jewish response to Hitler’s last will and testament, that his body not fall into the hands of Jews, and a (temporary) answer to the relentlessly haunting presence of the unbathed dead. See Azoulay’s definition of the process of imagination/identification with the perpetrators as that of “becoming” (In Gilles Deleuze’s sense of devenir), “Shoah in the Eyes, Hitler on the Wall”—or “Would you believe that you can read German!” [Hebrew]. Telo y u-kilh, No. 15, Winter, 1999, 49-62.

51. If the human species is differentiated from the beasts by the marvel of consciousness, then we enact our humanity and the very authenticity of our being by straining to “know” through awareness the “unthinkable” experience of others.

ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ

This essay is dedicated to the memories of Betty Feinbloom Handler and to Henry Schachter, in memoriam.

Silence is the facilitator of destruction.

Sue Grand

Magda took Rosa’s nipple, and Rosa never stopped walking, a walking cradle. There was not enough milk; sometimes Magda sucked air; then she screamed.

Cynthia Ozick

If the human species is differentiated from the beasts by the marvel of consciousness, then we enact our humanity and the very authenticity of our being by straining to “know” through awareness the “unthinkable” experience of others.

Lawrence L. Langer

hy did it happen? How could it have happened? Because we cannot understand, we keep asking—like small children—over and over again. Then, like the parents of those children, we keep trying to answer but fail.

Artists working on the theme of the Holocaust today are often too young to remember World War II, so young, in fact, that in some cases their parents

38. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi
were small children then or not yet born. Still, these far-flung artists, living in eastern and western Europe, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere, continue to ask and to try to find answers. Permanently marked by stories that could never be told to them, by secrets that were kept and carried into graves, by public rituals like perennial school visits to the sites of former concentration camps or Holocaust memorials that were dutifully but superficially observed, they make art that continues to grapple with their, and our, unassimilable past. In their art they “act out” and attempt to “work through” this past, which remains present, and they attempt to take us with them. We must try to go there.

What is the effect of keeping secrets from children? And from the grandchildren and the nieces and nephews of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders? All suffer. Adults have concealed the past either because they were helpless and afraid, guilty or ashamed, or because they believed they could protect the next generation by covering them each night with a thick blanket of ignorance. But the wish to know, the need to make sense, always bursts through us at times in the fallout from its flames.

Mendel, a film made in 1997 in Norway by Alexander Rosler, explores the theme of keeping secrets about the Holocaust from young children (fig. 1). Rosler was born in Dachau. Deeply concerned with not knowing and not telling, his work is an autobiographical fiction that demonstrates how florid symptoms can arise in children even when they (as one character in the film puts it) are “born too late” to have experienced brutality firsthand. Little Mendel Trotzig has nothing to remember. The first words in the film are his: “I don’t have any bad memories.” He cannot make sense of the world around him. At the milder end of the spectrum, Mendel is confused and bewildered. He snoops and tries to keep “secrets” of his own. He grows anxious and fearful. He acts out dangerous, misplaced aggression, attempting to shoot someone with a gun. Thus, broad questions are raised about the conditions for learning—learning about matters that are difficult, if not impossible, to teach.

In Mendel, such learning comes with maximum risk for the little boy. Playing with his Norwegian friends, Mendel hears about their fathers’ bravery against the Germans during the war. He confronts his brother, asking why the Jews who were about to be slaughtered stood around like sheep. They just stood there and prayed, he says, insolently repeating “baaaa.” He, Mendel, would not have been so cowardly. He would have grabbed a gun from a member of the firing squad and died resisting bravely. At this point, David silently rises from his chair in a rage, grabs his little brother, and pins him to the floor.

Mendel does not understand. His stepfather nervously chain-smokes, repeats ethnic jokes, and mocks religious rituals, but he wakes up at night with terrible dreams. Mendel’s mother sings sadly at night in Yiddish to David, who weeps softly. Whenever Mendel responds positively to any Christian symbol, song, or holiday, he is slapped and reprimanded by his brother. When Mendel asks for an explanation, he is told to be quiet, that the knowledge he seeks is “not for children,” that he is too young to know.

With power and clarity, Mendel goes on to portray the effects of adult secrecy on children. Parents may wish to keep children safe from knowledge that might prove overwhelming (to themselves as well as to their children), but these wishes do not lead to peace of mind. “Not telling,” we are made to see, produces its own forms of terror. At the milder end of the spectrum, Mendel is confused and bewildered. He cannot make sense of the world around him. At the more extreme end, he begins to exhibit actual symptoms. Like his stepfather, he has nightmares. He wets his pants (symbolic of his incapacity to exert cognitive control over the world around him). He acts out dangerous, misplaced aggression, attempting to shoot someone with a gun. Thus, broad questions are raised about the conditions for learning—learning about matters that are difficult, if not impossible, to teach.

In Mendel, such learning comes with maximum risk for the little boy. Playing with his Norwegian friends, Mendel hears about their fathers’ bravery against the Germans during the war. He confronts his brother, asking why the Jews who were about to be slaughtered stood around like sheep. They just stood there and prayed, he says, insolently repeating “baaaa.” He, Mendel, would not have been so cowardly. He would have grabbed a gun from a member of the firing squad and died resisting bravely. At this point, David silently rises from his chair in a rage, grabs his little brother, and pins him to the floor.

Once again, there is no discussion or explanation. Holding the child down, David demands an apology from him. But Mendel, who understands nothing about the Holocaust, repeats his “baaaa.” David picks him up, and then, in an unforgettable scene, holds the child by his feet out of a second-story window and demands, “Say you’re sorry or I’ll let you go.” When Mendel finally murmurs the necessary words, David also makes him say “mercy.”

Back inside, the older brother comments succinctly, “Your pride ran out.” Yet the little one, momentarily subdued but unvanquished, runs and locks himself in the bathroom. When he finally opens the door, an ensuing struggle melts into an embrace. “You’re awfully irritating, but you’re brave,”
David admits, "Then tell me . . .," begs Mendel. (Even now, after learning with his own life that one cannot stand in the place of another, can the boys begin to talk. Truths about the war are spoken, and shapes of the past come into clearer focus. Who can compare silences? The inability to return, to recount, to reconnect—the frozen muteness of a former victim of trauma with that of a former perpetrator, whose malignant self may have been encapsulated and dissociated from other more empathic modes of being?

For their offspring and for the generations to come, the stillness is toxic. Terrifying imaginary spaces appear in the voices of silence. Artists working within these spaces pull us down into them. Their work may frighten and even disgust us, but we must go there ourselves.

We must go because, for Jews, history has always been a reenacting as well as a retelling. Central to the text of the Haggadah is the story of the four sons, which is repeated annually at the beginning of the Pesach seder, when even the youngest children are not yet too tired or hungry to pay attention. Each of the four sons, normally "played" by children at the table, asks about the Exodus in a different way and is answered by the leader according to his special needs. There is a wise child, a wicked child, a simple child, and a child who cannot ask any question at all.

The wicked child asks, "What does this service mean to you?" By choosing the exclusionary "you" rather than the embracing "us," he removes himself from the community. This notion recurs throughout the Haggadah and is emphasized in songs such as "Dayenu," where we are fed manna in the wilderness, and "Echad mi yodeah," and through ritual practices in which each person must taste the acerbic horseradish, the bitter herb that is symbolic of "our" harsh treatment as slaves in Egypt. In this way, Jewish children are taught, year after year, that the story of the Exodus is a part of their own personal story. "In every generation, each of us should feel as though we ourselves had gone forth out of Egypt. . . . It was we who were slaves . . . we who were strangers." Thus, a continuous autobiographical self emerges in childhood that blends with the history of a people and provides a framework for the interpretation of one's acts.

Both gentleness and aggression, love and hate, are part of our human heritage, and artists who explore the theme of the Holocaust are telling us that we must try to see them both. No matter how hard it is. Can we try, they ask us, to imagine the childhood and inner state of perpetrators as well as victims and to dwell momentarily within the malignant splits that permit perpetrators to experience a subjective state of innocence in a condition of actual guilt? I think of a small child who disowns his acts, who knocks a family treasure to the floor, shattering it forever, and, almost believing himself, explains, "It fell down all by itself." Can we adults behave this way—disavowing agency, separating ourselves from our own deeds and from the consequences of those deeds? Can we—cut off from memory, history, and imagination—experience ourselves as not implicated in the actions of our bodies? Many of the artists who today explore the Holocaust try dramatically to represent such disorders ofknowing, such malignant dissociations, with, as one author has described it, their terrifying potential for contagion.

They also ask us to make analogies between the defenselessness of small children and of the victims of evil and to consider similarities between innocent and malevolent ignorance and between innocent and malevolent ideologies. They want us to find links between ancient voices of children and the strident, raucous clamor of political and economic propaganda. Between the fanciful building blocks of our nursery days and the stark architectural units of mass incarceration and annihilation.

To say the word "bad" may be to utter a simple indication of disapproval, even momentary or mild. "She is a bad parent" (possibly unresponsive or hypercritical). "He was a bad child" (rude, perhaps, or disobedient). "Last night we saw a bad play" (poorly executed or tasteless). When we switch, however, from bad to evil, we enter a universe of discourse that implies morality. We enter a realm where bad becomes malignant. Where to oppose is not only good but also right (as in right versus wrong). And evil seems to fascinate us. What about an art that speaks to us of evil? I do not mean an art, familiar to us now more than half a century after the Holocaust, that compels us to open our hearts to the victims of evil, but rather an art that asks us to share our sheltered psychic spaces with its perpetrators? An art that won't let us dissociate ourselves from evil but that, by representing and re-creating the very disjunctions that breed it, lures us, pushes us in, seals us up inside, and then ejects us feeling sick, stirred, titillated, subdued, betrayed, contami­nated, and embarrased. And shaken, perhaps, with deep, unformulatable questions.

For many of these contemporary artists the leitmotif is childhood. Perhaps we can begin to understand why. Brutality directed against the young is normally felt to be so heinous that for many years linking thoughts of children with genocide was avoided. Transgressing a sacred boundary, it was pushed away for almost four decades after the Holocaust, and only relatively recently have scholars begun to focus on it, even though the youngest children were the first to perish. To picture childhood stories and toys and youthful faces and games in one's art in this context, then, is to perform a certain sort of violation even before the details of any individual representation are considered.

But if you are trying to understand something, you must go back to the beginning—to have that possibility. For some of these artists, childhood counts in that way. As a beginning. Consider how each child's dawning awareness of his or her own immediate past (yesterday's holiday parade or train ride or bedtime story) leads to the sense of history on a grander scale. Biographymorphs into history. As children play and grow, their self-centered stories of "me" expand into broader accounts that include an increasing number of "not-mes" and merge with cultural traditions that exceed the life span and geographic range of any given individual. This matters because, when the capacity for historical memory is in place, it forms the ground of our personal identity, of an ongoing, meaningful sense of self, not only psychologically but ethically. It forms the basis of individual responsibility. Without connections to and recollections of the past, how can we braid the strands of causative and associative meaning that influence our deeds and are in turn affected by them? Thus, by invoking childhood play and storytelling, some contemporary artists of the Holocaust are beseeching us to return to the ground of their own and of our own individual ethical conscience.

When I look at their art I tremble to imagine what it might feel like to be deprived of that ground, that deep-rooted sense of history and memory and the means to make ethical choices that begins in childhood. Or to be where there can be no choices because one is stripped of everything. Where one is unrecognized and unseen and where one can no longer see oneself. What terrible inner isolation must ensue, what aloneness. A deadness, an emptiness, that, to be rendered endurable, can sometimes be belied by facts and numbers or mechanical behaviors that, nonetheless, no matter how often they are repeated or reiterated or recorded, can never assuage inner chasms of inaccessible pain. The art makes me see that when one cannot love or be loved because one has lost touch somehow with that possibility one can turn to others only destructively. Imagine a lonely child with lethal toys, behind thick panes of defensive glass—an invisible barrier that, if one could ever break through it, would smash and shatter, causing unbearable pain. The Images of Adolf Eichmann come to mind—how he twitched,
flipped pages, and polished his eyeglasses, mechanically rising and sitting, a grown-up child behind the glass panes of his isolation booth in Jerusalem. This is where the art is trying to take us: into that booth, behind that glass.

In Roee Rosen’s Live and Die as Eva Braun (1995), childhood is completely betrayed, for we must become Hitler’s paramour and wait for him and, when he is naked, have sexual intercourse with him before he shoots us to death in the bunker. If I can go there, even for a few seconds, I am split off from my world, without memory, in a prison of eternal presence. Everything outside becomes nonexistent. Rosen brings me so close to evil that I am sick—in my mouth and throat and stomach and skin; as the scene horrifyingly surrounds me, the sensation is intolerable. Rosen draws on images from childhood. One is a photograph of himself as a boy graffitied with the adult Hitler’s mustache (fig. 2), surmounted by interlocking pairs of scissors taken from the cover of Der Struwwelpeter (Strenzly Peter), a famous children’s book (fig. 3). Written in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1844 by Heinrich Hoffmann, a middle-class doctor, for his three-year-old son, Struwwelpeter tells of wicked children who are punished grotesquely for their transgressions. When they prove recalcitrant, these children are viciously chastised. A disobedient little girl, Paulinenchen, plays with matches and is burned alive (fig. 4). Kaspar, who does not wish to eat the food his parents give him, is killed by starvation. Another small fellow, Konrad, sucks his thumb and ends with having both offending fingers chopped off by enormous shears (fig. 5). Why do

Fig. 2. Roee Rosen, Live and Die as Eva Braun #2, 1995. Acrylic on rag paper, 6⅛” x 11”. Courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 3. Cover illustration from the original Frankfurt edition of Der Struwwelpeter by Heinrich Hoffmann, 1844, (Lewes Verlag Ferdinand Carl).

Fig. 4. Illustration of Paulinchen being burnt alive, from Der Struwwelpeter.

Fig. 5. Illustration of Konrad’s thumbs being cut off, from Der Struwwelpeter.
such images belong here, in art that asks about the Holocaust?

Perhaps a contemporary performance piece can help us understand. A mixed media “punk opera” (so called) based on Struwwelpeter and titled Shockheaded Peter (Fig. 6) is a musical adaptation of Hoffmann’s book.21 Created in England, it has attracted wildly enthusiastic crowds in London, New York, and San Francisco.

Beguiled by its daintily hand-painted sets with a cleverly elevated puppet theater, I was, despite my knowledge of Struwwelpeter, unprepared for the cruelty of this show and dazzed by the howls of glee that followed each sadistic act performed or recounted. Although the British adapters tried to provide an ironic frame for each story, I was horrified by the upturn of laughter that surrounded me as child after child, depicted as a monster, was mutilated, murdered, and sent to an onstage grave. At one chilling moment, the narrator, a counter tenor with whiteface clown makeup, an accordion, and an ear-splitting voice, elicited direct audience participation.

After yet another child character had been hideously punished, the narrator began to insinuate interrogatively, “Johnny was . . . ? Johnny WAS . . . ? Johnny WAS . . . ?” and, tentatively, one or two voices in the theater responded, “dead . . .” But the narrator-clown was dissatisfied with this insipid rejoinder. His pitch rose as he hectored the crowd with shrill taunts. In just a few seconds, he had succeeded. The entire audience was shrieking “DEAD!”

Stripped one by one of their privileges, rights, sustenance, and curiosity about evil to entrap us, to seduce us into revealing whatever disavowed voyeuristic pleasure we can take in it. They give us the means to experience our own latent sadism and, later on, waves of shame and even remorse. Through our spectatorial power (to look) and our powerlessness (in being unable to resist their seduction), we become momentary doubles for both the perpetrators of evil and its victims. Through our participation in an art that co-opts us this way, we actually replay that codependent relationship.34 Some pieces make us laugh, fast and raucously. They make us try—by humor, volume, and speed—to override the softer voices within and dissociate ourselves from helpless “children,” moreover, the perpetrators (and here we may invoke the audiences at Shockheaded Peter) somehow empowered themselves psychologically to perform acts of untold cruelty.

How were they able to do this? How could they brutalize human beings already reduced to such helplessness? Why was there no empathy for people who, stripped of all their markers, deprived of all the signs of their lived years, known only by numbers, could have likened to unnamed infants in an obstetrics ward, deserving of being comforted and loved? Was it because the next step was to render them nonhuman, like animals in a herd, as in the “baaaa” uttered by Mendel when he could not understand? For the victims were looked at by their murderers without being seen, and the violent acts performed on them were rendered void of consequence—like the killing of animals or like the brutalities I saw committed onstage against imaginary children. Were the disempowered ones, the Jews, seen, as in Shockheaded Peter, as “deserving” of what was “coming” to them,35 something adults say to justify the use of corporal punishment against their children? And do artists who link the Holocaust with childhood draw on this betrayal and attempt to implicates us directly in it?

I think the artists also use our fascination with and curiosity about evil to entrap us, to seduce us into revealing whatever disavowed voyeuristic pleasure we can take in it. They give us the means to experience our own latent sadism and, later on, waves of shame and even remorse. Through our spectatorial power (to look) and our powerlessness (in being unable to resist their seduction), we become momentary doubles for both the perpetrators of evil and its victims. Through our participation in an art that co-opts us this way, we actually replay that codependent relationship. Some pieces make us laugh, fast and raucously. They make us try—by humor, volume, and speed—to override the softer voices within and dissociate ourselves from
any memory or history that might spoil the effect. Other pieces guide us skillfully toward a slower process of reflection. In any case, by participating in these works of art and identifying with them, we become, as it were, their "victims." Having induced us to collude with them, they enact on us a species of psychic violence, a violence with which we go along. Arriving in the art museum or theater in a state of willing suspension of disbelief appropriate to the realm of the aesthetic, we are kidnapped. Simultaneously, conspiring with the perpetrators (real and imaginary), we evade the burden of our guilt, taste the juices of our own cruelty, and feast in fantasy on our brief mastery over what in real life would repel and/or destroy us.

Take Piotr Uklańsk i s 1999 installation piece The Nazis. A room of head shots, mounted at eye level on stark white walls: all are male movie stars who have played roles as Nazi officers. Gazing at these icons of masculine strength and beauty, can we remain impervious to their erotic and heroic appeal toward men and women alike? Can we fail to be lured by chains of not fully remembered associations to other, more benign contexts in which we had admired and adored these faces, these busts—now garbed in the black, brown, red, and yellow Nazi regalia with braided crosses, swastikas, embroidered eagles, lightning bolts, insignias, woolen visored caps, and crystal monocles?

A double consciousness appears—that "link between the power of a tempter and the weakness of the subject's resolve,") that betrayal of basic trust"—as when the small child's smiling grandmother turns shocking ly into a wolf. 19 Sexuality and brutality twist themselves together in Uklański's installation, as do entertainment and instruction, fiction and history, the lie and the truth. These dualities bond and conflate while at the same time we are prevented from meaningfully, feelingly conjoining them. I am not sure how to orient myself in this profoundly disturbing space. Where can I stand emotionally here? The faces are all at my eye level. They make uneasy contact with me. What fantasies do they impose? And how will I figure out how to evade them and thus to flee also from parts of myself?

Excited by the theatricality of Uklański's piece, its form and parodic content, we may in fact experience for ourselves an analogue of actual Nazi propaganda—its use of film and pageantry. Its regular-featured faces, even Hitler's own ascetic and reiterated histrionics, his uncanny capacity to, as Erikson put it, "explotp own hystera." 20 The multiple heads arranged in this line are mesmerizing. They are, in fact, hypnotic, reminiscent of National Socialist programs for the training of German youth, in which the children's normal developmental conflicts and family dynamics were swept aside in favor of "simple patterns of hypnotic action and freedom from thought," 21 in which their parents no longer mattered, nor did personal ethics, nor friendships, nor learning. The imperative was to be on the move without looking back. Uklański's piece invokes, as well, the hypnotic quality of military marches into battle and forced marches by prisoners, the endless recurrent horrors of the Holocaust, the lists, the unrecorded faces of its dead. Behind each head shot on this wall, I can find a child in black and white, lonely, frightened, then lifeless. But to do this is to pull back from the piece, perhaps. Or is it?

For all those good-looking, evil-doing faces are staring at us but not seeing us, aren't they? Just as perpetrators must. They look closely at the victims of their crimes, but never see them. They dissociate. To escape personal accountability, they cannot know. Uklański's pageant looks like a parade to me. Suddenly, it reminds me of the haunting procession of sceptered kings that frightened Macbeth, himself a serial killer. Dazzlingly, Uklański surrounds us with evil.

As does Zbigniew Libera. In LEGO Concentration Camp Set (fig. 7) he shows us how LEGO pieces can be used to construct replicas of concentration camps, with crematoria, gallows, guard towers, barracks, and electroshock tables. Instead of co-opting us emotionally, however, he invites us to come very close to his work, lured by our sense of familiarity with the toy. Then he gives us a shock and pushes us, just a bit roughly, back into a comer, where we are made to stand still and think. After our initial gasp at what he has done, he makes us face the processes at work here—the not-seen things that occur all around us and of which we ourselves are so perennially guilty. He shows, with his simple children's blocks, how evil penetrates unnoticed into ordinary life and perhaps especially unnoticed into the lives of children. His realistic toy constructions join terms we prefer to keep apart: like carefully planned construction and wanton destruction; like the giggling, thriving little boy who plays beside me on the floor as I write these words and the starving, panic-stricken children of his age who never lived beyond it; like carefree imaginative play and the rigorous, puritanical, ideological bending of young minds. Libera will not let us segregate these categories. His LEGO boxes challenge our myth of an idealized childhood world that can be sequestered from the harsh realities that once afflicted and continue to afflict real children.

Unlike performances of Shockheaded Peter, Libera's installation art causes us not to scream but to be scared; to think about the incongruous connections it makes and the disconnections we make. His uncanny boxes in red, yellow, black, white, and blue remind us of Uklański's brilliantly colored installation, and of secrets we have tried to keep but failed to keep, and of the price we paid for those secrets and of the truth that children always know something even when we attempt to hide what we feel we must to protect them—and ourselves. LEGO come, after all, from Denmark, from Copenhagen, where the iconic statue of Hans Christian Andersen's The Little Mermaid is admired by all. It is admired, however, by people who don't always remember the tale—how her tongue was cut out of her mouth, how her feet burned, and how every single step she took was accompanied by knife-like stabs of pain. 22
The Danish manufacturers of LEGOs did not approve of Libera’s artistic use of their toys because, as they said, “Lego” comes from the words that mean “to play well.”

In the early fall of 1998, I saw a work by Garance Nuridsany exhibited in Paris, Ours en peluche en forme de roue (Teddy Bears in the Form of a Wheel, 1996), that seemed and still seems to me one of the most disturbing pieces of art I have ever encountered. Imagine a typical white museum wall. Dead center is mounted a child’s furry teddy bear (Fig. 8), its head smothered in black and brown packing tape, the kind you use when you move. This tape has been ripped and smeared with blood-red paint that also stains the bear’s whole body. Its arms are tied with sial, the kind of rope that cuts into you and sears. A child’s toy tortured. Desecrated, mutilated, it dangles there on the wall, illuminated by glaring spotlights. Hanging around it in a circle are more than twenty other toys, each one similarly tortured. A fuzzy gray elephant, bound, gagged, and blindfolded with tape; a blond dollly trussed so that her face is roughly masked by white-washed tape, her feet clamped, her hands forced back and immobilized, her inert body wrapped in transparent plastic.

Harsh rope confines another miniature teddy bear, whose tiny paws are cruelly pinched by clothespins. Still another poor bear has had its legs forced apart, the area between them daubed with more blood-red paint that also stains the bear’s whole, intact, safe, healthy, clean, and warm. This artist tortured us as well as the bears by throwing the obverse of parentaL care at us. She had sacrificed each toy, one by one, to her art. Why? To reveal the cruel underside of nurturing? To show us that we can destroy our young; break and bloody them; mock, defile, taunt, degrade and blasphemse them.

She placed the evidence before us on a spotless, pure-white wall in the form of a circle with a perfect center. So, perhaps her intention had something to do, in addition, with the notion of making something whole, something complete, or something cyclical and endless. Maybe a piece about the process of breaking things. And people. What was she feeling while she did all this? Perhaps she enjoyed it, or was she anguished as she worked? All the ambiguities forced on me by her art and by the work of contemporary artists facing the Holocaust have left me restless and without peace, as it should be. Yet, in the terrible times themselves, there were those who moved beyond ambiguity.

In her novel Fugitive Pieces, Anne Michaels has written about a Jewish child who managed to survive: “There’s a precise moment when we reject contradiction, this moment of choice is the lie we will live by. What is dearest to us is often dearer than truth. There were the few... who never confused objects and humans, who knew the difference between naming and the named.”

Will the making and viewing of art help us to become one of those few? Can it help by connecting us to a kind of vision and knowledge that facts and figures only obscure? Even if we run away after seeing these pieces, even if we can only peek at them and then cover our eyes, even if we shudder and recoil from them, the enduring self will have been worthwhile.

NOTES
5. For the application of these two psychoanalytic terms to Holocaust-survivor and second-generation experience, see Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Bacula, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1998).
6. Dominiick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* 87, no. 2 (April 2000), 314-21. Both “acting out” (which can be associated with Freud’s notion of melancholia) and “working through” (which can be associated with his description of mourning) are processes deeply inflected with the need for repetition. “Working through,” however, is distinguished from “acting out” by its greater self-consciousness and investment of time and patience, as opposed to manic swiftness, and, above all, by its deliberate efforts toward interpretation. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that “working through” does not imply arriving at an absolute psychic haven, either intellectual, as in some endpoint of understanding, or emotional, as in a capacity to put one’s loss aside forever.
7. Bernhard Schlink, *born in Germany in 1944,* writes: “How could those who had committed Nazi crimes or watched them happen or looked away while they were happening or tolerated the criminals among them after 1945 or even accepted them—how could they have anything to say to their children? But on the other hand, the Nazi past was an issue even for children who couldn’t access their parents of anything, or didn’t want to.” *The Reader,* trans. Carol Brown Janeway (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 169.
example. In it, a clownish father fabricates stories to try to
studying the inner world of the perpetrator of evil, she
writes, powerfully, "I am opposed to the forgiveness of the
unrepentant .... To embrace the unrepentant in the soft
envelope of forgiveness is to abandon the perpetrator to the
loneliness of his own depravity."  
10. Ibid., 24.
11. See my Museums of the Mind: Magritte’s Labyrinth and
Other Essays in the Arts (New Haven: Yale University Press,
own depersonalized and derealized state, the perpetrator­
survivor can also genuinely experience himself as innocent,"
(64).
13. Bernhard Schlink, in The Reader, writes:
"Once," he went on, "I saw a photograph of Jews being
shot in Russia. The Jews were in a long row, naked, some
were standing at the edge of a pit and behind them were
soldiers with guns, shooting them in the neck. It was a
quarry, and above the Jews and the soldiers there was an
officer sitting on a ledge in the rock, swinging his legs
and smoking a cigarette. He looked a little morose. Maybe
things weren’t going fast enough for him. But there was
also something satisfied, even cheerful about his expres­
sion, perhaps because the day’s work was getting done
and it was almost time to go home. He didn’t hate the
Jews. He wasn’t . . ."
He stopped the car. He was absolutely white, and the
mark on his temple glistened. "Out!"
I got out. He swung the wheel so fast I had to jump
aside. I still heard him as he took the next few curves.
Then everything was silent. (151).
15. "Ancient Voices of Children: A Cycle of Songs
on Texts by Garcia Lorca" (1970) is the title of a brilliant piece of
postmodern music by George Crumb that quotes, at one
point, Gustav Mahler’s “Das Lied von der Erde” and evokes the
presence of popular culture in modern industrial
society, the essay expressed a deep commitment to
avant-garde culture. The reasons for this commit­
ment were more ideological than formal, more ethi­

cal than aesthetic. In “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” the

"Avant-Garde and Kitsch" Revisited
On the Ethics of Representation

LISA SALTZMAN

n 1939, Clement Greenberg penned the now canonical essay “Avant-Garde
and Kitsch.” A scathing indictment of the pervasive
presence of popular culture in modern industrial
society, the essay expressed a deep commitment to
avant-garde culture. The reasons for this commit­
ment were more ideological than formal, more ethi­

cal than aesthetic. In “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” the
formalist critic actually devoted more time to a discussion of the perils of a political appropriation of culture than to an analysis of the work of an aesthetic avant-garde. For even if Greenberg could not then imagine the atrocities that a fascist regime would inflict upon European civilization, he was deeply wary of kitsch as a cultural form and a political icon, as a means for totalitarian regimes “to ingratiate themselves with their subjects.”

Even as Greenberg’s early writing was animated by the undigested elitism of an emerging critical anxiety to ally himself with the cultural capital of the Western tradition, his aversion to kitsch, and to popular culture more generally, was also bound to the escalating political crisis in Europe. Increasingly aware of the use and abuse of representational images in the totalitarian regimes of Germany, Italy, and Russia, Greenberg argued for the importance of maintaining an art outside the purview of politics. For him, that could be achieved only with an art of rigorous purity, autonomy, and self-reflexivity—in other words, with an art of abstraction. In Greenberg’s aesthetic utopia, abstraction would serve as a lifeboat, rescuing and preserving the values not only of high culture but of humanity.

The postwar triumph of abstract expressionism foregrounded on, among other things, the persistence of figurative practice. With the advent of assemblage and then Pop, the visual field whose boundaries Greenberg had fought so hard to police and patrol gave way not merely to figurative but to the aesthetics of popular culture, to the aesthetics of kitsch. Even Minimalism, a movement that pursued the logic of formalist practice to its extreme limits, bespoke as much an aesthetic commitment to the language of industry as an ascetic commitment to the rhetoric of purity. From the Pop slickness to the Minimalist monolith, the art of the 1960s produced culture as industry and industry as culture. Whether critical of or complicit with the processes and products it both reproduced and represented, the art of the 1960s lay claim to a world outside the frame that had contained and defined Greenberg’s modernist pictorial field.

In the aftermath of Pop, the aesthetic strategies of appropriation and simulation so fundamental to it have come to govern a significant body of art. In the wake of Pop, art no longer cloaks its continuous consumption of cultural images beneath the mythic aura of originality and creation. Any claims to beauty, to sublimity, give way to a posture of clever sophistication and ironic detachment. Any possibility of purity is lost to its semblance as pastiche. Art after Pop is predicated on the postmodern convention, if not conviction, that each act of visual representation is but one more act of representation, repetition, or reproduction of a set of culturally available and assimilable signs. It feeds relentlessly, unabashedly, and consciously upon the virtual archive of images that constitutes its present. But where Pop drew its styles and subjects from a relatively circumscribed set of strategies and signs, the evolution of contemporary mass media has exponentially expanded the array of images potentially employed as aesthetic source, subject, or situation.

Participating in this contemporary cultural moment is the work assembled in Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art. Steeped in the codes and immersed in the strategies of a media-saturated, commerce-driven world, the work in Mirroring Evil mobilizes billboards and bar codes, LEGO sets, and Prada purses, television and movies to achieve its artistic ends. Through media and method, the work forlornly locates itself in aesthetic terms as coming after. It locates itself as coming not only after the work in this exhibition and catalogue brings together a compromised history of a cultural category with a tainted history of a European nation. The work embraces kitsch, whose lure was exploited to unprecedented ends in fascist aesthetics. And it uses kitsch to frame an encounter with the very history that exploited the aesthetic of kitsch with devastating historical consequences. In so doing, and in so doing with such readily assimilable and recognizable forms, the work in Mirroring Evil demonstrates that such a history, despite the ethical presumption of its radically unassimilable nature, has been assimilated, packaged, consumed, over and over again, in cultural form, for decades.

The challenge of the work in Mirroring Evil is that it makes manifest that the representation of the
Holocaust can be too easy. The work shows us just how easy it can be. The power of this work, or its potential, is that an experience of such immediacy and ease leaves us feeling profoundly uneasy. And in producing an experience of such ease and unease, in inserting us into that spectatorial dynamic and ease leaves us feeling profoundly uneasy. And in an endless stream of media, the cultural screens, the encounter through which we have come to know the dialectic, the work forces us to contemplate the strategies of representation and the situations of encounter through which we have come to know the history it takes as its highly mediated subject. The work in Mirroring Evil forces us to think about the endless stream of media, the cultural screens, the viewing situations, through which we come to know not only history, this history, but the world.

Saul Friedlander, the historian of Nazism and the Holocaust, wrote in Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death (1982) that contemporary culture becomes the source of historical insight. Troubled by the increasing body of cultural work in the seventies, primarily filmic and literary, that took up the legacy of fascism, producing what he terms a "new discourse" on Nazism, he concludes that it may well be the very representation of fascism in contemporary culture that allows the postwar historian to "perceive something of the psychological hold Nazism had in its day." For even as he cringes at the cultural fascination with fascism, at the cultural reproduction of the intertwining of kitsch and death so fundamental to the ideology and aesthetic of Nazism, this "new discourse" on Nazism reveals to him "structures of the imagination" previously hidden to the historical gaze.

Even as Friedlander moves to suspend judgment from this new cultural work on Nazism, focusing instead on its potential for furthering historical understanding, he does establish a set of criteria for judgment—namely, his own feelings of uneasiness before some of these cultural forms. There are aspects of this "new discourse" on Nazism that make Friedlander profoundly uncomfortable, that transgress some intangible threshold, some hitherto yet intractable sense of decency, propriety, and limit. For Friedlander, and for other critics as well, it is Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's 1978 film Hitler, A Film from Germany, a phantasmagoric narrative of the catastrophes of European history, that occasions discomfort and allows for the articulation of aesthetic and ethical limit. One such critical voice that stands out in the field is Susan Sontag's, whose work on kitsch both intersects with and emerges from her attention to fascist aesthetics. Given the strength and clarity of her ethical position, Friedlander turns to Sontag's work, finding a kindred spirit to affirm and confirm his own. Instructs as he struggles to articulate a set of aesthetic and ethical criteria.

Even before writing on fascism, aesthetics, and kitsch, Sontag had penned one of the most ethically acute responses to the history of fascism and genocide, reflecting on the issue of its representation, even if that representation took the presumptively unmediated form of the documentary photograph. In her essay "In Plato's Cave," republished in the collection On Photography, Sontag articulated her own sense of limit, recalling her response at happening upon a set of photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau in a bookstore in Santa Monica in 1945. Reflecting on this moment of viewing, this act of witness, this loss of innocence, she wrote:

Nothing I have seen—in photographs or in real life—ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully what they were about. What good was served by seeing them? They were only photographs—of an event; I had scarcely heard of and could do nothing to affect, of suffering I could hardly imagine and could do nothing to relieve. When I looked at those photographs, something broke. Some limit had been reached, and not only that of horror; I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feelings started to tighten; something went dead; something is still crying.

It is not in these words of limit and lament but in Sontag's penetrating essay "Syberberg's Hitler" that Friedlander finds a confirmation of his discomfort, his uneasiness at the "new discourse" on fascism, emblazoned for him in the endless chain of ravishing images that concludes Syberberg's film. It is in Sontag's work on aesthetic rather than documentary representations of history that Friedlander finds the words to express his fundamental discomfort about Syberberg's filmic enterprises:

Attention has gradually shifted from the reevaluation of Nazism as such, from the horror and the pain—even if muted by time and transformed into subtled grief and endless meditation—to voluptuous anguish and ravishing images, images we would like to see going on forever. It may result in a masterpiece, but a masterpiece that, one may feel, is tuned to the wrong key; in the midst of meditation rises a suspicion of complacency. Some kind of limit has been overstepped and uneasiness appears: It is a sign of the new discourse.

One thing he makes clear is that the ability to hear if a work is tuned to the "wrong key" is a matter of personal judgment, even if he and Sontag hear in Syberberg's work the same sour note. It is also clear that Friedlander's and Sontag's shared aesthetic and ethical criteria emerge from work that evinces a certain return to Romanticism. Their criteria emerge from work that resonates with an aesthetics of sublimity and beauty, from work that indulges in aesthetic excess, from such work, were we to shift from the domain of film to that of art, as that of Syberberg's compatriot Anselm Kiefer. In short, their criteria emerge from work very different from the post-Pop practice assembled in Mirroring Evil.

If there is an art-historical precedent for the very particular project of the work in this exhibition, it is not in the insistently material surfaces, the esoteric subjects, the weighty monumentality of Kiefer's sustained meditations on German cultural identity and its traumatic historical legacy. Rather, it is in the glib gestures, the provocative postures, of the nascent neo-avant-garde of the 1960s, which, in an attempt to resuscitate the transgressive project of the historical avant-garde, trafficked in the taboo, and, in some instances, flirted with fascism, in all its illicit fascination. Perhaps most interesting for a history of visual modernism and the avant-garde is that it is abstraction, Greenberg's privileged preserve of cultural value, that serves as a site of origin for such transgressive practices.

Think, for example, of Frank Stella's reductive geometric black paintings of 1959, poignant paragons of the project of modernist painting. In the resolve economy of their means the canvases strippeen painting of its expressive and figurative claims, fulfilling, if only to empty, the promise and premise of Greenbergian modernism. Where Jackson Pollock might be said to have put forth a return to painting's origins with his energetic primordial abstractions, Stella presented its end, delivering in this series something like painting's essence and evacuation. A point of beginning for Stella, in a career that would be unrelenting in its formalist exploration of the possibilities of geometric abstraction, his series also marked a certain point of conclusion, an end to the high modernist enterprise. A series of repetitions whose renunciations and refusals were as much the mark of stubborn melancholia as of modernist purity. In his inaugural artistic gesture Stella produced painting after painting that was barren, if not bereft.

And yet, even as these dark paintings stood as epitaphs to the moribund painterly project of post-war abstraction, they came to life through a reference to death, through their titular invocations of,
among other things, Nazism and the death camps. In such paintings as *Arbeit Macht Frei* (fig. 1) and *Die Fahne Hoch*, Stella conjured up, through the sheer allusive power of the word, a history that was only just entering the domain of postwar American cultural representation. Painted before the intense media attention to the Auschwitz trials in the early 1960s, Stella’s black paintings closed out a decade in America that knew the Holocaust most immediately and affectingly through such cultural markers as the English translation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1952) and its subsequent stage production in 1955. Painted before a postwar American public had grown increasingly desensitized to representations of history and its atrocities, titled before a postwar American public had grown increasingly inured to the cultural treatment of such taboo subjects, historical or otherwise, Stella’s black paintings exploited history for its shock value, its novelty, its “grisly chic.”

From our position in the present, in which explicitly memorializing work has tended toward an aesthetics of visual restraint, toward an aesthetics of abstraction and absence in the pursuit of remembrance (for example, Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*) (fig. 2), Stella’s spare black paintings may seem almost manifestly memorializing in gesture. They may be seen to present a pictorial solution to the historical omissions and elisions of New York School painting, offering up history against the
blank face of abstraction, if only to foreclose its representation in a final emptying of painting’s expressive possibilities. They may be seen, in an uncharacteristically Adornesque moment, to have found a reductive pictorial language through which to commemorate the catastrophic historical events of the twentieth century. They may be seen to mourn not so much, or not only, the end of painting as the end of painting’s capacity to figure history or bear witness to its traumas.18 And yet, the present is not the moment in which Stella’s paintings were originally conceived or received. They were not a part of the manifestly memorializing culture that defines culture at the end of the millennium.19 Instead, they were part of a culture that had barely begun the task of confronting the historical legacy of fascism and genocide. They were a part of a neo-avant-garde culture that flirted with fascism as a signifier of power, that trafficked in taboo as a gesture of defiance, that alluded to atrocity as an act of affront. If there is a context for Stella’s early gesture, it is in the subsequent gestures of such fellow minimalists as Robert Morris, who pursued in a more sustained manner, in both sculptural and photographic form, the transgressive possibilities of fascism as referent, doing so in the most manifest and defiant of ways in a poster advertising his exhibition at the Castelli/Sonnabend Gallery in 1974 (fig. 3).21 It is in relation to this provocative poster that Sontag again emerges as a critical and ethical voice, turning to it in “Fascinating Fascism,” her interrogation of what she diagnoses as a cultural fascination with fascism.22 In that essay, Sontag expresses her discomfort at the postwar rehabilitation of the Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, whose Triumph of the Will (1935) and Olympia (1938) emblazonize for Sontag the Romantic excess, the idealization of beauty, the glorification of surrender, the glamorization of death so central to fascist aesthetics. But Sontag is even more unsettled by the popularization and eroticization of fascism that she finds in contemporary culture. And it is that phenomenon to which she devotes the latter half of her essay. Troubled by her discovery of a pornographic magazine devoted to SS regalia, she links these photographs and the sexual subculture of sadomasochism to broader cultural patterns indicating a fascination with fascism, pointing to the literary work of Yukio Mishima and the films of Luchino Visconti and Liliana Cavani.23 Within this discussion, Sontag isolates the work of Robert Morris, initially in the hope of finding a cultural model that performs differently. Sontag writes:

The solemn eroticizing of fascism must be distinguished from a sophisticated playing with cultural horror, where there is an element of the put-on. The poster Robert Morris made for his recent show at the Castelli Gallery is a photograph of the artist, naked to the waist, wearing dark glasses, what appears to be a Nazi helmet, and a spike collar, attached to which is a stout chain which he holds in his manacled, uplifted hands. Morris is said to have considered this to be the only image that still has any power to shock: a singular virtue to those who take for granted that art is a sequence of ever-fresh gestures of provocation. But the point of the poster is its own negation. Shocking people in the context also means inuring them, as Nazi material...
Sontag turns to Morris in the interest of difference and as a gesture of defense. She isolates his very self-conscious citation and performance of fascist masculinity as distinct from a more general cultural appropriation of fascist motifs and regalia. Yet her analysis comes to suggest that even his knowing gesture fails. For even as Morris may take on fascism with utter awareness of its power as a shocking signifier, as taboo, his very act of representation participates in a cultural neutralization of that historical referent, inuring the public to the very subject he takes to be so transgressive. And this inuring, this emptying, this neutralizing, as Sontag concludes, is the mechanism of Pop.

Certainly, there is a history of Pop-influenced and -inflected work that comes between Morris's poster in 1974 and the work assembled in Mirroring Evil at the dawning of a new millennium, just as there are traditions outside of America that pursue similar aesthetic strategies, certain critical questions will be asked, even if certain cherished verities may not be restored. And if that is the challenge of the work here, it is also its lasting contribution.

NOTES
2. Written with a political purpose absent from his later work of expressly formalist criticism, Greenberg's analysis of culture and politics has moments of uncanny resonance with Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"; see Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217-52. In his concern for culture under industrial capitalism, exemplified in the extreme in the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler, Greenberg looks to socialism as a means of countering the exploitation of mass aesthetics. I am certainly not suggesting that Greenberg, despite his work in translation during that period, read Benjamin, whose essay, although published in 1936 in the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, was not translated into English until 1966. But it is interesting to consider the point of congruence between two fundamentally distinctive cultural critics.
4. As the work of Marxist art historians has revealed, even abstraction was not immune to ideology. For discussions of the relationship of New York School painting to Cold War politics, see, for example, the foundational work of Serge Guilbaut, Eva Cockcroft, and Max Kozloff, reprised in Pollock and After: The Critical Debate, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
5. Certainbly, Theodor Adorno's later qualified, if not regretted, postwar dictum "After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric" has played a powerful role in the ethical and aesthetic debates surrounding (aesthetic) representation after Auschwitz. For a discussion, see "Thou shall not make graven images," Adorno, Kiefer, and the Ethics of Representation," in my Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17-47. Of course, Adorno is not alone in shaping postwar debates about ethics and aesthetics. His voice is joined by those of Eille Wiesel, Primo Levi, Jean Amery, and George Steiner, to name just a few of the most prominent and influential figures.
6. As Greenberg writes, "Where there is an avant-garde, generally we also find a rear-guard. True enough—simultaneously with the emergence of the avant-garde, a second new cultural phenomenon appeared in the industrial West: what things to which Germans give the wonderful name of Kitsch: popular-commercial art and literature with their chromotypes, magazine covers, illustration, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc., etc." "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," 9.
8. Ibid., 18.
10. For a treatment of this reception history, see Klaus Edel, Syberberg's Hitler-Film (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1980). Briefly, critics found Syberberg's phantasmagoric narration of the catastrophes of European history not only reactionary but politically naïve. That is to say, they found his film mythologizing the very history that was its purported subject.
15. For the most recent, if polemical and cynical, account of the American cultural reception of the Holocaust, see Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).
16. The phrase is Hal Foster's, from an essay on German neo-expressionism and its use of fascist motifs; see his Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 62.
17. For a treatment of Holocaust memorials and the degree to which they embody an aesthetics of absence and restraint, particularly those in Germany in the 1980s, see James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).
18. For an insightful and incisive interpretation and critique of Stella's black paintings, as well as the work of his fellow minimalists, see Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” Acts Magazine 64, no. 5 (January 1990): 44–63.


20. See Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” for a discussion of such minimalist work. Hers is the first to pursue an insistently feminist and political reading of that body of work. Most important, it is written against the reigning formalist accounts of the period. In attending to issues of title, signification, and subject, as well as issues of form, Chave lays bare the aesthetics of power, violence, and masculinity both manifest and implicit in minimalist work.

21. Morris continued to explore the seductions of fascism as aesthetic subject, turning to representations of corpses and conflagrations in his altarpiece sculptural pieces from the 1980s.


23. Against Sontag (although Sontag does not emerge as a point of reference in the article) is Jean-Pierre Geuens, “Pornography and the Holocaust: The Last Transgression,” Film Criticism 20 (Fall–Winter 1996): 114–30. In his essay, Geuens contends that even the most exploitative, Sadistic, pornographic films involving images and scenarios indebted to a history of fascism do not go far enough. He concludes his essay by stating that “the wounds should be repeatedly and mercilessly stabbed open with a knife for the Holocaust to remain the mirror that truly defies our limits” (127).


25. Much as Anna Chave has changed our understanding of the history of minimalism with her 1990 article “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” she has continued that quest in her article “Minimalism and Biography,” Art Bulletin 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 117–48. There, she deepens her investigation of the period by including biographical information about not only its practitioners but its critical proponents. One piece that is further illuminated by her work is the Robert Morris photograph in question.

26. It bears noting, if only for what admittedly may be the shock value of such a revelation, that there exists a body of pornographic Holocaust literature in Israel, the foremost example of which is authored by a Holocaust survivor. For a discussion of that work, see Omer Bartov, “Kitsch and Sadism in ka-Tzetnik's Other Planet: Israeli Youth Imagine the Holocaust,” Jewish Social Studies 3 (Winter 1997): 42–76.


---

Lisa Saltzman

---

ERNST VAN ALPHEN

---

Playing the Holocaust

---

PLAYACTING AND TOYS

---

n an interview in 1994 the French artist Christian Boltanski declared that all his work was "more or less about the Holocaust."

This is not particularly surprising, in terms of the work he began making in 1984. His installations, generically titled Shadows, Candles, Monuments, Canada, and Reserve, evoke the Holocaust compellingly. But the statement isn't as obvious when
applied to his earlier work. Just how do the Model Images (1975) or the Comic Sketches (1974) relate to the Holocaust?

Model Images shows ordinary snapshots from the seventies, ones that are common in photo albums of almost anyone who lived then in western Europe, Canada, or the United States. Their normality is the opposite of the apocalyptic horror of the Holocaust. In the Comic Sketches of 1974 (fig. 1), a series of stage photographs, Boltanski humorously playacts ordinary scenes from childhood.

In *The Shameful Kiss*, for instance, he plays a boy who meets a girl at the beach. He wants to kiss her, but he is too shy. In *The First Communion* we see Boltanski playing a young boy who receives the host from a priest. In *The Doctor’s Visit* we see him as a boy who is ill. His mother is worried and calls for the doctor, who comes and says that although the little one is very ill, it is not serious. This is a great relief to the mother.1 In short, the Comic Sketches show scenes that can be recognized by practically everyone. They are the most ordinary and archetypal childhood scenes imaginable.

There is, however, a remarkable difference between the Model Images and the Comic Sketches. In the Model Images, Boltanski used found snapshots. Moreover, the images we see are “serious,” not comic. The scenes in the Comic Sketches, in contrast, are playacted. Importantly, all the roles are played by Boltanski wearing the same dark suit. By adding something simple to this outfit he can become another character—with glasses, a doctor; with a hat and flower, a mother. This minimalist play of distinguishing characters, together with the facial expressions, makes the scenes comical.

It is this aspect of play that interests me. In the Comic Sketches Boltanski, the child of a Jewish father who survived the Holocaust through hiding, foreshadows a younger generation of artists whose work deals with the Holocaust “playfully.” These artists are second- or third-generation descendants of survivors or bystanders, and they use play or toys to represent the Holocaust or Nazi Germany.

I would like to single out three of these artists. The first is David Levinthal, who photographed scenes from Auschwitz in his Mein Kampf series (1994-96; fig. 2), staged by means of little dolls or figurines. The figurines remind us of the little tin soldiers, for decades a popular toy for young boys and a collectors’ item for adult men. In a work that he made with Garry Trudeau titled *Hitler Moves East* (1977; fig. 3), Levinthal represented, in the same way, Operation Barbarossa, Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. The second artist is the Israeli/Dutch Ram Katzir, who made a series of...
installations in which the audience was invited to color the images of a coloring book or to make additions to it (Fig. 4). The images were based on Nazi photographs or documentary Holocaust images. The third, Polish artist Zbigniew Libera, made LEGO Concentration Camp Set (Fig. 5), consisting of seven boxes of different sizes from which a miniature concentration camp can be built.

These artists represent a group and their work a particular genre. This genre has a specific epistemic-artistic thrust, and the artworks raise a question: What is the function of play in Holocaust representation? Since Holocaust art centers on the question of remembrance, I rephrase this question more provocatively: Is there a place for “playing” the Holocaust in Holocaust remembrance? The issue of generation is important. Until these artists came along, representing the Holocaust playfully had been taboo. Now it seems that a new generation of artists can relate to the Holocaust only in the mode of play. Why does the toy as memory occur now? What does it mean, and how can we evaluate this phenomenon in terms of remembrance?

I broach this issue through the question of Boltanski’s playful Comic Sketches. Taking the artist’s statement “all my work is more or less about the Holocaust,” I am interested in speculating in what way these pictures relate to the Holocaust. Again, the exaggerated poses of his characters and the rather silly events they enact evoke collective, ordinary notions of childhood and parenthood. They don’t represent the specificity of Boltanski’s autobiographical childhood nor the situation of children in the Holocaust. I contend that their generic and ordinary plots are precisely the point.

For their point is replacement. By their normality, these Comic Sketches actively and playfully replace the abnormality that we expect of “Holocaust sketches” with sketches of ordinary childhood and parenthood. In an interview with Paul Bradley, Charles Esche, and Nicole White, Boltanski says the following about his work:

CB: When I am doing art, I am a liar and I am mostly an awful professional artist, disgusting, it is my job. . . . It is true that I really wanted to forget my childhood. I have spoken a lot about my childhood, but it was not my childhood. It was a normal childhood. I never spoke about something that was true, and in my art at the beginning it seemed biographical but nothing was true, and I was never speaking about the fact that I was Jewish or that it was impossible for my mother to move because she had polio. I never spoke about that and I never spoke about my weird grandmother. When I...
quote your own aLways a bit worse than others. What he
father was awful and his mother was awfuL. That’s it.
In doing so, he suggests that aLL parents are awfuL,
thing sufferabLe. Art is not mimetic, but performa­
tive instead. This makes it easier to understand how
anything specific about his childhood, only that his
intense desire for normaLity.

The Comic Sketches emphasize an aspect of art
that, for Boltanski, defines art as such. Art is “play”
and “play” is its reality. The reality of play is funda­
mentally different from the reality that art mimeti­
cally refers to. This early work, then, has an artistic
manifesto inscribed in its silly childishness.

In Boltanski’s work, the notion of art as play has
never been controversial. When this aspect of art
becomes its theme, as happens in the Comic
Sketches, the reference to the Holocaust is invisible
or at most implicit. But that thematic restraint dif­
fers with a younger generation of artists that
includes Levinthal, Katzir, and Libera. These artists
enact the Holocaust playfuLLy, with emphatic expLic­
ation they are provocative, even scandalous.

“serious” dark suit that Boltanski wears beneath his
art consisted of making something with the inten­
tion of demonstrating the reaLity of these two
situations.3

The work of Katzir and Libera has been extraordi­
nary because of the function automatically
attributed to Holocaust art. Unlike other art that
can claim autonomy or self-reflexivity, Holocaust art
tends to be unreflectively reduced to how it can pro­
 mote Holocaust education and remembrance. Art,
 teaching, and remembrance are thus collapsed with­
out any sustained debate about the bond between
these three cultural activities. In the context of
Holocaust education and remembrance, it is an unas­
 sailable axiom that historical genres and discourses,
such as the documentary, memoir, testimony, or
monument, are much more effective and morally
responsible in teaching the historical events than
imaginative discourses. Accordingly, art in general is
already problematic because it is imaginative, not
documentary.4

This objection to artistic engagement with the
Holocaust holds much more strongly for toy art.
Obviously, if art is not “serious” enough in terms of
historical reconstruction, it is clear that within the
realm of the imaginative, toys represent the lowest
and least respected activity. For they can be seen as
doubly imaginative—as things to play with and to
play out, as toys and as art. Fictional Holocaust nov­
els also are problematic, as the controversies around
 Jerzy Kosinski’s The Painted Bird, D. M. Thomas’s The
White Hotel, or Helen Danville’s The Hand That Signed
the Paper have shown. But at least such novels can
 teach something about the past, even though they
are fiction. That is the why the hybrid genre of the
historical novel has gained respect and popularity.

Other hybrid genres are not so lucky. Roberto
Benigni’s film Life Is Beautiful (1998), mixing the
discourse of the Holocaust with that of fairy tales,
caus ed great controversy because it was not histori­
cally engaged enough. The cardboard sets mocked
realism; the script, the acting, and the filming itself
emphasized that the film was a dramatic, slightly
kitschy fairy tale. Ignoring the cinematic genre that
the film itself flaunted, it was judged on the basis of
its truthfulness, a test it could only fail and empha­
tically sought to fail. Hence, the play the father
engaged in with his child to save him from the hor­
orrs around him was not seen as pedagogically inter­
gesting, as a refusal to subject the child to events his
childhood entitled him to stay clear of, but as unre­
alistic. Sander Gilman, for instance, dismissed
Benigni’s film on such grounds: “Not purposeful
action by adults but the accident of chance allows
children to survive, and this underpins the falsity of
Roberto Benigni’s claim. . . . Benigni’s promise is
that there are no accidents, that at the end of the
comedy the gods in the machine will arrive to
resolve the action and rescue those in danger.”5
I have emphasized words that demonstrate Gilman’s
 attribution of a realistic intention (claim) as well as
a childish attitude of expectation (promise). This
kind of misrepresentation is even more absurd for
toy art. For one of the remarkable features of toy art
is that it cannot be compared to such representa­
tional genres as novels and films or other narrative
material used for education. Toys don’t tell. But
what do they teach? Do they teach at all, or do they
do something else?

TEACHING AS A CULTURAL ACTIVITY

In order to understand if and how toys teach, and
what they teach if they do, it is necessary to reflect
on teaching as a cultural activity, especially the role
teaching plays in Holocaust remembrance. As
Shoshana Felman has argued, “Western pedagogy
can be said to culminate in Hegel’s philosophical
didacticism: the Hegelian concept of ‘Absolute
knowledge’ [ . . . ] is in effect what pedagogy has
always aimed for as its ideal: the exhaustion—
through methodical investigation—of all there is to
know; the absolute completion—termination—of
apprenticeship. Complete and totally appropriated
knowledge will become—in all senses of the word—
a mastery.8

Learning, according to this traditional concep-
tion, is linear, cumulative, and progressive, and
leads to mastery of the subject studied. Mastery over
the Holocaust is, indeed, one of the main motiva-
tions behind Holocaust education. In order to pre-
vent something like the Holocaust from happening
again, later generations have to have as much
knowledge as possible about the Holocaust. It is
through knowledge that one can "master" the Ho-
locaust. This conception of teaching assumes a col-
apse of two forms of mastery: to know and to
know; the absolute completion-termination-of
knowledge—does not know what it knows.9 In other words, Holo-
cast teaching confronts us with the problem of how
to master by teaching a past that has not been mas-
tered yet and cannot be mastered.

Felman analyzes the dominant conception of
learning which is not in possession of itself. Psychoanalysis has renewed the questions and the prac-
tice of teaching. Unlike traditional methods and
assumptions of education, she sees psychoanalysis
as a radically new pedagogy. But in light of the trau-
matic, hence nonmasterable nature of the Holocaust,
she remarks on psychoanalysis as a mode of teaching
then can also provide a model for Holocaust teaching.
It can provide a model, that is, for teaching knowledge
which is not in possession of itself. Psychoanalysis is
thus a pedagogical experience: as a process which
gives access to new knowledge by teaching the
child, prohibitions usually take the form of their
binary opposite: They are articulated as orders or
commands. Those orders together constitute a Holo-
cast "etiquette," according to Sander Gilman.10 But
his own indignation in the face of a film like
Benigni’s that disobeys this "etiquette" demon-
strates that the rules also entail prohibitions.

The moral imperative of the prescriptions for
"respectable" Holocaust education and studies is
more than explicit in the formulations of Terrence
Des Pres. Appropriating, in a nice case of interdis-
cursive heterogeneity, the voice of God in his use of
the "genre" of the Commandments, he dictates:

1) The Holocaust shall be represented, in its total-
ity, as a unique event, as a special case and kingdom
of its own, above or below or apart from history.
2) Representations of the Holocaust shall be as
accurate and faithful as possible to the facts and con-
ditions of the event, without change or manipulation
for any reason—artistic reasons included.
3) The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn
or even sacred event, with a seriousness admitting no
impulses without restriction. ... Accordingly, edu-
cation must inhibit, forbid and suppress and this is
abundantly seen in all periods of history. But we
have learnt from analysis that precisely this sup-
pression of instincts involves the risk of neurotic
illness. ... That education has to find its way
between the Scylla of non-interference and the
Charybdis of frustration. ... An optimum must be
discovered which will enable education to achieve
the most and damage the least. ... A moment's
reflection tells us that hitherto education has ful-
filled its task very badly and has done children
great damage.11

Freed's definition of overrepressive education, as
structured by prohibitions and suppression, seems
to have become the explicit guideline or epigraph
for Holocaust education. In the education of the Holo-
cast, prohibitions usually take the form of their
binary opposite: they are articulated as orders or
commands. Those orders together constitute a Holo-
cast "etiquette," according to Sander Gilman. But
his own indignation in the face of a film like
Benigni's that disobeys this "etiquette" demon-
strates that the rules also entail prohibitions.

The moral imperative of the prescriptions for
"respectable" Holocaust education and studies is
more than explicit in the formulations of Terrence
Des Pres. Appropriating, in a nice case of interdis-
cursive heterogeneity, the voice of God in his use of
the "genre" of the Commandments, he dictates:

1) The Holocaust shall be represented, in its total-
ity, as a unique event, as a special case and kingdom
of its own, above or below or apart from history.
2) Representations of the Holocaust shall be as
accurate and faithful as possible to the facts and con-
ditions of the event, without change or manipulation
for any reason—artistic reasons included.
3) The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn
or even sacred event, with a seriousness admitting no
impulses without restriction. ... Accordingly, edu-
cation must inhibit, forbid and suppress and this is
abundantly seen in all periods of history. But we
have learnt from analysis that precisely this sup-
pression of instincts involves the risk of neurotic
illness. ... That education has to find its way
between the Scylla of non-interference and the
Charybdis of frustration. ... An optimum must be
discovered which will enable education to achieve
the most and damage the least. ... A moment's
reflection tells us that hitherto education has ful-
filled its task very badly and has done children
great damage.11

Freed's definition of overrepressive education, as
structured by prohibitions and suppression, seems
to have become the explicit guideline or epigraph
for Holocaust education. In the education of the Holo-
cast, prohibitions usually take the form of their
binary opposite: they are articulated as orders or
commands. Those orders together constitute a Holo-
cast "etiquette," according to Sander Gilman. But
his own indignation in the face of a film like
Benigni's that disobeys this "etiquette" demon-
strates that the rules also entail prohibitions.

The moral imperative of the prescriptions for
"respectable" Holocaust education and studies is
more than explicit in the formulations of Terrence
Des Pres. Appropriating, in a nice case of interdis-
cursive heterogeneity, the voice of God in his use of
the "genre" of the Commandments, he dictates:

1) The Holocaust shall be represented, in its total-
ity, as a unique event, as a special case and kingdom
of its own, above or below or apart from history.
2) Representations of the Holocaust shall be as
accurate and faithful as possible to the facts and con-
ditions of the event, without change or manipulation
for any reason—artistic reasons included.
3) The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn
or even sacred event, with a seriousness admitting no
impulses without restriction. ... Accordingly, edu-
cation must inhibit, forbid and suppress and this is
abundantly seen in all periods of history. But we
have learnt from analysis that precisely this sup-
pression of instincts involves the risk of neurotic
illness. ... That education has to find its way
between the Scylla of non-interference and the
Charybdis of frustration. ... An optimum must be
discovered which will enable education to achieve
the most and damage the least. ... A moment's
reflection tells us that hitherto education has ful-
filled its task very badly and has done children
great damage.11
response that might obscure its enormity or dishonor its dead. 17

No wonder that later generations get a bit restless under such weight. The Holocaust art using toys may be a conscious violation of these commandments and their complementary prohibitions.

First of all, Levinthal, Libera, and Katzir represent the Holocaust not as “unique” but as a historical object that can be toyed with, one that is exchangeable with, let’s say, the Wild West, knights and medieval castles, pirates and pirate ships. Second, accuracy and faithful representation do not appear to have a high priority in their artworks. That lack of representational truthfulness does not imply that these toy artworks can be blamed for being the product of Holocaust denial. They are not untrue. In logical terms they are neither true nor false. For they are not propositional statements. But something other than accuracy or historical truth is at stake. Third, the works seem to actively ignore the seriousness related to the Holocaust as “sacred event.” Instead, these artworks make us imagine for historical genres and solemn tones—even, as we have seen, religiously so, speaking in a divine voice—is not respected but provocatively challenged.

But the use of identification as a pedagogical tool is not problematic, or ticklish, as such. Recently, it has been applied in several Holocaust museums in order to make visitors imagine what it meant to be victimized. For instance, in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the itinerary leads visitors through a cattle car. The experience of being transported to the camps by cattle cars is not being told about or shown at a distance but is thrust upon the visitors. Inside a cattle car, identifying with those who were transported to the camps by those cars is almost unavoidable. In that museum, the kind of identification that is allowed, and even stimulated, is identification with the victims, not with the victimizers. But of course, in the context of an outing to a museum, such identification is not “real,” not total, but partial. Getting a small and short taste of the experience, a tiny bit of the poison, is the goal.

What if the object of identification consists of the victimizers instead? The toy artworks under discussion facilitate identification not with the victims but rather with the perpetrators. This is, of course, much more difficult to do, as well as to justify. How do the toy artworks accomplish this, and how can it be argued that this is helpful for the cultural remembrance of the Holocaust? In other words, how can this unsettling kind of identification be an effective form of pedagogy? One way to achieve this identification with an undesirable position is through making, shaping, and forming the perpetrators. The visitors of Katzir’s installations were invited to color in images based on Nazi photography. We as visitors are coloring Nazi leaders or members of the Nazi youth: we are giving them color, form, and substance, and in that process we “generate” them. This making of the Nazis is a convoluted yet real form of identification. In creating the perpetrators, we as visitors become somewhat complicit in the possibility of the Nazis—not, of course, with actual Nazis. Libera deploys a different technique so visitors get a small taste of identification with the perpetrator. His LEGO Concentration Camp Set stimulates visitors of the museum or the gallery to envision the possibility of building their own concentration camp. Again viewers are put in the shoes of the victimizers, not of the victims. Here the Identification concerns the acts perpetrated, conceiving of and constructing the physical tools of the Holocaust.

Levinthal’s photographs are at first sight more ambivalent. His scenes of “playing the Holocaust” seem to facilitate identification with victims as well as with perpetrators. But the moment we start to take the title of these photographs into consideration (Mein Kampf) the ambiguity evaporates, and we end up with an enforced identification with Hitler, the author of Mein Kampf. We each have our own Kampf, our own ambitions that can be catastrophic. Here the identification triggers the ideological mindset set out of which the historical disaster sprung.

This feature of toy art calls for extending the genre or linking it to a neighboring genre. Based on the artistic strategy of soliciting identification with the perpetrator, I claim a generic grouping on a much larger scale. Other art becomes understandable under the aegis of toy art. For example, the Israeli artist Roee Rosen’s Installation Live and Die as Eva Braun (1995) activates this mode and way of looking without the framework of toys and children and their emphatic relation to pedagogy. His Installation consists of brief texts, printed in white letters on black columnlike strips that run from floor to ceiling. Between the text columns hang sixty black-and-white works on paper. The texts are written in the second person. This is a powerful semiotic mode to entice the addressee to respond to and hence endorse a position. This “message,” although emanating from the first-person voice who is doing the addressing, may so strongly engage the second person—for example, for the first person to completely identify with the second—that endorsing the position put forward becomes hard to resist. 18

This is the powerful rhetoric that Rosen deploys for the visitor to achieve identification—again, just a bit of it—with Eva Braun. The texts address the viewer. But they also address the historical figure Eva Braun, inviting the visitor to “become” Hitler’s mistress, Eva Braun:

Excitement jobs through your body when you hear the steps outside. When he opens the door you gasp at the sight of his small mustache. Because you are not only Eva it seems menacing, almost monstrous. But everything around the mustache is so congenial. He comes towards you with such warmth, his smile tired, his arms open to embrace you. Remember—you are Eva. When Hitler closes his arms around you, the view darkens and you are almost overwhelmed with titillation when you feel the whiskers of that famous little facial tuft tickle your ear and the back of your neck.
Unlikely as it seems, this text so insists on intensely human qualities—warmth, a tired smile—so that identification on the part of "you," the second person, with the addressee of the text becomes quite plausible. The viewer is Eva Braun and he or she is not: "Because you are not only Eva it seems menacing." What is menacing is precisely the schizophrenic identification with someone you really don't want to be. The threat of collapse of two incompatible positions nevertheless coincide is unsettling. Like the identification with the victims triggered by the cattle car installations at the Holocaust Museum, the identification is just a small taste of the actual experience. But unlike the cattle car, Rosen's work makes this restriction explicit. Moreover, focusing on Hitler's little mustache opens the story to a rather heavy-handed irony. These two devices create a small, bearable measure of identification and are Rosen's way of being a responsible educator. Nevertheless, identification and distance are being exchanged. This rhythm of alternation facilitates reflection on the experience of identifying with Eva Braun.

The texts follow a linear narrative. First, along with Eva Braun, the viewer experiences moments of romantic intimacy and sexual pleasure; then he or she is invited to co-experience Eva's suicide. The end of the story consists of a short trip to hell:

There's no question, you are being led to hell—but why?

As you wait for your tortures to be set, you view some of the other sinners. Particularly arresting is a group of two-dimensional people hanged by their sinning organs—hairs, genitalia, breasts, tongues.

You realize with some dismay that hell seems to be based on a famous painting.

How would you be hanged? What of you should be minced, sliced, burnt? What, in your eager perfection, in your life dedicated to willful servitude, in your quiet harmony, is eternally punishable and damned?

All the events the viewer is asked to experience are totally set in the realm of affect and the physical: eroticism, sexual pleasure, suicide, and torture. This is precisely the point.

An artwork like Rosen's based on the Holocaust cannot be dealt with simply in the framework of art and aestheticism; the debate on Holocaust education and remembrance are inevitably activated. This makes cultural clichés acutely problematic. For it can be argued that, regardless of that context, the texts are, here and there, obscene. This obscenity produces a clash, again, a challenge to the solemnity of Holocaust education.

As Roger Rothman has pointed out, however, it is not in the context of art but in the context of Holocaust remembrance that Rosen's Live and Die as Eva Braun is "obscene":

For we are taught how to mourn, just as we are taught how to paint. There is nothing "real" or "natural" about it. The language of our mourning is not our own. It is given to us. This is perhaps the most repugnant of all the implications of Live and Die. Our mourning is clichéd. It is not real. It is virtual. It is a game. A game we know how to play well by now. We are good at it and we know it. And we teach it to others so they will be good at it, too. This is the "obscene" aspect of Rosen's work.

But it is also the obscene aspect of Holocaust mourning, an aspect all-too-often-ignored or suppressed in mainstream memorials.19 Instead of rejecting the work for its obscenity, then, Rothman embraces that obscenity because of its relevance for Holocaust remembrance and mourning. Here, because of its mock-dramatic style, but even more because of its second-person address that comes close to dramatic form, I consider Rosen's installation together with the artworks of Levinthal, Katzir, and Libera in the framework of Holocaust remembrance through play. In this context, we are better off not jumping to conclusions. It is not necessary to conclude that in their provocative refusal of the "commandments" of Holocaust education and representation, these artworks imply a wholesale refusal of the relation between art and education or art and remembrance. And Rosen's work, obscenity and all, is an instructive counterexample.

Rosen's insistence on the resonance between memory and painting retains a bond in the act that severs it. The bond with representations that are both imaginative and culturally commonplace, as well as recalled from the past—medieval paintings of Hell, for example—is simultaneously evoked, activated, and severed, indicted for its loss of adequacy. For, following Freud and Felman, we can say that the artists install a new condition of knowledge that enables a production of knowledge that is first of all affective instead of cognitive. It is precisely this affective quality that is crucial in these Holocaust artworks. These artists need the concept of play and toys (or, in the case of Rosen, the reiteration of cultural commonplaces, such as sexuality, suicide, and torture) to replace cognition by affect on Holocaust remembrance and its pedagogy.

Rosen's are ambiguous texts in terms of identification; they both entice and relativize identification with the evil side of the Holocaust. Unlike the identification provided by the Holocaust Memorial Museum, this work and the toy works solicit a form of identification that is not only different in target, but qualitatively different. As Kaja Silverman has argued, identification takes one of two forms.20 One form involves taking the other into the self on the basis of a (projected) likeness, so that the other "becomes" or "becomes like" the self. Features that are similar are enhanced in the process; features that remain irreducibly other are cast aside or ignored. Silverman calls this idiosyncratic identification. The other form is heteropathic. Here, the self doing the identification takes the risk of—temporarily and partially—"becoming" (like) the other. This is both exciting and risky, enriching and dangerous, and affectively powerful.

In the case at hand, it can be argued that identification with the victims, although useful in realizing their horror, is also a way of reassuring visitors, perhaps unduly, of their fundamental innocence. To put the case strongly, this reassurance is unwarranted, and unhelpful in achieving the ultimate goal of Holocaust education: preventing history from repeating itself. Victimhood cannot control the future. In contrast, soliciting partial and temporary identification with the perpetrators makes one aware of the ease with which one can slide into a measure of complicity. To raise the possibility of such identification with the fundamental, cultural other is appealing to heteropathic identification. Precisely because toys and play are not "serious," toy art is so eminently suitable to make such heteropathic identification, which begins to blur overly rigid boundaries.

ART AND PEDAGOGY

So far, I have put forward the notion that the traditional, dogmatic "rules" for Holocaust remembrance and education are inevitably a framing device for understanding the Holocaust art that challenges those rules. This frame is so powerful because when the Holocaust is concerned, education more than any other cultural practice is the transgenerational tool for remembrance. The danger that this view entails is its subjugation of art to the pedagogical pursuit of Holocaust education. Yet, toy art, through its reference to childhood, endorses this subjugation but changes its terms. This antagonistic pedagogy as a major feature of the toys suggests that Holocaust art is a special, negative case of aesthetics in its "interestlessness." It is not autonomous, as art since modernism likes to see itself, but subordinated, put in the service of another, inevitably "higher" goal. In contrast, in the wake of Kant, art is usually seen as disinterested, free from educational ideals. The toy art discussed here breaks through this opposition. Distinct from such a subjugation of Holocaust
art to education, Libera's works seem to imply that Holocaust art and other kinds of art are not at all opposed. In this respect Holocaust art is not different, but perhaps only a stronger, more evident case of the pedagogical ambition of art in general. Hence, the shift this art brings to the pedagogy of remembrance also entails a change of aesthetics.

Libera's artistic interest is focused on those cultural products that serve to educate or to form the human being, and to "form" should be understood in the figurative as well as in the literal sense. The objects that he creates are made up of appliances that already exist in the contemporary cultural world through their resemblance to toys or to machines used in fitness clubs or beauty salons. These are not related to the Holocaust. Besides the LEGO Concentration Camp Set, for example, he made You Can Shave the Baby. These are five pairs of baby dolls, with shocks of red hair emanating from their heads and sprouting from their pubic areas, lower legs, and underarms. Ken's Aunt (see page 130) is a Barbie doll in the form of an overweight woman. These works have an upbeat tone to them that contrasts sharply with Rosen's suicide scene, yet in Rosen's work, the earlier, erotic fantasies have a similar artificial positivty to them. Libera's Doll You Can Undress is a doll that reveals her stomach area and visible intestines. And Erotica is a set of fifty boxes of small bronze figurines that look like toy soldiers. This time it is not the army but civilians, women, and the oppressed of society that are the toy "soldiers" we play with. The tone here is more unsettling. Other works by Libera present themselves as "correcting devices," such as Universal Penis Expander, Body Master, and Placebo.

What matters in this non-Holocaust aspect of Libera's work is the emphasis on correction or "forming." "Forming" takes on a multiple-layered meaning. In light of this, the "making" that underlies them all receives yet another nuance. Libera's artistic oeuvre shows that although his LEGO Concentration Camp Set is unique in having the Holocaust as its subject matter, all of his works address, literally or figuratively, the education of body and of mind. In an illuminating essay, Andrew Boardman has argued that Libera challenges the contemporary belief that aesthetic values are disinterested, fluid, or free-form. On the contrary, contemporary Western art is essentially a remnant from a indelible nineteenth-century construct according to which art and education go hand in hand with moral strength and prudence:

Although art produced today likes to believe that it has shed the majority of those stodgy 19th century precepts, it has carefully disguised them in the fine-woven cloak of pedagogy. The built-in assumption of art today is that it acts to inform us, develop our faculties and therefore deliver us from a transgressive and earthly ignorance into the safe arms of civilization. [...] One might argue that Libera's work, because of its visual connection to child development and to learning, superficially epitomises this 19th century, bourgeois outlook. In fact, by wrapping his work in this upright mode of educational discourse, Libera questions the sweet platitudes and patronizing certainties of art that adhere in our educational aspirations for visual culture. 21

From this perspective, the target of Libera's LEGO Concentration Camp Set is twofold. In addition to exposing the repressions and inhibitions of Holocaust education and its conceptions of remembrance, he also exposes the moral rectitude of (contemporary) art.

These two conclusions makes it clear that we cannot stop at the idea that in modern Western culture art unavoidably teaches and forms. The specificity of toy art remains play, which is also the tool for freedom from pedagogical lessons. The intricate relationship between art and teaching can neither be dismissed nor endorsed. No matter what art's pedagogical mission is, the function of play in relation to


Plate 20 (top). Tom Sachs, Giftpack Giftset, 1996. Cardboard paper, ink, thermal adhesive, foamcore, 44 3/4" x 12".

Plate 21 (bottom). Tom Sachs, Prada Deathcamp, 1998. Cardboard paper, ink, wire, adhesive, 27 1/4" x 27 1/4" x 2".
both art and teaching needs to be considered. The question that is thrust upon us is also double: Does play teach, and how does play teach differently? Is the result or "mastery" provided by play of a different order than the mastery resulting from cumulative and progressive learning?

**HOLOCAUST NARRATIVE VERSUS HOLOCAUST DRAMA**

To understand how the mastery provided by toys differs from the mastery provided by "learnable" knowledge, both modes of learning must be analyzed in terms of the generic discourse to which each belongs. "Learnable knowledge" of the Holocaust takes the form of narrative. Personal narratives in the form of testimonies, diaries, or memoirs are seen as especially instructive, teaching later generations not simply the facts of the Holocaust but its apocalyptic inhumanity. It is safe to assume that all Holocaust education, including that in the form of art, shares this goal. But the artworks by Levinthal, Libera, Katzir, and Rosen don't tell us much about the past. Like Boltanski's Comic Sketches before them, they envision playing the past. And I use the verb emphatically, because—with the possible exception of Katzir, who experimented with museum visitors actually coloring the books—these works are not real toys. Instead, they are artworks in the form of toys. These artworks are meant to be processed by adults, not by children. The distance between children playing and adults envisioning themselves as those children adds yet another layer of identification, in which adults act—or rather playact—like children. The art under scrutiny, a shift in semiotic mode is at stake. The Holocaust is represented not by means of narration but in the mode of drama or a script for a drama. That is, of course, more literally true in the cases of Katzir's installation and Libera's LEGO box than in the case of Levinthal's photographs. But I will argue that Levinthal's photographs should also be understood as drama. It is as such that they solicit heteropathic identification and the possibility to identify with the other. In the case of the Holocaust the other is the moral other, no longer an inevitably abstract evil force from the beyond, but a person with whom one can even feel complicitous. Drama, then, becomes a centrally important semiotic mode of education.

James E. Young has remarked that the photographs of Mein Kampf generate a powerful sense of the past through a measured act of simulation. He uses the phrase "a sense of the past" to distinguish an effect from an actuality. What strikes me most, however, and in analogy to Young's view, is how these works generate a "sense of the present." I don't see fictional, narrativized images of a concentration camp. What I see, what I imagine, or even what I am is a subject in post-Holocaust culture playing with a (fake) concentration camp. The narrative images are embedded in, or produced by, an act that should be defined as drama. And this difference between narrative and drama is of crucial importance in understanding what is at stake in the artworks under discussion.

You cannot actually play with Libera's LEGO boxes. But they evoke the possibility of a scene in which somebody in post-Holocaust culture performs Holocaust events within the setting of a camp. Constructing the setting, the artist facilitates the articulation of playing Holocaust events. Katzir's work does not just envision the dramatic mode of representation, it really enact. In his installation Your Coloring Book, realized in different ways in Utrecht, Enschede, Jerusalem, Vilnius, Krakow, Berlin, and Amsterdam, visitors were invited to sit on school benches and to color or draw in the coloring books that had been placed on classroom desks or tables (fig. 6). The visitors were drawn into a performance in which they actualized, shaped, and colored—in other words, generated—Nazi characters.
This dramatic aspect of the toy works is important in terms of both education and, specifically, Holocaust remembrance. For the difference between narrative and drama is particularly relevant for understanding—a condition for curing—trauma. Drama is a very particular cultural form that is fundamentally different in form and effect from narrative. And this specificity of drama improves what toy art offers to Holocaust education and remembrance. In order to assess the crucial difference between works of art that narrate events from the Holocaust and those that perform or playact it, the distinctions the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet made between narrative memory and traumatic memory are helpful.

Narrative memory consists of mental constructs that people use to make sense out of experience. Current and familiar experiences are automatically assimilated or integrated in existing mental structures. But some events resist integration: “Frightening or novel experiences may not easily fit into existing cognitive schemes and either may be remembered with particular vividness or may totally resist integration.” The memories of experiences that resist integration in existing schemes are stored differently and are not available for retrieval under ordinary conditions. It is only for convenience’s sake that Janet called these unintegratable experiences “traumatic memory.” In fact, trauma is fundamentally (and not gradually) different from memory because “it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control.”

Trauma is failed experience, and this failure makes it impossible to voluntarily remember the event. This is why traumatic reenactments take the form of drama, not narrative. Drama just presents itself, or summarize, highlight, underscore, or minimize elements of the story at will, are inaccessible to the ‘actor’ who is bound to enact a drama that, although at some point in the past it happened to her, is not hers to master.” Janet’s clinical distinction between narrative and traumatic memory ultimately concerns a difference in distance toward the situation or event. A narrative memory is retroversive; it takes place after the event. A traumatic memory, or better, reenactment, does not know that distance toward the event because it is more immediate.

This distinction between narrative memory and traumatic memory does not apply literally to the artworks under discussion. Although these works are not narrative, it is of little help to see them as instances of traumatic memory. These works are not involuntary re-enactments of the Holocaust but rather purposeful attempts to shed the mastery that Holocaust narratives provide. Instead, they enliven the viewer to enter into a relationship that is affective and emotional rather than cognitive.

Mastery is the issue, but this time the method for obtaining mastery is totally different: not through mastery by knowledge but mastery by admitting affect. This is by no means a passive opening up but an active countering of the closure brought about by narrative mastery. To explain how these imaginative attempts to work through work, yet another distinction must be invoked. I am referring to the distinction made by Eric Santner between “narrative fetishism” and mourning. He defines narrative fetishism as the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place. The work of mourning, on the contrary, is a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses. It is a process of translating, tropeing, and figuring loss.

Santner uses, of course, Freud’s discussion of the fort/da game in Beyond the Pleasure Principle to explain the mechanisms of mourning. The fort/da game was observed by Freud in the behavior of his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson. In this game the child was able to master his grief over his separation from the mother by staging, playacting, his own performance of her disappearance. She was gone—fort; then she was there—da.) This little boy was involved in heteropathic identification with the person who was, in his everyday drama, the “perpetrator,” the mother who left him. He did so by repetition, using props that D. W. Winnicott would call transitional objects. This game is based on a ritualized mechanism of dosing out and representing absence by means of substitutive figures. In the words of Santner:

The dosing out of a certain negative—a thanatotic—element as a strategy of mastering a real and traumatic loss is a fundamentally homeopathic procedure. In a homeopathic procedure the controlled introduction of a negative element—a symbolic or, in medical contexts, real poison—helps to heal a system infected by a similar poisonous substance. The poison becomes a cure by empowering the individual to master the potentially traumatic effects of large doses of the morphologically related poison. In the fort/da game it is the rhythmic manipulation of signifiers and figures, objects and syllables instituting an absence, that serves as the poison that cures.

In the Holocaust toys, similarly, the poisonous—also Libera’s word—staff, needed in a carefully measured dose, is the “Holocaust effect”: to playact after the event. A traumatic memory, or absence by means of substitutive figures. In the words of Santner:

Playing the Holocaust
of the child. In the case of Freud’s grandson, it was the child’s own drama that was enacted. Here, the child stands for the next generations, who need to learn a trauma they have not directly lived, although, as Marianne Hirsch and others have emphasized, they may suffer from postmemory. But at the same time, by the same gesture, a double distance is produced: play instead of reality, and play instead of, in the context of, “high art,” an institutional frame that sets these toys apart. To playact the Holocaust in this way is to perform under the strict direction of a “director,” a “metteur en scène,” which is radically distinct from a “revival” or “repetition” of Nazism in the dangerous shape of neo-Nazism.

TOUCHING TOYS

Why is it that this trend of “playing” the Holocaust by means of toys characterizes the art of this current second, third, and fourth generation of post-Holocaust survivors and bystanders? How can this work contribute to the cultural necessity to shake loose the traumatic fixation in victim positions that might be partly responsible for the “poisonous” boredom that risks jeopardizing all efforts to teach the Holocaust under the emblem “never again”?

In the face of the overdose of information and educational documentary material, clearly, there is a need to complete a process of working through not yet “done” effectively. The overdose was counterproductive. In the face of that overdose, “ignorance” is needed. An ignorance, not in terms of information about the Holocaust but of everything that stands in the way of a “felt knowledge” of the emotions these events entailed. Primarily, of the narrative mastery so predominant in traditional education.

In this perspective, the toys, with their childish connotations, “fake” the ignorance that clears away the “adult” overdose of information that raises obstacles to felt knowledge. “Mastery,” then, is no longer an epistemic mastery of what happened but a performative mastery of the emotions triggered by the happenings. Only by working through knowledge that is not “out there” to be passively consumed but rather “felt” anew time and time again, by those who must keep in touch with the Holocaust, can art be effectively touching.

NOTES


4. See, for the documentation of this controversy, Katzir’s catalogue Your Coloring Book: A Wandering Installation (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1998).

5. A transcript of this very emotional discussion can be found in Bulletin Trimestriel de la Fondation Auschwitz, special no. 60 (July-September 1998): 225-40.

6. See, for an elaboration of this argument, my book Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).


hen people go to museums, especially art museums, they expect to enter a realm of safety, a space where their bodies and psyches are protected from danger. Art museums are exceptionally safe. Most are environmentally controlled to a standard rarely found elsewhere; guards and sophisticated security systems protect visitors from a variety of possible mishaps.
and a large portion of the art on exhibit has passed the test of time. Visitors feel safe in museums, comfortable, at home. They have nothing to fear.

During the past twenty years, the best-attended exhibitions, the safest, have been exhibitions of Impressionist art. Almost half a million visitors saw and relished Renoir’s Portraits at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997 and 813,000 luxuriated in the Royal Academy exhibition Monet in the Twentieth Century in London in 1999. Yet the first Impressionist exhibitions were not considered safe at all. In the late nineteenth century, humanizing images of the working class dancing or swimming, prostitutes in the intimacy of their toilette, or landscapes dotted with polluting factories demanded that the bourgeoisie see their world for what it was—a place and time of unsettling change. The broken brush strokes were metaphors for a fragmented world. More than a century later, people interpret Impressionist art quite differently. Today’s museum visitors tend to look at Impressionist art exhibitions with nostalgia for a sunny, simpler time that never was. Many of those who see Impressionist exhibitions use them as talismans against the dangers of contemporary industry, reassurance that despite the darkness of deep change, light and civilization prevail.

Why is it that museum visitors demand so much safety, become irate if they feel threatened, and are so willing to withdraw support or close down an institution if they object to an exhibition or even one artwork? Part of the answer lies in what art historian Carol Duncan has called “civilizing rituals.” Today’s museum visitors tend to look at Impressionist art exhibitions with nostalgia for a sunny, simpler time that never was. Many of those who see Impressionist exhibitions use them as talismans against the dangers of contemporary industry, reassurance that despite the darkness of deep change, light and civilization prevail.

As much as museum visitors want the reassurance of the familiar, they also expect new experiences. Their willingness to engage with the alien, the unpleasant, the dangerous depends on limited or graduated exposure and the assurance of support, either educational or emotional. In some ways, the museum can be seen as the equivalent of D. W. Winnicott’s “good enough” mother who encourages her child to venture out into the world but is always there when the child returns. Essential to the process is what Winnicott calls the transitional object, a doll or a blanket, with which children build relationships as they begin to leave the security of their mother’s sphere. Without a “good enough” mother, children cling, reject the toys they are given or have chosen, refuse to move on or out, and become very angry. They are terrified of being lost forever. Temporary exhibitions are the equivalent of transitional objects. The question for museums is how to be a “good enough” mother, how to provide a safe enough space for visitors to “play” with new ideas, how to transform the inevitable fear of the unknown into autonomy and independence.

Mothers can’t guarantee safety, nor can museums. Danger is often unforeseen. When Jana Sterbak, an internationally acclaimed artist, exhibited Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic (1987; fig. 1) as part of her retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada in 1991, there was no way of predicting that the “meat dress” would become the focus of a strident debate about poverty, social justice, and government support of the arts. Vanitas is a trenchant, poignant comment on female flesh and adornment. The dress is made of raw beefsteaks that take the form of the young woman on whom it was sewn. After a photography session, the dress was removed and hung to dry. Sterbak mercilessly plays on the fashionable thinness and the scorn for withering age. Before the National Gallery exhibition, Vanitas was shown for four years in commercial or artist-run galleries, and discussion remained intellectual, centered on current concerns, such as avant-gardism, performance, commodification, and feminism.

It was only when Sterbak’s dress moved into the public arena of the National Gallery that the terms and tone of the debate changed. The work suddenly became politicized and controversial art, dangerous to the country. As art historian and critic Johanne Lamoureux so astutely observes, in the public domain “the taxpayer does not see him- or herself as...
the mere receiver of information; he or she challenges the position of the sender/speaker [artist/museum]. . . . It is from that position mainly that the issue of possible censorship is raised as a threat."

The Vanitas debacle demonstrates that safety zones within the contemporary art world depend on context. What is safe in one sphere is not necessarily safe in another. When Sensation, an exhibition of works from Charles Saatchi's collection by young British artists, was shown at the Royal Academy in London in 1997, one protester threw eggs and another ink on Marcus Harvey's gray and white, larger-than-life Myra (1995; fig. 2), a portrait of the convicted mass murderer and child-killer Myra Hindley. Harvey had transformed the painterly, neutral tesserae of Chuck Close's giant portraits into a template of a child's handprints with what art historian Elizabeth Legge calls "vicious effectiveness." Ensuing publicity made Harvey's portrait the emblem of an exhibition that the public and the press critiqued as distasteful. Initially, Myra seems a surprising choice for such attention given the presence of more obviously troubling works, such as Marc Quinn's self-portrait head made from eight pints of his own frozen blood; Damien Hirst's dead animals, split open and suspended in formaldehyde or the Chapman brothers' mutated and mutilated sexualized child mannequins.

As Legge points out, Harvey's portrait, exhibited so soon after the death of the Princess of Wales, was received "as a short-haired blonde demonic double of Diana-the-good-mother." The focus on Harvey's painting, like that on Sterbak's Vanitas, suggests that when stereotypes of women and, by extension, mothers, are questioned, these works become flash points for protest. Rather than examine mother images that are other than idealized, dissenters prefer to remove them from view.

When Sensation was shown at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the endangered work was Chris Ofili's The Holy Virgin Mary (1996; fig. 3), attacked by New York's Mayor Rudolph Giuliani as blasphemous and "sick" because it was adorned with elephant dung and contained tiny images of angels fashioned from pornographic photographs. Giuliani was unaware that in Ofili's Anglo-African culture dung is considered a precious commodity. Picketers and protesters in support of the Catholic League massed outside the museum, and Giuliani used the offending painting as the cornerstone of a legal argument to evict the museum from its municipally owned building and reduce its funding, a suit lost in court.

Before the exhibition opened, the museum stated: "The contents of this exhibition may cause shock, vomiting, confusion, panic, euphoria and anxiety." Issuing the equivalent of a health warning widely reported by the press was instrumental in turning the event into a "sensation" and the museum into a dangerous space, daring the public to attend. The focus on exhibiting "offensive" art and the moral and legal questions raised by the exhibition made it impossible to discuss the art as art or its relationship to contemporary British or American society. In choosing distanced irony to announce the exhibition rather than careful or caring communication, the museum abdicated its role as a "good enough" mother, leaving the art in the exhibition, future visitors, and itself without a safety net.

The Sensation debacle was reminiscent of the culture wars sparked by The Perfect Moment, the 1988-89 retrospective of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs. The flash point in that exhibition was Mapplethorpe's The X Portfolio (1978), a series portraying male masturbatory and homosexual acts including bondage, mutilation, and fisting that crossed sadomasochistic boundaries. The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington abruptly canceled the exhibition, and the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, which bravely took the show in 1990, was put on trial on two misdemeanor counts: pandering obscenity and the use of minors in nudity-oriented materials. Insti-
tutions that exhibited the X Portfolio were in danger of losing their funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and artists whose work deviated from a very precise definition of pornography were in danger of being refused grants. Museums exhibiting Mapplethorpe’s work were considered the equivalent of morally unfit mothers.

Like Vanitas, Myra, and The Holy Virgin Mary, The X Portfolio destabilizes conventional notions of Eros and Thanatos. Museum goers feel exposed, vulnerable, frightened when asked to reconsider in such a radical way assumptions about sex, religion, race, and death they hold sacrosanct, especially when entering what they anticipate to be a danger-free zone. Wanting safe ground, they are left wanting.

Yet Joseph Kosuth’s 1992 exhibition The Play of the Unmentionable, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, dramatically demonstrates that standards of tolerance for what is considered acceptable in museums depend on time and place, not some absolute criteria. Kosuth combed the archives of the Brooklyn Museum for information on artworks in the collection once considered so controversial they were removed from display but which are considered so benign today that we wonder why they ever evoked such scandal. What often gets forgotten is that the museum may be at its safest when it exhibits “dangerous” art precisely because it insists on participating in rather than avoiding current debates occurring outside the museum. An exhibition can be a forum in which difficult issues are addressed without the expectation that all questions can be resolved or that closure is the desired result. There may be more value in raising doubts than in providing answers. When the museum balances pleasure and reality, encourages an understanding of the complex relationships between art and life, and takes measures to make potentially disturbing work safe, it may not be liked but it does function as a “good enough” mother.

When planning the installation of the Mapplethorpe retrospective, curators and exhibition designers were very much aware of the dangers posed by exhibiting such explicit photographs in the public space of the museum. The exhibition contained 150 works spanning a twenty-year period, of which The X Portfolio was a small segment. At the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1986, curator Richard Marshall arranged the display so that the potentially dangerous photographs from the portfolio were isolated in a separate room that viewers could bypass entirely or suddenly stumble into. Esteemed critic Arthur Danto recounted the profound revelation he experienced from an unexpected encounter with hitherto-unknown photographs that challenged his every preconception about art and the body.

Danto, however, was in the minority. After the Mapplethorpe retrospective, isolation, in and of itself, was not considered safe enough. In 1999, the Art Gallery of Ontario used a similar segregationist installation strategy for the more disturbing grotesques in a touring Cindy Sherman retrospective. Here but viewers were warned in advance that they might not wish to see the artwork they were about to encounter and given the opportunity to exit the exhibition at that point. At Without Sanctuary, an extraordinarily brave exhibition of postcard photographs of lynchings in the United States at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2000, viewers were warned, both at the entrance to the museum and at the entrance to the exhibition itself, that material beyond the threshold would be extremely difficult to view (fig. 4).

In both instances, sober warnings prepared visitors for the possibility that what they would see might be disturbing and gave them the choice of entering the exhibition space or not. Rather than the abrupt, sudden, confrontational formula associated with the artistic or political avant-garde where visitors are not warned, as in The Perfect Moment, or warnings are used as a dare, as in Sensation, the transformational potential of the exhibition experience can be conceived in terms of a developmental learning model that is gradual and slow. Risk, surprise, and confusion are reduced; the unexpected, destabilizing encounter is minimized to allow a safer space for contemplation.

Museum goers are far more familiar with warnings that protect art from the dangers they pose than vice versa. Visitors are repeatedly told, either perfunctorily or subtly, not to touch, not to get too close, not to photograph, because works of art are fragile, likely to be damaged by environmental elements such as the oils secreted by human hands or strong light from camera flashes. At the Louvre, a pane of safety glass shields the Western world’s most venerated painting, Mona Lisa, from the enormous crowds that come to see it. The glass stands a few feet in front of the painting, functioning as both warning device and protective screen, a clear signal that the spectator is considered a danger to the artwork.

In 1981, when Picasso’s antifascist Guernica was finally installed in Spain after spending the Franco era at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, safety measures were more elaborate. The enormous mural was encased in a bulletproof glass box, “safely and hygienically sealed from the public to protect against terrorists of the right and Left and Basque separatists for whom it remains a special symbol.”

Metal detectors, closed-circuit television, and armed civil guards screened spectators, adding to the safety of both the work and its viewers (fig. 5). Museums today go to great effort to protect visitors from the dangers of art. When Sandra Rechico’s Shards II (1997–2000; fig. 6) was exhibited in Montreal in Vital Signs, a group exhibition of experiential art, the gallery took extensive measures to ensure that all who came in contact with Rechico’s floor of broken glass would be safe. During installation, the air system was shut off and the floor regularly wet down so that technicians, wearing protective Tyvek...
suits, would not breathe in the circulating, microscopic glass dust. A combination of watching, wall labels, and waivers kept visitors safe. The information desk was repositioned, allowing the guard to simultaneously survey the scene and be close at hand to answer questions. Wall labels advised that unaccompanied children were not allowed to walk on the floor and suggested that those who chose to step on the glass wear adequate footwear, “limit participation to walking,” and wipe their feet on the mats provided to avoid carrying glass dust into the safety of their homes. In addition, anyone wishing to walk on the shattered glass floor, and seven hundred people did, was asked by the gallery to sign a waiver.

In signing a waiver, visitors enter into a contract with an institution, accepting full responsibility for any bodily damage that might occur during the experience and exonerating the institution from any liability. Waivers are a North American phenomenon, a response to the possibility of costly lawsuits. When Carsten Holler’s Slide-Tribute to Female Valerie was exhibited at the Berlin Biennale in 1998, there were no waivers required of visitors wishing to use the tubular slide for quick transport from one floor of the exhibition to another, but when a version of the work was exhibited in New York at P.S.1 in 1999 in Children of Berlin, anyone entering the slide, which began inside the exhibition on the top floor and deposited participants in the courtyard outside, had to sign.

Waivers, like glass, provide a layer of protection between what video artist Bill Seaman calls the “viewer” and the artwork. They also provide a layer of protection between the museum and the visitor, subtly transforming the relationship between the two parties. With waivers, visitors are addressed as adults, not children. Responsibility is shifted from the warning “good enough” mother to the participant. It is the visitor who must decide whether to risk exposure.

As of yet, museums have not devised waivers to cover possible psychic danger. Instead, a mix of educational material, audiotapes, videos, feedback devices, ancillary programs, as well as carefully designed layout are used to help cushion shock, frame responses and activate alternative avenues of consideration. Without more overt interventions, museum goers may forget that museums do not exhibit dangerous art without anticipating strong emotional responses, that no matter what the museum provides, there are no fail-safe measures for feeling safe with unanticipated or negative responses. Museum goers may also forget that a crucial role of the museum is not to waver when it presents unpopular art or exhibitions.

In all the controversies mentioned, the majority of museums held their ground and argued passionately and effectively for the controversial art. Similarly, when the Anti-Defamation League and a member of the Whitney’s national committee (who had promised the Whitney one million dollars) protested the display of Hans Haacke’s Sanitation (2000; fig. 7), the museum did not withdraw the work from its 2000 Whitney Biennial. Haacke’s installation, in a room of its own, without a warning, included six quotations, three from Mayor Giuliani and three from other politicians, decrying Sensation. The quotes, written in the Fraktur script favored by the Nazis, were placed on either side of a multi-layered American flag inspired by Jasper Johns’s once-controversial painting. On the floor, Haacke placed large garbage cans emitting the sound of marching boots and a copy of the First Amendment, which guarantees free speech. Haacke’s installation linked responses to Sensation in the United States with censorship policies of the Third Reich and reopened recent debates about the relationship between art and politics, art and race, and art and money. Most importantly, Sanitation introduced a political comparison—Nazi Germany/right-wing America—considered taboo. The museum
recognized the importance of not forecasting discussion however inopportune, awkward, or unsettling, for without debate, albeit rancorous, hurtful, and misguided, the range and depth of feeling associated with the issues would not have emerged. It may take a form of “mother courage” to exhibit works a museum knows will provoke intense responses, but public debate, the basis of democracy, is safer than its alternative.

When an exhibition is framed as a forum for discussion, its success is not dependent on traditional aesthetic criteria. What matters more is how much discussion is generated, for how long, in which sectors of society, and most importantly, to what effect. The emphasis becomes ethics rather than aesthetics, practice rather than theory, audience rather than artist. Precipitated on dissonance, discomfort, and discordance, the exhibition as discursive event asks the audience to consider the value of situational ethics and transgressive aesthetics, to use the exhibition as a focusing device and a forum.

**Mirroring Evil** is a dangerous exhibition. It deviates markedly from what has become the norm, from what has been codified as acceptable, from what is considered safe in exhibitions of art about World War II in Jewish museums. Unlike most exhibitions about the period, *Mirroring Evil* does not focus on the disasters of war, the innocent victim, or the unending grief of the Holocaust. The enemy has been allowed to claim the stage. The enemy has been allowed to be dangerous. In fact, endanger our safety; that the museum is an ideal place for examining what makes us so afraid. See “Danger and Safety,” *Art History* 17, no. 3 (September 1994): 416-23. Thanks to Kitty Scott for suggesting I read Cousins. See my “The Exhibition as Discursive Event” in *Longing and Belonging: From the Far Away Nearby* (Santa Fe, N.M.: SITE Santa Fe, 1995), 120-25, for a discussion of controversial exhibitions.

8. Ibid.
9. A key area of concern for many commentators and legislators was the morality of exhibiting work from a single collection. Although the practice is common, questions were raised about the enhanced “economic value” a museum exhibition gave to the Saatchi works. The narrow focus of the polerized debate to acknowledge the importance of Saatchi’s private museum in London as a major showcase for contemporary art or Saatchi’s annual practice of giving away a substantial portion of his collection to museums in Britain, where restricted budgets preclude the acquisition of new work, especially if it is costly. In North America, visible private patronage is acceptable only when it takes more discreet forms.
14. The exhibition, curated by Jennifer Fisher and Jim Drobnik, took place at the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, spring 2000. My thanks to Karen Antaki, director of the gallery, who provided me with the information about installing and monitoring the work.
15. As a way of avoiding charges of age discrimination, when Slade was exhibited in New York, sliders had to be a certain height.
16. These quotations are as follows:

  “We will do everything that we can to remove the funding for the Brooklyn Museum until the director comes to his senses.”—Rudolph Giuliani

  “I would ask people to step back and think about civilization. Civilization has been about trying to find the right place to put excrement, not on the walls of museums.”—Rudolph Giuliani

  “Since they seem to have no compunction about putting their hands in the taxpayers’ pockets for the exhibit, I’m not going to have any compunction about putting them out of business.”—Rudolph Giuliani

  “This elite cries ‘censorship,’ and falls back upon that last refuge of the modern scoundrel, the First Amendment.”—Pat Buchanan

  “Do you want to face the voters in your district with the fact that you are wasting their hard-earned money to promote sodomy, child pornography, and attacks on Jesus Christ?”—Pat Robertson

  “No tax fund shall be used for garbage just because some self-appointed ‘experts’ have been foolish enough to call it art.”—Jesse Helms
Distanced Mirrors: Reflections on the Works of Art
Without doubt, Hitler is the twentieth century's ultimate signifier of evil, replacing mythological figures or religious ones like the Devil. In using the image of Hitler, as Rudolf Herz does, or his attributes, as Roe Rosen does, artists self-consciously tempt the representation of taboo, show how generalized and banal certain representations have become, and question any meaning they might convey. These works admit the impossibility of interpretive closure. In her fascination with forensic issues and her fixation on the intersection of science and art, Christine Borland probes the representation of evil in the image of another infamous Nazi, Joseph Mengele. In focusing on the Nazi doctor whose "scientific experiments" with twins were actually an excuse to torture Jews, Borland also probes the ethics of modern science.

Studying the Auschwitz doctor, Borland discovered a remarkable set of contradictions between his physical beauty and the terrifying depravity of his personality. Her research revealed the equally shocking fact that some of his victims were actually captivated by his dashing features and charm. Mengele's "patience," knowing that he was a torturer and murderer, gave contradictory descriptions of him. One of the doctor's patients, Mark Berkowitz, commented that Mengele "looked so handsome that if we saw him we almost had the urge to run to the gate and greet him." He was described by others as Hollywood star material, "radiating lightness and gracefulness [in] contrast to the ugliness of the environs." One woman admitted that there were others who "would love to spend a night with him." Postwar descriptions became infinitely less flattering. The conflation of seductiveness and depravity in the identity of one man coincides with Georges Bataille's belief that violence is connected with every form of eroticism.

To investigate these contradictions, Borland created—one might say, choreographed—the sculptural installation L'Homme Double. In conceptual fashion, the artist disassociated herself from the very act of cre-
The resulting busts show a remarkable range of differences. The strategy is reminiscent of Maurizio Catelan’s II Super Noi, in which the artist commissioned fifty artists to draw his portrait solely from textual description. Borland’s busts are displayed together in one gallery, each near the framed photographs and documents that she supplied for the sculptures. The multiplicity, or twinning, of the images and the differences among them purposely frustrate the factual base of Borland’s art, thereby erasing the possibility for any sense of objectivity. As has been frequently observed in relation to Borland’s work, both subject and artist disappear.

The title of Borland’s work also reverberates with meaning. It refers to the psychological explanations given by Lawyers for the Nazi perpetrators about a type of schizophrenic personality, one that could be good in one place, yet evil in another. (Remember Christian Boltanski’s appropriated scrapbook of the Nazi soldier in domestic harmony with his family; see page 8.) The term “double” also refers to the actual twins on whom Mengele experimented.

But there are other levels of reference that operate in Borland’s installation. The use of the “taboo” of academic art within the history of modernism is a type of aesthetic violation with which she plays, and it is precisely this type of academic art—especially the prototypically idealized bust—that was central to Nazi aesthetics. Each of the six sculptures is reminiscent of the work of ideologically and aesthetically tainted sculptors such as Arno Breker, who worked for the Nazis and helped establish the monumental and megalomaniacal style associated with the movement. In the 1980s, Breker received a heavily disputed commission for portraits of the art collector Peter Ludwig and his wife. The commission extended a debate then raging in Germany about the ethics of showing art of the Nazi period in museums and exhibitions.1 In a play of paradox, Borland distances herself from the work, from “touching” the subject, and from the ideological implications of the style she has commissioned, thus circuitously disavowing ethical connections. In staging these multiple representations of Mengele, Borland negates the notion of art as unified and holistic, a principle central to fascist aesthetics. Ultimately, the ethical implications of the situation she fabricates are also multiple. Her assigning others to depict the Nazi perpetrators in three dimensions begs the continuing and controversial questions about the appropriateness of representation in the face of the Holocaust and the confusion between the represented and the real. Even more curious is Borland’s own ethical transgression in implicating other artists as she tests the limits of representation. At once coincidental and profound is the fact that not only does she use other artists in her attempts to re-create a symbol of evil, but also that their physical products actually become Borland’s own artistic expression. The artists stand in for her as the sculptures stand in for Mengele. Thus, Borland raises the stakes in the rhetorical questions her work sets up. Is she free of blame because it is others who “touch” this tainted subject matter? Or is she even more guilty because she implicates others for her own personal ends? These troubling questions, central to her project, remain irresolvable.

Because of the dialectic—some might say diabolical—nature of the project, they continue to persist and to frustrate.

NOTES

ROEE ROSEN

Live and Die as Eva Braun, 1995

ROEE ROSEN

Live and Die as Eva Braun, 1995

Male Fantasies of Hitler: Confusing Gender and Identity
Romantic painting, and images drawn from popular culture. One pop-culture source is the well-known German farcical comic book Adolf. One of the first images we encounter (Fig. 1) is one in which we seem to be poised at a console table or vanity looking into an empty mirror held up (or flanked) by two monkeys. We do not know if the monkeys are real or simply decorative elements of the mirror's frames. Through the mirror's emptiness and its mimetic reflection, we begin to imagine ourselves in the process of becoming Eva Braun, and we subsequently imagine the horrendous possibility of being seduced by Hitler. Although Hitler's image never appears in Rosen's project, symbols associated with him float through the drawings and confound a coherent reading. Another depiction resembles a photograph of the artist as toddler, reconfigured so that the child now sports Hitler's trademark mustache and parts his hair on the right side, as Hitler did. Rosen uses a dizzying number of symbolic and mimetic tropes, and the critic Roger Rothman has observed the disjunction of text and image.

Like Rudojf Herz in Zugzwang, but through radically different methods, Rosen's Live and Die as Eva Braun uses multiplication, fragmentation, doubling, and self-imposed confusion. Rothman demonstrates how the work's "playfulness is undercut with signs of violence, trauma, perversion, and destruction." As with Krystufek's works, which force us to enter the perpetrator's space, we now become both the subject and the object of enjoyment. As viewers, we reincarnate the fascist impulse toward self-destruction that was theorized in the early 1930s by Georges Bataille.

As we enter Rosen's world, we lose control of our judgment and sense of appropriateness. We enter a seductive, if frightening, space in which we cavort with, even approve of, evil, knowing full well its implicit terror. Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's Hitler, A Film from Germany created a similar sense of intimacy with the twentieth century's symbol of evil incarnate (Fig. 2). As Thomas Elsaesser has shown, watching the film we, as spectators, become exasperated and feel abused. Rosen forces us to the next level of participation, mingling innocence and sex. Rosen also shares Syberberg's deployment of screens and mirrors and engages us in what Elsaesser calls "the Medusa- face of fascination." Yet Rosen is more akin to Todd Solondz, through whose films, such as Welcome to the Doll House (1995) and Happiness (1998), we begin to engage, at least in our imaginations, in "inappropriate" behavior. For example, we catch ourselves titillated, laughing at immoral situations.

Rosen's work exemplifies Sidra Ezrahi's perspective on the creation of images after Auschwitz. In opposition to those she calls "mythifiers," Ezrahi notes that for "relativizers," like Rosen and the other artists in this volume, "it is precisely in its [the Holocaust's] ineffability that it is infinitely and diversely representable." More important for Rosen is that "the urgency of representation, then, unfolds in continual tension between desire and its limits." And it is precisely because of this impulse that Rosen's project was fiercely attacked when it was exhibited at the Israel Museum in 1997, even though Rosen might have possessed greater "legitimacy" than many because he is the son of a Holocaust survivor.

The project's content and consequent transgressions became international news covered by CNN, Newsweek, and The New York Times. Israel's Minister of Education asked that the exhibition be closed, and the Israeli news media focused on the controversy, claiming that the project indulged in sensationalism for its own sake and "turned the Holocaust into pornography." Yet some who saw Rosen's work tried to come face to face with the experience of psychologically entering the proverbial mind and body of Eva Braun. One critic showed how the antagonist Eva helps us come to recognize our deepest fears and desires and "get to know the worst of evil." Others drew political and social par-
allels to the racism that pervades Israeli society and to the situation of the Palestinians. Through our experience as Eva, we begin to ask ourselves a litany of questions: How can we, as imperfect societies and individuals, so easily cast blame on others? How can we presume to understand right and wrong, good and evil, without having succumbed to the ultimate temptation? Certainly this is not an easily defensible position with regard to the Holocaust. But is it possible to mistakenly see what Rosen has created as a Holocaust memorial or monument? According to the Israeli critic Ariella Azoulay, the exhibition throws the spectator into a maze of intricate systems, in which the viewer "becomes the subject of control, of representation, of evil, of sexuality, of passion, of rejection, of will, of resistance, and of loss." She, also, argues the faultiness of too simplistically connecting Rosen's project to the Holocaust. The subject of its narrative and the nature of its form, in fact, discourage any "sovereign interpretation" or control of the limits in representing such a chilling subject.7

NOTES

1. Roee Rosen, communication with author, February 27, 1999.

Mischa Kuball uses light as his signature medium. With it, he plays with contrasting ideas of image and symbol, the sacred and profane, power and powerlessness. In Hitler's Cabinet (1990) he uses the medium to probe historical archives and intellectual theories while he distorts physical structures and transforms stylistic references. Curiously, Kuball's continuing obsession with light for the exploration of intellectual theories and representational images has been associated with two opposed influences. On the one, the artist's historical outlook reflects back to earlier, utopian histories, for example, the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century or the Bauhaus of the early twentieth. On the other, Kuball alludes to the potential of light for the display of sculptural and political might, as under the Nazis. In this case, Albert's Speer's infamous, blinding, nevertheless awesome Dome of Light of 1937 is a particular example, as is the use of intense light as both symbols in and strategies for Nazi architecture. Speer's overwhelming spectacle serves as the quintessence of what Walter Benjamin called "aestheticized politics." Kuball plays with the inevitable, paradoxical connections between these two strikingly opposed political and social ideologies. Rather than offer standard lessons about the social potential of one or the moral failure of the other, he shows how inextricably they are connected.

Cruciform in shape and large in scale, Hitler's Cabinet hugs the gallery floor. At first glance, its solid, industrial shape reminds one of the muscular and emotionally distant works of such Minimalist artists as Carl Andre and Richard Serra. Yet the humble materials Kuball uses and the meanings of the symbolic forms in which the materials are configured contrast markedly with the hardness, heft, and hermetic nature of Minimalism. Indeed, Kuball refers to his Minimalist predecessors, yet he seeks to inject purpose and content into Minimalism's ahistoricism. He uses slide projections that teach historical
Kuball's crosseslike shape is made of inexpensive pressed wood, unpainted and unadorned. Each of the four ends of the cross is pierced with rectangular openings, through which 35-millimeter slides are projected onto the floor. Creating ghostlike, fan-shaped forms, these splayed images are stills from German films of the 1920s and 1930s. When lit, the stills transform the pressed-wood cross into a swastika: the durable industrial sculpture becomes an environment that performs electrically. These still photographs visually re-create Siegfried Kracauer's famous 1947 psychosocial history of German cinema, *From Caligari to Hitler.* According to Kracauer, the films made between the end of World War I and the election of Hitler set the stage, so to speak, for Nazism. Kracauer, a German-Jewish refugee historian, saw the aspirations and fears, the psychological frailties and political struggles of the German people, encoded in a wide range of German films. For example, he claimed that movies like Paul Wegener's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* glorified authority connected with madness. According to Kracauer, such manifestations of the German psyche would make the average German easily influenced by Nazi propaganda, losing the ability to make sound moral judgments. In *Kracauer's* observations, many productions showed German traits of chauvinism, Romanticism, nationalism, and, ultimately, preference for tyranny over chaos. Thomas Elsaesser has thoughtfully outlined the pitfalls of Kracauer's postwar theoretical position: "The fill[s] gaps, smooth[es] out the narrative logic, invert[s] the causal chains, level[s] off intensities . . . and den[es] ambiguities." Elsaesser shows how, according to a large corpus of feminist critiques, Kracauer's history could be easily be deconstructed as "phallicentric versions of politics and history."1

The slide projectors in each of the four arms of Kuball's environment continually project the range of images that frame German cinema during the period between the wars. Kuball's projections are distorted and tinted an eerie shade of blue. They fan out in megaphone shape as if to trumpet the meanings Kracauer has so forcefully assigned them. On the surface they show Kracauer's theory as a constant parade of representations. One could say that Kuball's sculpture, or teaching machine, simply performs Kracauer's lesson in the gallery—that the symbols, images, and implications Kracauer found in German film between the wars equals the swastika, the symbol of Nazism. Kuball is certainly too well sculptural transformation of the hard surface they show Kracauer's theory as a constant straightforward confirmation. The artist makes us hyperconscious that—without text—the images are an archive, no more, no less: a highly specific mode of organizing representations that Allan Sekula has dubbed a "territory of images."2 By simply looking at the images, the viewer of this revolving archive must search for the clues through which Kracauer has orchestrated his brilliant, if now dated, transformation of culture into politics. Kuball's second-generation sculptural transformation of the hard cross into the more fleeting symbol of the swastika is a metaphor for the direct, deductive nature of Kracauer's synthetic narrative. In the deadpan flash of the images and the seemingly easy transposition of one solid symbol with impermanent other, we note the artist's implied critique of the sociologist's forced interpretation. The artificiality of these contorted slides, and the fact they are projected onto the less worthy realm of the gallery floor (instead of the privileged space of the gallery walls), makes us wary of the reliability of the meanings that have been assigned to them. Do we really see the Nazi future in these films, or does Kuball help us retrace the dark, sinister forms and symbols as they appeared to Kracauer's eyes? In fact, Kuball helps us unmask the larger issue Allan Sekula has observed about the way archives are often distorted as they are deployed: "In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, the loss of context."3

Transgressive here is the way Kuball uses the images of film stills to transform his cruciform shape into a swastika, a symbol today forbidden by German law. Devious is the way it can be turned on and off. Kuball uses light to create this highly charged, illegal image that can be obliterated merely by pulling the plug.

NOTES

1. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psycholog­


4. Ibid., 116.
Piotr Uklański
The Nazis, 1998

PLATE 5

The Conflation of Good and Evil

Fig. 1. Piotr Uklański, The Nazis (installation shot from Photographers’ Gallery, London), 1998. (courtesy of Gavin Brown’s Enterprise.)


phers’ Gallery display books on the Holocaust and photographic blowups of Holocaust victims to allay the public’s concerns. Yet Janner felt that nothing would temper the exhibition’s impact, short of a corollary presentation of photographs showing the misery that the Holocaust caused Jews and non-Jews alike. He wanted historical material to explain, validate, and even vindicate the art displayed.

Although some hip youth magazines capitalized on the glamour and sartorial aspects of the display, serious critics were able to formulate a more judicious reading of Uklanski’s installation. Neal Ascherson, the Observer’s correspondent commented on the artist’s “sinister, intelligent talent” in making the exhibition into “a pitfall out of which no one scrambles intact.” The London Times reviewer Waldemar Januszczak, although known to be a conservative critic, took the matter most seriously, analyzing the project and exploring why it provoked such hostile reactions. Januszczak saw Uklanski’s Polish origin as part of the predicament. Being of Polish birth himself, he empathized with both the artist and the audience and recognized that the history of Polish anti-Semitism left wide mistrust in its wake. In addition, he blamed the film industry for its “harmless” and “picturesque” characterizations and praised Uklanski’s work for its scrutiny of such superficiality.

NOTES

1. Alice Yaeger Kaplan discusses the problematic surveying of the history of World War II using the tale of her friend Margaret, who was told stories by her grandmothers “on the sly.” See Alice Yaeger Kaplan, “Theweileit and Spiegelman: Of Men and Mice,” in Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., Remaking History (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 167-68. Information about Uklanski’s family is included in a number of the articles about his exhibition. The artist also spoke about his familial reaction (or lack thereof) in reference to the Holocaust and World War II during an interview with the author on January 16, 1999.


110 Norman L. Kleeblatt

ELKE KRYSUFTEK

Economical Love (Pussy Control), 1998

PLATE 6

Economical Love (Hitler Hairdo), 1998

PLATE 6

Economical Love (Abstract Expressionism), 1998

PLATE 8

A Feminist Rejoinder to Uklanski’s The Nazis

Fig. 1. Piotr Uklanski’s The Nazis, reproduced in The Face (London, August 1998).
take on the *droit moral* of image making, both viewer and artist are caught in a standoff, each guilty of stealing the other’s likeness and dignity. In accomplishing this, Krystufek exponentially raises the stakes of Uklanski’s already ethically compromis­
ing, socially interrogative enterprise. Hitler’s Children takes its title from part of a text and image in Uklanski’s book; he himself had appropri­
ted them from a 1940s film poster. Onto this she overlays photographs of herself in positions that are at once vulnerable and compromising. Those she has staged and then collaged are sexy, scary, and purposefully self-indulgent. She implores us to ponder the untenable question of whether she, as the child of an Austrian family, one of “Hitler’s Chil­
dren,” has any right to portray the abuse of women by men. Simultaneously, she exposes the self-
victimization she recognizes in herself and in other women of her generation. This strident imagery is part of a personal crusade to unravel the “industry of images and the magazines that commercialize the [female] body.” Through it, Krystufek blurs the boundaries between society’s abuse and misrepre­
sentation of women and how these abuses are replayed as self-inflicted. In other words, trauma is internalized and repeated. What Mark Seltzer has observed about “wound” culture is apt for Krystufek’s heavily manipulated representations. He claims that “the wound and its strange attractions have become one way . . . of locating . . . violence and . . . erotics, at the crossing point of private fan­tasy and collective space.” In essence, Krystufek has tapped into what Seltzer has coined the “pathologi­cal public sphere.”

There is no underestimating the influence Theweleit’s Male Fantasies has had for Krystufek’s thought. Theweleit examines the writings of—and representations connected to—the male Freikorps, right-wing World War I veterans who became keepers of the peace (or policemen) during the postwar unrest in Germany and during the Weimar Republic. They often became Nazis. In relating their superfi­
cially protective stereotypes of some women and violent hatred of others, Theweleit lays out potential connections between such attitudes and the eventual projection of that violence onto the bodies of Jews. Alice Yaeger Kaplan best explains the discomfit­
ing position that Theweleit proposes in his continuum between fascist and nonfascist and the inevitable connections of the attitudes of the men in his study to the attitudes of his German “left-wing intellectual” readers. Like Theweleit, Krystufek is not propelled by the anxiety that fascism might reappear. Instead, she finds his observations compelling because of how they relate to ordinary interac­tions between men and women. And like Theweleit, Krystufek offers the material evidence to “take precedence over interpretations.” Theweleit’s evaluation of men’s search for pleasure, that they “look for ecstasy not in embraces, but in explosions, in the rumbling of bomber squadrons or in brains being shot into flames,” could well describe one of Krystufek’s shocking collages. What makes her art so convincing, and often so threatening, is that she assumes the male role as the purveyor of the images, both negative and positive, but performs those male sexual fantasies using her own body. And she sub­jects male viewers to the distorted and perverse mimicry of male sexual fantasy inscribed on the female body. Male fantasies are mirrored on the artist’s flesh and mirrored onto potential perpetra­
tors—men who might gaze at women or fantasize violently about them.

NOTES

2. For a discussion of post-1960s feminism in Germany.
4. Mark Seltzer, “Wounded Culture: Trauma in the Patho­

logical Public Sphere,” October 80 (Spring 1997): 5.
ALAN SCHECHNER

Barcode to Concentration Camp Morph, 1994

PLATE 9

It’s the Real Thing—Self-Portrait at Buchenwald, 1993

PLATE 10

Impersonating the Victim: Consorting with History

Past, present, and future collide in the images that Alan Schechner broadcasts on the Internet. Schechner digitally manipulates photographs of Jewish Holocaust victims to draw uneasy parallels and point out differences between the Nazi era and the present. The Holocaust and its history form the backdrop for Schechner’s work, yet technology and the Internet are the overarching strategies in his world of comparisons. This heightens awareness of our relationship to the Holocaust and raises questions about memory, authenticity, individuality, corporate control, and popular culture in contemporary society.

Barcode to Concentration Camp Morph (1994) is part of Schechner’s series entitled Taste of a New Generation, located on his website. In this work, through progressive transitions, he digitally transforms a barcode into a photograph taken of camp victims wearing striped uniforms. Noam Milgrom-Elcott, a third-generation observer, has commented: “As numbers morph into human faces and the mark of merchandise becomes the dress of affiliation, the troubling association of commodification, concentration camps, and digital imaging emerges. The larger message speaks of the barricading of human life, the transformation of beings into numbers.” This gradual dehumanization emerges quite literally through number sequences—both in the information bytes of digital technology and in the classification system of bodies in the death camps.

This theme of commodification permeates Schechner’s website and is especially prominent in It’s the Real Thing—Self-Portrait at Buchenwald (1993). Here the artist digitally inserts his own image into a now-famous Margaret Bourke-White photograph taken when the Jews were liberated from Buchenwald in 1945. Bourke-White’s black-and-white photograph documents the horrors she witnessed—men with sunken cheeks, shaven heads, and desolate expressions, wearing ragged striped uniforms. By introducing himself—a second-generation English-born Jew, round faced, well fed, with a full head of hair—into the picture, Schechner collapses the space between history and the present. Our familiarity with the original image transforms into terror as we are left to ponder Schechner’s presence among the survivors, to connect him (and ourselves), one or more generations removed from the Holocaust, with the victims and their sufferings. Then, the terror transforms into shame as we realize our desensitization to the overexposure of Holocaust images. Our shock no longer derives from the documentation of a horrifying event, but rather from a manipulated artwork.

The shock allows us entry into the image, but we are immediately ejected again through Schechner’s inclusion of a Diet Coke can, centrally placed and the only element of Self-Portrait at Buchenwald that is depicted in color. The artist does not simply hold the Diet Coke but presents it, as if the can is posing alongside him. The irony of a robust Schechner among the718 impoverished survivors becomes embarrassing in the presence of a symbol of our culture’s self-indulgent body consciousness. We are faced with the fact that we can extravagantly afford to produce purposely nutritionless products for widespread consumption. Despite Schechner’s attempt to make the Holocaust more immediate for us, we quickly become aware that his (and our) memory of it has not been fully regained.

Has memory lost its power to replication and repetition, to marketing and consumerism? The Coke can draws parallels between brainwashing tactics of the Nazis and commodification. Just as much of Europe succumbed to Nazi culture because it was the dominant paradigm, so does our contemporary culture succumb to consumerism. Given recent findings that The Coca-Cola Company collaborated with the Nazi regime in the 1930s, Schechner’s image invokes how removed we have become from the devastation of the Holocaust. Even knowing about the collaboration, we can easily turn our cheek to satisfy our consumer needs. In this way, Self-Portrait at Buchenwald delivers us directly into the psyche of the complicit Nazi, who may not have been anti-Semitic, but who didn’t challenge the prevailing ideology, and was consumed by the wave of National Socialism.

Schechner discusses this image in terms of Israeli complicity, through the Israeli State’s employment of traditional Holocaust imagery, which he believes has been used to frame debates about Israeli governmental policy toward Palestinians. The artist has commented that “[T]hroughout my time in Israel, I became acutely aware of how the Holocaust was used to justify some of the unsavory aspects of Israeli policy. I was told more than once how: ’What ever we do to them (the Palestinians) can never be as bad as what they (the Germans) did to us.’” In this way, not only does Schechner collapse history and the present into one image, he collapses victim and perpetrator into one person. Further, he blurs the boundaries between observer and participant.

The artist reveals his own complicity by inserting his own image into the photograph, and this becomes his medium of confession. Through the interactive nature of the Internet, where one clicks on an image to view it, and where one can pick and choose which image to view, the viewer also becomes complicit. The Internet is not a passive experience, but an active one that creates a physical dialogue between image and audience. That the viewer participates in this dialogue makes our voyeuristic attitude toward the Holocaust undeniable, and to be voyeuristic necessitates our distance from it. Again, we are confronted with our detachment.

Schechner’s decision to digitally insert his image into the photograph of the Coca-Cola can is an example of digital manipulations like those of Elke Krystufek’s cut-and-paste technique creates an even more complicated image. Initially, the seamlessness of the digitally manipulated image seems to be consistent with the work’s title—It’s the Real Thing. But as we become aware of the artist’s presence within the pic-
ture, we realize it's not the real thing at all. Further, as a digital image Schechner's work no longer retains the photograph's light referent from the original event (something Bourke-White's had), and is yet one more step removed from reality. This meditation on the authenticity of the works points out that our memory of the Holocaust is created and maintained through images, or as Marianne Hirsch has explained, we hold a "post-memory" of these events. Ultimately, the existence of digital images like Self-Portrait at Buchenwald and Barcode to Concentration Camp Morph becomes an analogy for an awkward and complex association with the Holocaust. On the one hand, the images are immediate and intimate. The Internet is interactive and it employs strategies of merging art and everyday life. Because these images are Internet art, we may view them anytime, anywhere. On the other hand, the images are immaterial. They exist only on our computer screens; we cannot touch or handle them, and they are not even physical referents of any event. This limbo between distance and immediacy becomes a metaphor for a new generation's discomfort with our relationship to the Holocaust.

NOTES

RUDOLF HERZ

Zugzwang, 1995

PLATE 11

Impossible Bedfellows: Adolf Hitler and Marcel Duchamp

Unlike the contentious reception that greeted Piotr Uklański's The Nazis, Rudolf Herz's installation Zugzwang (fig. 1) met little controversy. In his other occupation as a photo historian, Herz had curated a 1994 exhibition in Munich's Stadtmuseum titled Hoffmann & Hitler, a scholarly investigation and thoughtful interpretation of the uses of photography to create and sustain the powerful and mythical image of the Führer. The project took Herz deep into the archives of Hitler's favored and sole photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, who glamorized Hitler along with the entire Nazi movement.

The Munich exhibition was well received by cultural critics and journalists, who saw it as an important step in understanding the mechanisms that shaped and promoted Hitler and the Third Reich. But fears that some people might misinterpret the exhibition, that others would find it painful, and that it might become a meeting place for neo-Nazis, led to the cancellation of venues in Berlin and Saarbrücken. The cancellations emphasize the dialectical dilemma of silence versus openness about the Holocaust and Nazi period that relate to imagery some still consider taboo.

The cancellation of the Berlin and Saarbrücken venues fueled Herz's desire to reframe Hoffmann's imagery as Zugzwang. For this piece, originally installed in the Kunstverein Ruhr in Essen, the artist wallpapered the gallery space from floor to ceiling with juxtaposed images of Adolf Hitler and Marcel Duchamp. He made strategic use of the paradoxical fact that the "greatest terrorist of the twentieth century" and the hero of the twentieth century's avant-garde were photographed by the same cameraman—none other than Hitler's beloved photographer and the mastermind of his public image, Heinrich Hoffmann. Hoffmann had a virtual monopoly on staging and selling images of the Führer and of the Nazi movement. He photographed Duchamp in 1912 and Hitler exactly twenty years later.
Like Uklachi's spare installation, Herz's is physically simple, almost painfully so. Both deploy appropriated photographs with neither identification nor legend, and both quote Warhol. Conceptually calculated, Zugzwang refracts both the historical and the art historical in an installation that is at once physically empty and visually saturated. Its restrained formal strategies are a rapid-fire trajectory of references from Dada to Pop, collage to montage. Minimalism to Conceptualism to installation art. Simultaneously, and seemingly by pure coincidence, Herz pits two ideologically divergent players on the seemingly disconnected and highly fragmented chessboard of twentieth-century history and art. The Duchampian reference to chess is as important for the work's formal aspects as it is to the installation's concept. Indeed, Zugzwang is organized physically as a chessboard and intellectually as a chess match. Its title is a chess term that refers to the untenable situation in which a player is limited to moves that will have a damaging effect on his or her position. As with Herz's other work, Zugzwang revolves around pictures of pictures, pictures of fragments, defaced pictures, and, not least, pictures as wallpaper. While the image of Hitler, with his signature mustache, instantly identifies the arch villain of the twentieth century, Duchamp's face is not as readily recognizable. It is much easier to remember Duchamp in one of his playful guises than as the man pictured here in a conservative black suit early in his career. How dare one combine the effigy of a mass murderer with that of the hero of the twentieth century's avant-garde? This question is crucial to the project, and ironic, considering that the Kunstverein in Essen occupies a historically loaded space on the ground floor of the city's now restored, former great synagogue. The upper level of the building houses a museum devoted to the city's Jewish history.

Herz permits the superficial similarities and radical differences of this implausible marriage of Hitler and Duchamp to ricochet ad infinitum into an aesthetic, ideological, and physical stalemate. Coincidences abound, albeit superficial ones. Duchamp and Hitler were born only two years apart—the former in 1887, the latter in 1889. Both are dressed in a similarly bourgeois manner: dark suit, white shirt, and tie. Both men were artists, Hitler a boring traditionalist with neither talent, nor a sense of innovation. To call his work "academic" would be to dignify it. Duchamp, the radical, unlocked the traps of standard historical practice by looking outside of art for alternatives to its suffocating traditions. In the process, he debunked the once holy domains of "aura" and "originality." Zugzwang proposes yet another remarkably complex issue at stake in the intellectual battle between Hitler and Duchamp, between Nazism and Dadaism—the diabolically contrasting notions of nihilism that pertain to each sitter's dogma.

Nihilism was the paradoxical end result of Hitler's totalitarian holism, the havoc his terrorism wreaked for history. Such a reading of the consequences of his reign of horror circulated as early as the 1930s, and was reiterated, for example, in his early postwar biography by Alan Bullock. Duchamp's self-imposed nihilism, his play with contradictory ideas and identities, opened infinite avenues for exploration that have proved to be virtually inexhaustible.

Because Zugzwang deploys an arsenal of aesthetic tropes, we experience the installation as a virtual lexicon of ideas and moods associated with Duchamp. Aside from the use of the photograph as readymade and the reference to chess, there is doubling, mirroring, replication, multiplication, and discontinuity in a mise en abîme that results in a dizzying experience for the viewer. The art historian David Joselit has discussed Duchamp's "relay between the 'elastic' body and a geometric system" and his "compulsive repetition of reproduction." Herz has "stolen" these systems conceptually and has reapplied them physically in his appropriation of retrograde photographs by Hoffman onto practices liberated by Marcel Duchamp. Thomas Elsaesser observed that Syberberg dissolves Hitler as a subject in Hitler. A Film from Germany. Herz's Zugzwang works toward the same end. He needn't dissolve Duchamp; the Dadaist already beat Herz to that punch.

One element that has gone unobserved in the considerable literature on Zugzwang is Herz's cagy contrast of Duchampian replication with the Nazis' very different use of multiplication. For the Nazis, multiplication was central to the orderly and overwhelming massing of humans and machines, to the domination and ultimate annihilation of the value of human life. It was an essential cog in the wheel of Nazism's pageantry and of ultimate importance in the consolidation of its power. Of course, Duchamp, used replication precisely to dispel notions of power, originality, and genius.

It is also fascinating to note the remarkable difference in approach between Uklachi's The Nazis and Herz's Zugzwang. Uklachi scours a remarkable range of film sources to create an extensive archive of movie heroes in the role of villains. Herz uses his discovery of two images from Hoffman's single yet vast archive to construct an ingenious installation in which images themselves are turned into a Dadaist artistic strategy. Given the infinite and ambiguous meanings that accrue for Zugzwang, Herz's work might well have engendered controversy. But it received mainly positive notices, was mostly reviewed as art, and has come to be considered a signal work of German art of the 1990s. Even the rather aesthetically conservative director of Essen's Jewish Historical Museum, a space housed directly above Essen's Kunstverein, approved of the artistic and moral ambiguities central to Zugzwang.

NOTES

1. Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine, and Die Zeit all were highly positive about the intentions of the
organizers and importance of the show to open a discussion
and analyze the mechanisms that produced Nazism and
helped it penetrate society.
2. Georg Bussman, “Kunstgeschichte als symbolierte
Realgeschichte oder: Und wer ist der Andere?,” in Rudolf
3. Saul Friedlander, Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on
Kitsch and Death, trans. Thomas Weyr (Bloomington and Indi-
discusses this in slightly different form. The preceding para-
graphs are partly based on Bussman’s and Peter Friese’s arti-
tles for the Essen catalogue. See Peter Friese, “Zugzwang,” in
4. David Joulila, Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp
5. Susan Sontag, “Racists and Fascism,” in Under the Sign
of Saturn (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980). Friedlan-
der, Reflections of Nazism, 52.
6. Peter Friese and Friederike Wappler in conversation
with author, October 20, 1999.

The Villain Speaks
the Victim’s Language

BOAZ ARAD
Safam, 2000

Marcel Marcei, 2000

PLATE 12
PLATE 13

In Explaining Hitler (1998), the author Ron
Rosenbaum examines the obsession with Hitler’s
life and character in the post-Holocaust era. Rosen-
baum points out that our fixation with the master-
mind of “the final solution” is a search for what
Hitler “had hid[den] within him.” We want to un-
derstand who Hitler was, how Hitler functioned, why
Hitler did what he did. We long to know if Hitler ever
regretted his actions. As Rosenbaum puts it, “Was he
‘convinced of his own moral rectitude’... or was he
deply aware of his own criminality?” In his videos
Safam, Marcel Marcel, and Hebrew Lesson (2000), the
Israeli artist Boaz Arad explores this question with
the preoccupation, obsession, and desperation about
Hitler that Rosenbaum contemplates.

In Hebrew Lesson, Arad splices very short film
clips from Hitler’s propaganda speeches to produce a
montage in which the Fuhrer’s strung-together Ger-
man syllables are transformed into a Hebrew sen-
tence. Arad manipulates Hitler so that he speaks in
Hebrew and says: “Greetings, Jerusalem, I am deeply
sorry.” The video is disjointed; with each cut the
artist makes, we see Hitler in a different uniform,
from a different angle, using a different gesture. The
audio is also incongruous: the viewer does not
immediately understand what Hitler is saying, or
even recognize that the manipulated language is
Hebrew. Arad repeats the montage seven times, mak-
ing Hitler restate his apology over and over. It is
only after the second or third repeat that the apol-
ogy becomes comprehensible. The video’s fragmenta-
tion, both audially and visually, frustrates us in
much the same way as does our culture’s fragmented
knowledge of Hitler’s life and character.

The visual and audio dissonance of Hebrew Lesson
evokes Arad’s frustration in manipulating Hitler’s
image and voice. The awkward transitions from clip
to clip illuminate Arad’s painstaking process and his
meticulous attention to Hitler’s speeches—listening,
playing, rewinding them over and over again untiL
he was able to find the precise syllables with which to construct the Hebrew apology. Through this fetishistic process, Arad has become intimate with Hitler, deeply familiar with his words, his inflections, the intonations of his voice. As viewers we are privy to this intimacy, though the jarring cuts in the spliced-together segments indicate that this intimacy is driven by repulsion.

The disjunction is not only sensory. The painful irony of hearing an apology constructed from the same words that condemned so many to death is disorienting. We ask ourselves: How is it possible for this man to apologize? And how is it possible for him to do so in Hebrew? Arad does not simply propose that we fantasize such a scenario, but presents before us an example of a speaking Hitler acting out the possibility. Our collective desire to believe in film and video’s ability to capture “real life,” to capture “truth,” stumps us here. So does our collective frustration with Hitler’s suicide. We never had the chance to put Hitler on trial, to confront him with his actions, to see if he would show remorse. Hebrew Lesson, if only for a brief moment, allows us to explore these possibilities and then to become horrified by them. We are trapped in the confusion between reality and representation, documentary and fiction.

Through Arad’s exhaustive editing process, he is able to exert power over the Führer and manipulate him, using the same propaganda films that Hitler used to exert power over the German public. The strategy is reminiscent of John Heartfield’s photomontages of the 1930s (see page 127), in which Heartfield manipulated propaganda photographs of Hitler to castigate the National Socialists. Both Arad and Heartfield subvert Hitler with the same materials that Hitler himself used to reach the public. And yet, the effects in each of the two artists’ work are quite different. Heartfield’s montages contain a comic element: they were made at a time when the world was still unaware of Hitler’s plans for mass extermination. Arad’s video is infused with all of the pain and anger of memory.

Arad becomes the all-powerful ventriloquist, treating the Führer as his puppet as he “teaches” him Hebrew—and remorse. The disjunction of the montage serves yet another purpose: to reveal the difficulty Hitler would have had in issuing such an apology. His words are forced: Arad may be manipulating Hitler, but Hitler resists at each syllable. This unsettling form of ventriloquism challenges any last vestiges of our faith in the “truth” of video. Arad makes it clear that we should not believe everything we see or hear, and that the apparent reality in film and video is not always as it seems. The piece forces us to wonder how history might have been different had the original audience of the original films understood such deceptions. Arad reminds us that we, as more sophisticated viewers bearing the burden of this traumatic history, must be ever vigilant to the fraudulence of contemporary visual culture.

Ultimately, Hebrew Lesson’s presentation of an apologetic Hitler confronts the viewer with perhaps the most difficult question of all: Is it possible to forgive Hitler? First we must digest this mea culpa, then ask what it means to us. Does post-Holocaust culture want an apology from Hitler? Then we must process our anger. How dare Hitler apologize? And how dare he be so intimate, using the Hebrew language? We are then left with the moral dilemma of how to answer this apology: Arad slyly leaves the ball in our court.

NOTES
2. “Shalom Yerushalayim, Ani mitnatzel.”

MACIEJ TOPOROWICZ
Eternity #14, 1991
PLATE NUMBER 14

Fascinating Fascism: Then or Now?
threshold of evil, and forces a comparison of historic imagery with contemporary ones. In doing so, he hopes to illustrate how chillingly close we can come to ignoring the aesthetic and ideological origins of our luxury products, and how often their promotion is modeled on Aryan, Nazi, or fascist ideals.

Like much work involving artistic appropriation, Toporowicz's video Obsession (1991) uses scavenged images. Here, clips from the Nazi-era propaganda films of Leni Riefenstahl are combined with the controversial postwar Nazi imagery in such films as Luchino Visconti's The Damned (1969), Pier Paolo Pasolini's Solo (1975), and Liliana Cavani's The Night Porter (1973). Toporowicz cuts back and forth among these highly loaded representations, interjecting stilts and video clips from Calvin Klein's advertising campaigns. Given the way Toporowicz manipulates the material, he makes us see how one of the world's most popular designers (and numerous others as well) has based his advertising campaign on German fascist ideology and art. This video is neither easy to watch nor easy to ignore. The artist has us enter, self-consciously, the clutches of fascism and Nazism. The imagery comes from different epochs—Germany in the 1930s, Europe in the 1970s, and the United States in the 1990s—and thus has radically different intentions and meanings, forcing us to a self-examination about the continuing seduction of Nazi imagery. If we remain compelled to watch this video, whom do we blame for the imagery that fascinates us? Why do we continue to look? What makes us voyeurs? Certainly, images from the 1930s in Germany are implicitly reprehensible, especially given their intent. However, purely in terms of representation, we have difficulty separating the origins of the images and weighing them on a scale of transgression.

Susan Sontag has demonstrated the dangers of what she regards fascism's fascination. She calls attention to how fascism's aesthetics of physical perfection—what she deems "an ideal rather than ideals"—is coupled with the diametrically opposed notions of control and submission, ecstasy and pain. The films Toporowicz uses are, in the main, part of the late 1960s' and 1970s' revival of interest in the Nazi period and its erotic, sometimes sadomasochistic associations. Laura Frost has taken Sontag's study a step further, showing that eroticized fictions of fascism are a significant, stock-in-trade tradition of modernist practice that goes back to the turn of the century. As such, she asks the complicated question of what it means when an author or artist eroticizes and rebukes fascism simultaneously. This is precisely the tautology that Obsession constructs. Toporowicz uses various fascist images, complicit and not, in a tense cultural critique. Yet he seduces us with tainted imagery, and forces us into the complicated position of separating our feelings of attraction for evil and terror from repulsion at its moral connotations.

Like Piotr Uklański and Rudolf Herz, who also manipulate already existing material, Toporowicz keeps a distance from the subject. His cool manner of cutting and editing his video and the provocative, spine-tingling sound track he uses makes us all the more conflicted and ambivalent. Viewers often look to artists to resolve moral issues at hand; this was certainly the case with art about identity that pervaded the art world during the late 1980s and much of the 1990s. In these cases, messages were explicit about right and wrong; battle lines clearly drawn. Here, however, the artist shifts the onus of moral decision making back on to viewers. Beyond making us aware of dangerous seductions at play everywhere in the contemporary world, Toporowicz forces us to confront some very elemental instincts. Following philosopher and social critic Georges Bataille's observations, Toporowicz demonstrates the fundamental violence connected to eroticism. The artist thus forces us to participate in the basic, contrary, and even dangerous tensions that underlie human nature, through which, in Bataille's words, we are driven away by terror, [yet] drawn to it by an awed fascination." The viewer is made to feel the treach­erosity of the duality and must wrestle with himself or herself toward a resolution.

NOTES
A group of five identical sculptures sits on individual white pedestals. Each sculpture uses one of Alain Sèchas's signature Disney-like animals to animate the space and confront the viewer. In this case, his seemingly harmless small-scale pets are made threatening by the addition of Nazi symbols. Sèchas has grafted a Hitler mustache onto each feline face. Swastika-embazoned rattles in hand, each kitten sits perched in a playpen onto which additional swastikas are centered in each of the enclosure's sides. Attached to opposite walls on either end of the five-part enfilade, two mirrors multiply the images of these mini-sculptures ad infinitum. The homespun, kitsch, pop-culture animals appear benign; through the addition of simple symbols associated with evil, they resonate fear. The pure white animal is both imprisoned and protected in its pen. Its small size makes it appear additionally helpless and vulnerable. Yet, the gesture of its implied salute emotes and heightens its danger. Given the conflicting sense of scale and the disarmingly simple accumulation of symbols, it is not easy for the viewer to distill his or her disparate reactions to the ensemble.

This work forms part of Sèchas's assimilation of three-dimensional cartoon-like characters into confrontations with provocative topics. In his depictions of such themes as suicide, rape, torture, and decapitation we experience violence combined with vulnerability. Sèchas inscribes transgressive experiences on composite cartoon creatures with whom we have comfortable and long-established ties. Do we feel them more deeply because of our familiarity with the types he has chosen? Do their simplicity of means and disarming expression remove us further from—or bring us closer to—their implicit danger? Devoid of irony, the suggested humor of the creatures delivers us to a paradoxical space.1 Guy Walter has aptly observed the frustrating circularity of Sèchas's sculptures and shows how the sculptor connects the most abstract with the most representational sensibilities. In particular, Walter demonstrates how the work keeps us from entering it, how it forces us to return to the surface.2 Although we are warned not to overlay an American reading of the collision between high art and popular culture on his work,3 Sèchas pits the viewer in a space of inextricable frustration between subjectivity and objectivity, between style and surface, meaning and superficiality. The contrasting intersection of these sensations—and between the innocence and violence at the heart of his project—are precisely those that fix the outer limits of contemporary popular culture.

While artistic sources such as Georg Grosz are mentioned in discussions of Sèchas's drawings, there is little speculation concerning artistic roots for his sculptures. Nevertheless, it is clear that his three-dimensional work plays off stylistic contradictions. The peculiarity of having forbears as disparate as Nikki de St. Phalle and Michaelangelo Pistoletto is part of Sèchas's premeditated effect, and connects to his sculptures' play between innocence and instability. De St. Phalle serves as perceptual model while Pistoletto functions in a predominately conceptual way. The former links Sèchas back to Matisse, to the luxe and joyousness that is inherent in one strain of modernism. De St. Phalle's childlike sculptures and specific environments for children make us eternally playful and juvenile in our wish to engage her exuberant figures and undulating forms. Pistoletto, virtually of the same generation as de St. Phalle—but with a totally different sensibility—forge links with other stylistic and strategic expressions of modernism, namely Surrealism, Dadaism, and photo-montage. In his trajectory from the perceptual to the conceptual, the physical to the pictorial, and the represented to the real, Pistoletto is a perfect model for Sèchas. The mirrored surfaces Pistoletto uses, like those real mirrors Sèchas incorporates into Spoiled Children, insinuate the viewer into the center of the exhibition space. Reflected representations,
both literally and figuratively, are central to Spoiled Children. Not only do the feline creatures serve as the artist’s alter-ego, but Séchas explains his sculptures as “mirrors of our desires and fears” in which we are stuck “halfway between being a spectator and being a witness to violence.”

The symbols and imagery of Séchas’s Spoiled Children bear startling similarities to the German artist John Heartfield’s Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the strongest of them all? The crisis (1933; fig. 1). In Heartfield’s photomontage we see the recently elected Adolf Hitler peering at himself in a traditional, framed mirror. The Nazi dictator’s assumed position is one of self-admiration, yet, in Heartfield’s hopeful reflection, we see Hitler’s form contorted as it becomes strangled by a skeleton. Séchas takes the two-dimensional disjunctions of Heartfield’s (and Pistoletto’s) games of reflection and refraction and makes sculpture which is a composite of innocence and evil, vulnerability and violence. In a continued play of doubling and multiplicity, the work continues its representations and reflections ad infinitum in two real mirrors.

Certainly, Séchas was also toying farcically with the essay by French post-structural psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Lacan’s famous piece on the “mirror phase” which deals with a child’s identity and ego formation as he/she recognizes himself/herself in the mirror for the first time, was invoked frequently in the art criticism of the 1980s and 1990s.1 The essay was one of the cornerstones in the oft-discussed issues around the nexus of personal identity and marginality, so crucial to much art making during the last decade. Séchas subverts the usefulness of Lacan’s essay as he frustrates any kind of fixed identity for the sculpture. The dizzying multiplicity and mirroring refuse any of the synthetic identities that Lacan’s theory was used to underwrite. The mirrors contradict theoretically and stylistically. The creation of this ad-in infinitum refraction of the five sculptures is clearly a pastiche reference to Nazi architectural models in which one architectural element is repeated excessively to create a sense of deep spatial recession. For the Nazis, such solid lapidary spaces were meant to overwhelm and to disempower the viewer. However, Séchas’s recession is neither solid nor real. Rather it mocks those fascist spaces by its fugitive maniacal reflection.

Without a doubt, Séchas’s Spoiled Children, like much of his other work, is a study in contradiction. Issues of childhood and violence, style and surface, real and reflected, craft and artlessness combine to destabilize our very act of looking and our sense of engagement. When we look, these dualities, and many others, keep ricocheting in our mind’s eye. The work has been said to create a figure of a “pre-Nazi” in whom fascism is more “innate than acquired.”2 This question about our personal, moral distance from history, from society and from evil itself seems remarkably similar to the question the Israeli writer David Grossman poses about the Nazi inside each one of us.3

NOTES

4. Ibid., 98, 99.
tutions such as the school, the cloister, the military barracks, or the factory are modeled on disciplinary institutions and buildings. Reaching further, Libera grasps the ultimate paradigm of disciplinary models and one overlooked by Foucault: the concentration camp. Libera also perceives that the camps, with their towers and crematoria, have become, paradoxically, twentieth-century temples.

LEGO Concentration Camp Set grew out of the artist's interest in war toys, educational programs, and self-improvement devices. Libera sees how seemingly harmless items may pose serious psychological and philosophical questions about gender, sexuality, and childhood. This is the logical outgrowth of his earlier works that engage with Foucault's notion of moral orthopedics to question societal conventions of beauty and propriety. For example, through the disarming vulnerability of The Doll You Love to Undress (1998) Libera forces us to encounter our own voyeuristic streak. Our uncomfortable reaction to Ken's Aunt (1999; fig. 1), a doll-sized version of a middle-aged, overweight man—an anti-Barbie—exposes the aggression that pervades contemporary society.

LEGO Concentration Camp Set led Libera to legal battles with the manufacturers and, ultimately, censorship of the work in a major international exhibition. After unsuccessful attempts to have the artist withdraw the piece from exhibitions in Germany, the United States, and Brazil, the LEGO Company initiated a lawsuit when it was exhibited in Copenhagen, near the company's headquarters. In the media coverage commentary that ensued, connections were inevitably made between censoring Libera's work and the official and highly circumscribed protocols for Nazi art, as well as Hitler's campaign to rid Germany of degenerate art. Because European law permits artists to use products and logos in their work, LEGO's attempt to restrict Libera's use of its product ultimately failed. Further repercussions for LEGO Concentration Camp Set took place the next year, when

In LEGO Concentration Camp Set, these toys' three-dimensionality forces us to imagine intimate physical contact with them in ways that Levinthal's and Spiegelman's works do not. Libera's sculpture possesses an anti-monumentality that creates the illusion that the works are hyper-real. In fact, we regress to our own childhoods and become vulnerable in the toys' presence. When we regain our adult intelligence and recognize what the boxes represent, we become repelled. To encounter LEGO Concentration Camp Set, to select it, or to desire to play with it, suspends us at the contradictory intersection of a world of make-believe with one of horror.

NOTES

5. Ibid., 60.
The artist investigates the way consumer culture works against personal identity, especially marketing and advertising. For Sachs, these objects reflect the most controlled corporate identity since National Socialism. Giftgas Giftset (1998) and Prada Deathcamp (1998), are especially troubling. Because of their associations with the Holocaust, viewers expect to encounter them at historic museums and sites, where they can be interpreted cautiously. But Sachs, Jewish and born and raised in Connecticut, dares to observe Holocaust museums and their visitors from the position of a critique of consumption. He finds that the lessons that these museums intend to teach are often poorly assimilated, particularly by young people. His cynicism toward the museums’ promotion of their goals is like his cynicism in the face of high-style consumerism. With these two works, the unabashed conflation of supposed “good” and outright “evil” tests our sense of propriety and our ability to separate aesthetics from history, morality from lifestyle. The seduction of the luxury label pitched against the horror of mass extermination is almost too much to bear. Yet, Sachs asks us to suspend notions of high and low culture. He asks that we ponder a continuum between high and low, then and now, and then asks whether we can recognize our desires in this less threatening environment, mirrored through the lens of the political conformity and ideological consumption of Nazi Germany.

Sachs’s work is inherently barbaric, particularly these two sculptures. It is as if he intends to bring to life the “esthetic barbarity” of culture noted by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Writing in the middle of World War II, the two Frankfurt School philosophers defined culture across a vast commercial spectrum, creating a continuum from automobiles to films, from bombs to bungalows. Their observation about the fabrication and manipulation of the consumer’s needs is one to which Sachs would readily subscribe. Yet his ambiguous objects that exist between the functional and the dysfunctional set up a disturbing retort to the secure, ideologically “correct” focus of Adorno and Horkheimer. In an otherwise glamorous article about the artist and his lifestyle, Thomas Huetlin sets up important contradictory readings of Sachs’s works. For example, he sees the tension, mentioned above between the appeal for status and the real threat of his works. He also asks irreconcilable questions about whether the works glamorize or critique power and whether the artist is fascinated by the label-logo culture or mocking it. Indeed, he sees the novelty of the artist’s approach in the purposefully ambiguous message in which the sculptures “criticize and reinforce the fetish” simultaneously.

NOTES

4. Ibid., 1.
5. Huetlin, 120.
Staging Depravity

The windowless walls are made of discolored, disintegrating brick, and the room is in a state of elegant distress. It is furnished with a brass bed, a leather reading chair, a gold candelabra, and a mahogany nightstand—even a deer's head, mounted on the wall. The lighting is dramatic, the colors are lush, the textures seem palpable; yet there is the sense that luxury is crumbling. Pearls have fallen next to empty champagne bottles, the bed is unmade, and a half-dressed woman lies across it. Are the man and woman on the bed simply exhausted or in a drug-induced stupor? As the viewer is made privy to this intimate scene, initial embarrassment gives way to curious seduction. We are invited into the uneasy situation of becoming a voyeur, yet we can't look away. Titillation turns into horror as we realize that this scene is the restaging of a Nazi couple dying in the diabolical finale of the Third Reich—a suicidal bacchanalia. Similar to Delacroix's Death of Sardanapalus, executed almost two centuries earlier, the viewer becomes bystander to the shocking, yet alluring, unraveling of an empire in which the dreamlike quality of the scenario only marginally serves to distance us from the morally questionable events taking place. This is the world that British artist Mat Collishaw creates in his photographic series Burnt Almonds (2000).

The tactility of the scenarios is heightened by baroque staging—dramatic lighting, exaggerated color, high gloss, and dynamic vectors. Authenticity is achieved through tabletop (or setup) photography, which is characterized by the inclusion of minute detail. The tactility and the authenticity combine to make Collishaw's scenes incredibly enticing, so that we gaze (willfully) at scenes of depravity. The moment the Nazi presence is detected, however, the viewer becomes uncomfortably aware that he or she is staring pleasurably into this staged world of evil. It is unsettling because we have entered the foreign and unthinkable world of the Nazis. Is it even more so because we dare to continue staring?

The narrative implied in these images is similar to that of Roe Rosen's Live and Die as Eva Braun, in which the audience is invited to experience intimacy with Hitler in his own bunker. However, while Rosen creates a narrative with words, illustrating scenes with flat, monochrome, and abstracted images, Collishaw's photographic constructions are highly explicit and graphically captivating. Rosen's title itself notifies the viewer that engaging his artwork can be dangerous, and he creates a safety valve from its contamination by calling the experience a "Virtual Scenario." Collishaw, however, allows the viewer to stumble unknowingly into the scene, and makes the experience horrifying through its hyperreality.

Collishaw overlays numerous photographic transparencies and exhibits them in a lightbox to create a three-dimensional effect in which the viewer sees the spectacle from multiple angles, thus becoming part of the scene. This effect evokes photography, cinema, painting, and propaganda. The associations are crucial to the Burnt Almonds series. They emphasize the close connections between the light-box works and the image-world that pervades popular culture, suggesting that Nazi imagery—and the debauchery and eroticism associated with it—is frequently appealing, just as contemporary advertisements are. By using the tabletop style, which borrows much from stage photography, Collishaw refers to the way Nazi imagery has been appropriated by the entertainment industry. This makes us painfully aware of the illusion of representation so prevalent in popular culture. As Collishaw has explained, "the image makes the real thing invisible...[by making it] picturesque, you can get away from the initial problem...it's a way of shortcutting social problems."

The conflation of Nazism and sexuality was examined by Susan Sontag in her essay "Fascinating Fascism," in which she points out society's attraction to and desire for absolute order and control, as embodied by fascist principle. What is also usually implicit in the link between fascism and sexuality is the attraction to the cult of masculinity, a central credo of Nazi culture. Works such as Robert Morris's Castelli poster (1974) (see page 60) and films such as Cavani's The Night Porter (1974) demonstrate these phenomena through the fusion of Nazism and sexuality, the extreme domination and control of sadomasochistic behavior, and, in Morris's case, male exclusivity. Collishaw, however, refuses the Nazi focus on masculinity, order, or control. By presenting the cyanide-drugged Nazis during their last moments, Collishaw creates scenes that lack order and purposely go against the grain of fascist dogma. These disheveled rooms are littered with imperfect, untidy, often effeminate (and certainly ineffectual) male bodies that bear the marks of a physical perfection lost not too long before.

Ultimately, Collishaw's images equate the allure of depravity with the pleasure of looking at the downfall of an empire. Just as we must question our complicity in images representing depravity, especially Nazi depravity, we must also question the moral implications of witnessing the decay and death of human beings, be they evil or not.

NOTES

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BOAZ ARAD
Born in Afula, Israel, 1956
Lives in Tel Aviv, Israel

EDUCATION
B.A. Avny Institute of Fine Art, 1982

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000 Eyn Harod Museum, Eyn Harod, Israel, The Disaster of Love
Hertliya Museum of Art, Hertliya, Israel, The Angel of History (video catalogue)
Peer Gallery, Tel Aviv, Erections in Israeli Art

1997 Camera Obscura School of Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, White Cube
Ashdot Yaakov Museum of Art, Ashdot Yaakov, Israel, Irony and Love of the Motherland

1994 Tivon Gallery, Tivon, Israel, Israeli Contemporary Art

1989 Shara Levy Gallery, Tel Aviv
1988 Mapu Gallery, Tel Aviv
1985 Shluch Gallery, Tel Aviv

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHRISTINE BORLAND
Born in Darvel, Ayrshire, Scotland, 1965
Lives in Glasgow, Scotland

EDUCATION
B.A. Glasgow School of Art, 1987
M.A. University of Ulster, Belfast, 1988
Kunstwerke, Berlin Studio Residency, 1996
Fellow in Fine Art, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 1998–2001

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS
2000 Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, Spirit CoLLection
Galeria Tony Tapiés, Barcelona, Treasury of Human Inheritance
Galerie cent 8, Paris, Christine Borland

1999 Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, Scotland, What makes for the fullness and perfection of life, for beauty and happiness, is good. What makes for death, disease, imperfection, suffering is bad. (catalogue)
Galerie Eigen + Art, Berlin, Christine Borland

1998 De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; Fundação Serralves, Lisbon; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, Christine Borland (catalogue)
Galerie cent 8, Paris, Christine Borland
Århus Kunstmuseum, Århus, Denmark, L'Homme double

1997 Lisson Gallery, London, Christine Borland
**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2000 Hayward Gallery, London, Know Thyself (catalogue)

2000 Chisenhale Gallery, London, Partage d'Exotismes (catalogue)

2000 Lisson Gallery, London, A Shot in the Head (catalogue)

1999 CCA, Glasgow, Exit Art, New York, Paradise Now (catalogue)


1996 Biennale d’Art Contemporain, Lyon, France, Orkney, Scotland, site-specific millennium projects, The Constant Moment (catalogue)

1996 Tate Gallery, London, Material Culture: The Object in British Art of the 1980s and ’90s (catalogue)

1996 Galerie Eigen + Art, Berlin, Christine Borland, Roddy Buchanan, Jacqueline Donachie, Douglas Gordon

1996 Spectra Gallery, Copenhagen, Are You Talking to Me

1996 Kunstannenlungen Weimar, Weimar, Germany, Kunsthalle Weimar, Nach Weimar (catalogue)

1996 Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, 21 Days of Darkness

1996 Fundação Serralves, Oporto, Portugal, More Time/Less History (catalogue)

1996 Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Live/Life (catalogue)

1995 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, To Be Real


**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**


1999 Heartney, Eleanor. “Christine Borland at Sean Kelly,” Art in America (September).


1999 Feldman, Melissa E. “Christine Borland at Lisson,” Art in America (November).


1999 Ippolito, Jon. “Where has All the Uncertainty Gone?,” Flash Art (Summer 1996).


**MAT COLLISHAW**

Born in Nottingham, England, 1966

Lives in London

**EDUCATION**

B.F.A. Goldsmith’s College, University of London, 1989

**SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS**

2001 Modern Art, London, New Works (four-day film screening)

1999 Galeria d’arte Moderna di Bologna, Italy, Artists’ Editions (catalogue)

1999 Galerie Analix, Geneva, Analix Forever (catalogue)

1999 Ippolito, Jon. “Where has All the Uncertainty Gone?,” Flash Art (Summer 1996).


SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2000 Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, From a Distance: Approaching Landscape
Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, Calif., Small Worlds: The Diorama in Contemporary Art
Serpentine Gallery, London, Greenhouse Effect
Landesmuseum, Lindz, Austria, 1000+1 Nacht
1999 Printemps de Cahors, France, EXTRAORDINAIRE
Museu de Arte Moderno de Sao Paulo, CHIVER de l'Amour
Kunsthalle Krems, Austria, Public Body & Artificial Space
Hayward Gallery, London, Secret Victorians, Contemporary Artists and a 19th-Century Vision
P.S.1, New York, The Edge of Awareness
Japanese Museum Tour, Exhibition of Contemporary British Art
1997 Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Pictura Britannica
Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden Baden, Germany, Urban Legends
Royal Academy of Arts, London, Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany, Full House: Young British Art
Gasworks, United Kingdom, Private Face–Urban Space: A New Generation of Artists from Britain
1996 Galeria Raucci/Santamaria, Naples, More Than Real
De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Hybrids
Natural History Museum, Rotterdam, Manifesta (catalogue)
Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester, The Inner Eye
Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris, Live/Life (catalogue)
Museum van Loon, Amsterdam, Exchanging Interiors
1995 Istanbul, Istanbul Biennale (catalogue)
Hayward Gallery, London, The British Art Show 4
Ice Box, Athens, Other Men’s Flowers
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Brilliant! New Art From London (catalogue)
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Wild Wools
San Marino, Italy, Moderno e Contemporanea
1994 Musee d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, Chiva Art: Moving Image
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, Nature Morte
Institute of Contemporary Art, London, Institute for Cultural Anxiety
1993 Stedhalle, Zurich, Changing I Dane Cities
Venice, Venice Biennale
Cohen Gallery, New York, Displace
1992 Serpentine Gallery, London, Exhibit A
Galerie Analix, Geneva, Twenty Fragile Pieces
Satie Metropol, Vienna, Under Thirty
1991 Stedhalle, Zurich, Stillstand Switches
1990 Building One, London, Medum Medicine
1989 Touring exhibition, Italy, Ghost Photography: The Illusion of the Visible
1988 Surrey Docks, London, Freeze

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Made In London." The Royal Academy Magazine (Spring).
Feaver, William. "Omo it’s that woman again." The Observer, December 7.
Searle, Adrian. "Life, the universe, and everything." The Independent, April 18.

RUDOLF HERZ
Born in Soestdofer, Germany, 1954
Lives in Munich

EDUCATION

B.A. Akademie der Bildenden Künste, 1981
M.A. Ludwig-Maximilians-University, 1989
Ph.D. Carl von Ossietzky-University, 1994

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

1999 Kunstverein Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany, Rat Race
Kunstbunker Tumulka, Munich, Flesh for Your Fantasy
1997 Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, Transit I
Neues Museum Weserberg, Bremen, Transit II
Halle K, Hamburg, Transit III
1996 Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, Rotfront
1995 Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen, Zugwagen
Villa Massimo, Rome, Späte Trümmer des erschöpften Widerspruchs
1992 Kunstraum, Wuppertal, Germany, Autodemonenage II
1988 Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Schauplatz, Kunstforum

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2000 Kunsthalles Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Metaforen: Dekonstruktivistische Positionen in Architektur und Kunst
Haus der Kunst, Munich, Die scheinbaren Dinge
1999 Banhof, Hamburg, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Das XX. Jahrhundert: Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland
1998 Galerie Im Marstall, Berlin, Ausstellung zum Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas
1997 Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Deutschlandbilder
1996 ICC/MKIA, Antwerp, Summer of Photography
1995 Kunstmuseum Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden; Neues
1994 Villa Massimo, Rome, RomEuropa
1983 Kunstverein Bonn, Bonn, Ansatzpunkte
critischer Kunst heute

SELECTED WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST
1987 Scholarship for Contemporary Photography.
Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation, Essen

ELKE KRYSUFTEK
Born in Vienna, 1970
Lives in Vienna

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1999 Bussmann, Georg, and Peter Friese.現代の芸術。Munich: Piper.

AWARDS
1998 Project Scholarship, Kunstfonds, Bonn
1997 Pritzweiner competition for the Memorial for Assassinated European Jews
1994-1995 Scholarship of the German Academy, Villa Massimo, Rome

1992 Baldreit Scholarship, City of Baden-Baden
1991 Art Award of Bavaria
1990 Award, City of Munich
1987 Scholarship for Contemporary Photography.
Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation, Essen

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS
2000 Portikus, Frankfurt, Nobody Has to Know
Galerie Georg Kargl, Vienna, Elke Krystufek
Gallery Side 2, Tokyo Centre National de l’Estampe et de l’Art Imprimerie, Chatou, France, Holywoodland
Galerie Brantmann, Brussels
303 Gallery, New York
Emily Tsingou, London
Secessioni, Vienna
Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen
1994 Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Migrateurs
1992 Galerie Metropol, Vienna (with Franz Graf)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000 Musée d’art contemporain, Bordeaux, France

Presumed Innocent: Childhood and Contempory
Art
Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck, Austria, Die verfützte Dina: Hysterie, Körper, Technik in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts
1999 Migros Museum, Zürich, Peace P.S. 1, Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, N.Y., Generation Z
Museum Bochum, Bochum, Germany, FunktionsSystemMensch
Galerie im Trakshaus, Salzburg, Zeichenen—Österreichische Zeichnungen der Neunziger Jahre
Austrian Cultural Institute, London, Wild Life
1998 Sao Paulo Biennale, Sao Paulo, Luxembourg Manifesta 2—European Biennal of Contemporary Art
Secession, Vienna, Das Jahrhundert der künstlerischen Freiheit
De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Life Is a Bitch
1997 Charlottenburg Exhibition Hall, Copenhagen, Display
EA-General Foundation, Vienna, Post-Production
1996 Magasin Grenoble, France, Autoreverse 2
1995 Centre Pompidou, Paris, Feminin/Masculin
1994 Kunsthalle, Vienna; De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Jetztzeit
1993 Venice Biennale, Italy, Aperto

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1999 Granjean, Emmanuel. “Elke Krystufek se met a
nu au Centre de gravure” Tribune de Geneve (September 24).
Lebovici, Elizabeth. “Elke Krystufek se met a
nu,” Liberation (June).
Huck, Brigitte. “Celebrity Skin: Elke Krystufek,”
Noema (May/June).
1998 “disidentico-maschile femminile e altro,”
Camera Austria (61).
1997 Metzger, Rainer. “Kunst kommt von Kaufen,”
Der Standard (August).

MISCHA KUBALL
Born in Düsseldorf, 1959
Lives in Düsseldorf

EDUCATION
B. A. Düsseldorf University, Düsseldorf, 1984

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS
2000 Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen, Essen Musterkunst
1999 Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Power of Codes
Kolnische Kunstverein, Cologne, In A Dream
1998 Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, Germany, Project Rooms
São Paulo Biennale, São Paulo, Private Kind of Memory
Kölische Kunstverein, Cologne, Project Rooms
1997 Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Migrateurs

Artist Biographies 143
1996 Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, Modeme, Rundum/Vienna Version
1995 Diiizesamuseum, Cologne, Weltwarschach-Warschachworld
1994 Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany, No-Place
1993 De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Double Standard
1992 Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, Projektionen urum 1:1:1 Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, Bauhaus-Block
1991 Haus Wittgenstein, Vienna, Welt/Fall
1990 Kunsthalle, Cologne, Kabinett/Cabinet
1987 Städtische Galerie im Museum Folkwang, Essen, refraction house.
1985 Todesfuge/Paul Celan
1984 Sand aus den Umen/Paul Celan
1982 Todesfuge/Paul Celan

BOOKS/DOCUMENTATIONS

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS
1997 Stiftung Kunst und Kultur NRW, Düsseldorf, Ministerium für Familie, Stadtentwicklung und Kultur NRW, Düsseldorf
1996 Kunstfonds Bonn
1995 Travel Grant from Art & Culture Foundation, Düsseldorf
1993 ArtAward of NRW Award of Experimental Photography from the Knupp Bohlen and Halbach Foundation, Essen
1991 Scholarship for Contemporary Photography of Alfred Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach Foundation, Essen
1990 Ars Viva Award of Cultural Association RLD, Cologne
1990 Ars Viva Award, Kulturkreis in BDI, Cologne
1998 Mikazeawiczelew Gallery, Warsaw, Works with Air and Electricity
1995 Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, New IS for New Years
1994 Kunsthalle Elsterpark, Leipzig, Minima Media
1993 Forty-Fifth Venice Biennial, Italy, Emergency: Aperto 93
1992 State Gallery of Art, Sopot, Poland, Mystical Perseverance and the Rose
1991 Kunstverein Bonn, Bonn, Kunst Europa
1990 Kunsthalle Hamburg, Hamburg, Polexit Festival
1984 Diiizesamuseum, Cologne, Weltwarschach-Warschachworld
1983 Bremgarten, Switzerland, Girl in a Gown
1982 Vanity Fair, New York
1981 WH Nieuwe Gieken, Nijmegen, Netherlands, Female
1978 private exhibition, Los Angeles, California
1977 Stadt Pulheim, Germany, refraction house.
1975 Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Cologne, Selten Mal, selten Kunst (Rare, Rare Art)
1973 Kunstverein Ruhr, Dortmund, Germany, Projektionsraum 1:1:1}

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000 Nikolai Fine Art, New York, The Toy Show
1999 Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Post Conceptual Reflections
1998 Edelvik Konst, Stockholm, Medialization
1996 Centro Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico, Persuasion
1996 Centro Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico, Medialization
1995 Centro Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico, Absence/Presence
1994 Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Beyond Belief
1994 Kunsthaus Bethanien, Berlin, New IS for New Years
1993 Technische Sammlungen der Stadt Dresden, Dresden, The Toy Show
1992 Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, Persuasion
1991 Kunsthalle, Copenhagen, Brothers in Arms
1990 Arnheim, Netherlands, ‘Emergency: Aperto 93’
1987 Stadt Pulheim, Germany, refraction house.
1986 Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany, No-Place
1984 Deutsche Ausstellung der Jungen Kunst, Hanover, Germany, refraction house.
1983 Nationalgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, refraction house.
1979 Kunsthalle, Munich, Germany, refraction house.
1977 Kunsthalle, Milan, Italy, refraction house.
1973 Kunstverein Ruhr, Dortmund, Germany, refraction house.
1972 Deutsche Ausstellung der Jungen Kunst, Hanover, Germany, refraction house.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


SELECTED WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.

TOM SACHS


EDUCATION


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1997 Roee Rosen, Daba. "1 Didn't Know Her Well," in Artists from Israel and Palestine (Siena: Palazzo Delle Papesse), 116, 162-63.

AWARDS

1997 Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for the Encouragement of Artists in the Field of Plastic Arts and Design.
Selected Group Exhibitions

1999 Alleged Gallery, New York, Cultural Prosthetics
1998 Gallery F15, Moss, Norway, The Subverted Object
1997 John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, Cultural Prosthetics
Galeria Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome, Tom Sachs
1996 Mario Diacono Gallery, Boston, Tom Sachs
1995 Morris-Healy Gallery, New York, Cultural Prosthetics
1993 Allied Cultural Prosthetics, New York, Watch Me Work

Selected Bibliography

Sheets, Hilarie M. “Contemporary Realism,” Artnews (March).
Smith, Roberta. “Removing the Bullets and Trying to Judge a Show,” The New York Times (October).
Moxham, Tony. “Life is 2029,” Interview (October).
Staff. “Goings on About Town,” The New Yorker (September).
Karcher, Eva. “Glamour-Partisan,” German Vogue (July).
Williams, Yselt. “Une Oeuvre d’art sur un plateau.” French Elle (September).
“Tom Foolery.” Black Book (September).

AWARDS

ALAN SCHECHNER

Born in London, 1962
Lives in Savannah, Georgia

EDUCATION
M.F.A. Electronic Art, Coventry University, England, 1993

FILM FESTIVALS AND INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCES
1999 Trustees Theater, Interactive Dance Technology Performance, Savannah, E-Motion
Festival De Video Y Artes Electricas, Centro de Capacitacion Cinematografica, Mexico, Vile@rt

1998 Thomas Healy Gallery, New York, Creativity Is the Enemy (catalogue)
SOMA (May)

1997 John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, Cultural Prosthetics
Galeria Gian Enzo Sperone, Rome, Tom Sachs
1996 Mario Diacono Gallery, Boston, Tom Sachs
1995 Morris-Healy Gallery, New York, Cultural Prosthetics
1993 Allied Cultural Prosthetics, New York, Watch Me Work

SELECTED WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


1995 Third Prize, Arts on the River, Savannah
1995  Wyndham Deeds Travel Scholarship, AIA, London
Runner-up in the Special Jury Award for Experimental Video, Second Annual Jewish Video Competition, Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley
1994  New Production Award, West Midlands Arts, England
1993  Intermediate Award, South West Arts, Exeter, England
Jane Sutton Memorial Award, Stoneleigh, England
1992  First Time Award, South West Arts, Exeter, England

ALAIN SÉCHAS
Born in Colombes, France, 1955
Lives in Paris

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1998  Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York, Premises (catalogue)
Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, Weather Everything
1997  Magasin, Centre national d'art contemporain de Grenoble, France, Dramatically Different
1996  Musée de Cognac, Cognac, France, Variations op. 96
1995  Galerie Joussé-Sequin, Paris, Toby
Verlaine, Montézieu, Histoire de l'infamie
1991  Biennale d'art contemporain, Lyons, France, L'Amour de l'art
1990  Venice Biennale, Italy, Aperto
1989  Institut d'art contemporain, P.S.1 Museum, Long Island City, N.Y.; Teatro Lope de Vega, Seville, Spain; Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France, Theater Garden Bestiarium

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

MACIEJ TOPOROWICZ
Born in Bialystok, Poland, 1958
Lives in New York

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

AWARDS

PIOTR UKLAŃSKI
Born in Warsaw, 1968
Lives in New York

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1996  "Obsession." Archive (Fall).

PIOTR UKŁAŃSKI
Born in Warsaw, 1968
Lives in New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000  Fuller Museum of Art, Brockton, Mass., Confronting the Figure
Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne, Obsession
Dulcinea, Istanbul, Confession of a Voyeur
1999  Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., Your I
1997  "Maciej's 'Obsession:'"

EDUCATION
M.F.A. Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow, 1982
Born in Białystok, Poland, 1958

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000  Port Art Museum, Finland, Obsession
1997  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, A Season in Hell
1996  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, Lure
1994  Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., Obsession

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1996  "Obsession." Archive (Fall).

PIOTR UKŁAŃSKI
Born in Warsaw, 1968
Lives in New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000  Port Art Museum, Finland, Obsession
1997  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, A Season in Hell
1996  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, Lure
1994  Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., Obsession

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PIOTR UKŁAŃSKI
Born in Warsaw, 1968
Lives in New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000  Port Art Museum, Finland, Obsession
1997  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, A Season in Hell
1996  Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York, Lure
1994  Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., Obsession

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1997 Galerie Voges & Desen, Frankfurt, Joy of Photography
1996 Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, Dance Floor
1995 Galeria Grichting, Lublin, Poland, Life as it Should Be
1994 Jan Kuzinski's shop, Premysl, Poland, High
Density Color, High Definition LIPS
1993 Bureau of Art Exhibitions, Sandomierz, Poland, Pojedynk w pojedynku

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2000 Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Age of Influence: Reflections in the Mirror of American Culture
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Let's Entertain Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S.1, Long Island City, N.Y., Greater New York
1999 Migros Museum, Zurich, Peace
1998 Museum Ludwig, Cologne, I Love NY (catalogue)
Neues Museum Wiesbaden, Bremen, Minimal-Maximal (catalogue)
xen Ende, Mannheim, From the Ice Factory, Hannover, Germany, Mel Morgen
Galerie Voges & Desen, Frankfurt, Slates at
DEAMGalleries, Tokyo, Nippon International Performance Festival
1997 ICA, London, a dance floor in
1996 P.S.1 Museum at the Clocktower, New York,

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rinnall, David. "If You Lived There..." Interior Design (August).
Pjede, Manuela. "Mode, Künstler, Visionen." (Max) (March).
Gross, Ulrike, and Markus Müller. Make It Funky.
Cologne: Octagon Verlag.
"Nazi Movie Shots Are Defended as Art." Amateur Photographer, August 29.

Generous Heart." The (London) Independent on Sunday, August 23.
Asherson, Neal. "It's only David Niven dressed up. Why do we feel a chill?" The (London) Observer, August 23.
Luntz, Enrico. "Encore une occasion pour approcher l'Art d'Aujourd'hui." Kulturismolo, July 3.
S. Stuart, "Nice Nazi Nasty Nazi." I-D (July).
Lyke, Peter. "The Reich Stuff." The Face (June).

"Happening Hop." The Scotsman, November 29.
Morris, Mark. "Nype." The Face (July).
Mil, Aleksandra. "Ouverture: Piotr Uklaski." Flash Art (October).
19970000 M. "In the Mirror of Absurdity." The (London) Independent, September 2-9.

152 Artist Biographies
153 Artit Biographies
ERNST VAN ALPHEN is a professor of comparative literature at the University of Leiden. His publications include Francis Bacon and the Loss of the Self (1993) and Caught By History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory (1997). His most recent book is Armando: Shaping Memory (2000).

SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI teaches comparative Jewish literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Since her first book, By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature, she has been part of the ongoing theoretical discussion of the avenues and "limits" of representation. She has written widely on the culture of memory in Israel and how it reflects renegotiations with the past in light of present struggles. Her latest publication, Booking Passage, is a study of exile and homecoming in the modern Jewish imagination.

REESA GREENBERG is a museum consultant and adjunct professor of art history at Concordia University, Montreal. She is co-editor of Thinking About Exhibitions (1996) and a founding director of Project Mosaica, a recently formed Canadian virtual Jewish Museum. Her most recent book is Museums, Private Collections, and Display: Past Holocaust Perspectives (forthcoming).

NORMAN L. KLEEBLATT is Susan and Elihu Rose Curator of Fine Arts at The Jewish Museum in New York City. Among the exhibitions he has curated are The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice (1987-88); Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities (1994); John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family (1999); and An Expressionist in Paris: The Paintings of Chaim Soutine (1998), which was co-curated by Kenneth E. Silver. His work explores the intersection of art and history, identity and culture.

LISA SALTZMAN is an assistant professor of modern and contemporary art in the Department of Art History at Bryn Mawr College. She is the author of Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz (1999). She is working on a new collection of essays, entitled Mnemonic Devices, dealing with issues of memory in contemporary art.

ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ teaches in the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University. She has held fellowships at the Getty Center, the Bunting Institute, the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, and the Camargo Foundation. She is the author of Art and Psyche (1985), Image and Insight (1991), Museums of the Mind (1994), and Inside Picture Books (1999). In her writing she explores the realms of aesthetics and psychology in the visual, literary, and performing arts.

JAMES E. YOUNG is Professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he is Chair of the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies. He is author of Writing and ReWriting the Holocaust (1998), The Texture of Memory (1993) and At Memory's Edge (2000). In 1997, Mr. Young served as the only foreigner appointed by the Berlin Senate to a five-member committee to select a design for Germany's national "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe," now under construction in Berlin.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS


Hayes, Peter, ed. Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of


--. If This Is a Man (1947) (also published as Survivial in Auschwitz) and The Truce (1963) (also published as The Reawakening). Translated by Stuart Wolf, with an introduction by Paul Bailey and an afterword by the author. London: Abacus, 1987.


EXHIBITION CATALOGUES


ARTICLES

Suleiman, Susan. “Problems of Memory in Recent Holocaust Memoirs: Wilkomirski/Wiesel.” Poetics Today 21, no. 3 (Fall 2000).
OFFICERS
Robert J. Hurst, Chairman
Philip A. Laskawy, President
Harry P. Kamen, Vice President
Michael R. Bloomberg, Vice Chair
Leon Black, Vice Chair
Susan Lytle Lipton, Vice Chair
Barry J. Alperin, Treasurer
Andrea Bronfman, Secretary
Melva Bucksbaum, Assistant Secretary
James A. Stern, Assistant Treasurer
Ann H. Appelbaum, Assistant Secretary, Ex-Officio

TRUSTEES
Richard Barovick
Corrine Barsky
William Berkman
Charles de Gunzburg
Robert C. Dinerstein
Bernard Goldberg
Rita Goldberg
Leslie Goldstein
Barbara S. Horowitz
Robert S. Kaplan
Ilan Kaufthal
Francine Klagsbrun
Jeanette Lerman
Betty Levin
Hirschell Levine
Paul S. Levy
Phyllis Mack
Leni May
Richard Menschel
Abby Milstein
Joshua Nash
Martin D. Payson
Elihu Rose
John A. Ross
Amy Rubenstein
Bernard Spitzer
Harold Strauss
Lynn Tobias
John L. Vogelstein
Josef Wilf
Karen Winnick
Benjamin Winter

LIFE TRUSTEES
E. Robert Goodkind
Eugene Grae
Fanya Gottesfeld Heller
Ellen Linaan
Vera List
Morris W. Offit
Richard Scheuer
H. Axel Schupf
Romie Shapiro
Stuart Silver
Sanford Solender
James L. Weinberg
Mildred Weissman

HONORARY TRUSTEES
Norman E. Alexander
Martin Blumenthal
Harriet Cooper
David Hirsch
Richard D. Isserman
Dr. Henry Kaufman
Sylvia Scheuer
Lesta Summerfield Stracom
Sylvia Zenia Wiener

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS
Rabbi Michael Greenbaum
Dr. Ismar Schorsch
Charlotte Schwartz

CHAIRMEN EMERITI
E. Robert Goodkind
Vera List
Morris W. Offit
Richard Scheuer
H. Axel Schupf
James L. Weinberg
TEXT CREDITS

While every effort has been made to contact all copyright owners, the editor apologizes to anyone who has been unable to trace due acknowledgment will be made in any future editions.


Excerpt from “Fascinating Fascism” in Under the Sign of Saturn by Susan Sontag. Copyright © 1980 by Susan Sontag. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC.


FIGURE AND PLATE CREDITS

For figures that accompany the catalogue essays, credits are included within the captions. Following are credits for the color plates.

Plate 1: Courtesy of the artist. In the collection of The Migros Museum, Zurich.

Plate 2: Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Andrew Whittuck.

Plate 3: Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 4: Courtesy of Vedanta Gallery, Chicago/Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf. Photograph by Norbert Faehling.

Plate 5: Courtesy of Gavin Brown’s Enterprise, New York. Photograph by Adam Reich.

Plates 6, 7, and 8: Courtesy of Georg Kargl Gallery, Vienna.

Plates 9 and 10: Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 11: Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Hans Döring.

Plates 12 and 13: Courtesy of the artist.

Plate 14: Courtesy of the artist.


Plates 17, 18, and 19: Courtesy of The Jewish Museum, New York. Photographs by David Heald.
