

Chapter 4

EXHIBITING

The Witness to History as a Museum Object

Kurt Tucholsky at the First World War Museum in Vincennes

In 1926, the German author and war veteran Kurt Tucholsky visited the French First World War museum in Vincennes. He looked at pictures painted by war artists and soldiers, at posters, military plates and improvised shoes and clothes made out of newspapers. The ration stamps for sugar made him halt:

There they lie, the worn out, grey things. Isn't that a real piece of history - ? Well, yes, somehow – but then something is missing. It is not the real thing. It was like this – and then again it wasn't. Is this how we will enter posterity? In that case, we will enter it in the wrong way. Something is missing: the horror, the lamentations, the depression, the hopelessness, the senselessness, the boredom, the atmosphere of collective lunacy ... No, posterity will not understand us. Just as we never understood our ancestors. (Tucholsky 1926)

He concludes: 'And after I had seen all this, piece by piece and very slowly and thoroughly, I shook my head and I missed something. What? Us. This is not us. There we are, standing life-sized in the museum and yet it is not us' (Tucholsky 1926). Tucholsky's solution to his dilemma seems macabre. If objects alone cannot adequately represent the horrors of the war, one has to start exhibiting humans:

One should stuff some of those field marshals, journalists, secretaries of state, and army chaplains, perhaps as friendly dummies, as an umbrella stand, say, or with a visiting card box in the mouth, so that for once in their lives they would be good for something – one should put these puppets into the display cabinets and write underneath: FROM GREAT TIMES. Then posterity will stand before them in wonder, regard them and shudder, and understand with pity. (Tucholsky 1926)

Tucholsky's was a sarcastic response to the museum's perceived belittlement of the horror of the war. The museum objects exhibited in Vincennes appeared as empty signs. For him, they could not refer to anything but themselves.

Tucholsky's reaction is not unlike that of W.G. Sebald's first-person narrator during his visit to the Breendonk Memorial cited at the beginning of this study. Although Tucholsky is himself a witness of the past who worries about how his generation will be remembered, while Sebald's first-person narrator laments that he is unable to understand the experiences and sufferings of his predecessors in the concentration camp, both see objects as obstacles in their attempt to get at the 'real thing': the experiences and memories of the people who have lived in the past.

My experience of the visit to the Museo Diffuso was quite the opposite. In one sense, the Museo Diffuso has put into practice what Tucholsky suggested – although in a less macabre way. In the Museo Diffuso, the visitor is confronted with an overflow of stories: that of a soldier, for example, who volunteered to fight on the Russian front because he was interested in Russian culture and who, as soon as he arrived, broke down crying from homesickness; that of a woman who is still touched by the remembrance of discovering that the butter she had finally acquired on the black market had melted when she wanted to fry an egg for her father; or that of a partisan fighter organizing strikes in the factories. In other words, unlike Tucholsky and Sebald's first-person narrator, I learnt a lot about how people felt during the war years. I heard the stories behind the objects, but I did not see the objects themselves. When I asked Luciano Boccalatte (Boccalatte interview 2010) of the 'Istituto Piemontese per la Storia della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Girogio Agosti', one of the curators, why the museum exhibits so few objects, he answered:

The object in itself, especially the objects of the Resistenza, are very poor objects. They don't even have ... well ... when I see for example the coat of Louis XIV I can be fascinated by it because it has a splendour all of its own. However, the partisan boot does in fact only speak to me if I completely know its history, if I am totally immersed in this history, if I know everything ... then the object can indeed communicate something to me. For the majority of visitors, this does not happen anymore.

Boccalatte called the choice to use video testimonies in the exhibition 'a quasi-obligatory choice'. In order to illustrate his point, he told me a story. In 1995, on the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Italy, he was involved in the arrangements for an exhibition on the Second World War and the Resistenza. Many citizens donated objects for this purpose.

Luciano Boccalatte was approached by a man whose older brother, a partisan fighter, had died during the first days of hostilities. The man wanted to donate objects that reminded him of his brother. Amongst these objects was a piece of bread that he had taken from his brother's pocket while he lay dead. Luciano Boccalatte told me that he was struck by the fact that the man treated the objects almost as relics. He said that he had problems explaining to the man that the piece of bread might have an emotional value to him, but that it would not communicate anything when placed inside a display case (Boccalatte interview 2010).

Thus, in the Museo Diffuso, the relationship between objects and individual memory has been redefined. Sceptical of objects as adequate means to illustrate the past, the Museo Diffuso uses video testimonies in order to communicate what it was like to live in Turin during the war years. The extreme case of the Museo Diffuso shall in this chapter serve as a starting point for an analysis of the practice of exhibiting video testimonies. In the first section of this chapter, 'Video Testimonies and Museum Objects', I will analyse the correlations between video testimonies and museum objects. In other words, I will look at the intermedial relations between video testimonies and the other exhibits in museums. In the second section, I will consider 'Video Testimonies as Museum Objects'. I will here analyse how video testimonies are adapted to the rules of exhibition. In other words, I will analyse the intramediation of video testimonies. In both sections, I will pay particular attention to the auratisation and authentication of both the video testimonies and the other objects in the museums.

Video Testimonies and Museum Objects

The Authenticity of Museum Objects

The concepts of aura and authenticity are often deployed when referring to museum objects. Both are notoriously difficult to define. The most famous and – at least for cultural studies – the most influential definition of 'aura' goes back to Walter Benjamin. In his essay 'The Artwork at the Time of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin (2003 [1939]: 257) defines aura as: 'the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be'. Peter M. Spangenberg (2000: 406ff) observes that for Benjamin, aura is both an 'Erfahrungskategorie' (category of experience) and an 'Objekteigenschaft' (feature inherent to certain objects). First, Benjamin, as a translator of Proust, sees a relationship between aura and 'mémoire

involontaire' (involuntary memory) (Spangenberg 2000: 406–8). In his essay 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', Benjamin (2003 [1940]) observes:

Experience of the aura thus arises from the fact that a response characteristic of human relationships is transposed to the relationship between humans and inanimate or natural objects. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To experience the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look back at us. This ability corresponds to the data of *mémoire involontaire*.

As a category of experience, aura is thus based on the viewer's anthropomorphization of the object. Aura resides in the viewer imagining a reaction coming from the object.

As a feature inherent to certain objects on the other hand, aura depends on an object's authenticity. Authenticity is for Benjamin (1991 [1939]: 477) based, in turn, on the 'Echtheit' (originality) of an artwork and the fact that it has been produced as part of a tradition.¹ For him (2003 [1939]: 255), the 'Echtheit' (originality) of a thing 'is the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it'. He famously argued (2003 [1939]) that 'in the age of technological reproducibility', the aura inherent to the original object is in decline. In the case of photography and especially film, the possibility of reproduction has replaced the original object.

The German cultural theorist Gottfried Korff has adapted Benjamin's theory to museum objects. He considers (2007 [1984]) the museum experience as unique because of the authenticity of museum objects. For him, 'authenticity is the beginning of a special experience of history, that cannot be attained in a cognitive, intellectual or discursive way, but which finds its foundation in the principle of affective impression, of sensual excitement' (2007 [1984]: 121). This experience, according to him (2007 [1984]: 120), can be found in 'the ambivalence innate to the historical relic'. He observes:

The original object does not only bring the past closer to us, it also distances it again – because of the peculiar foreignness inherent in authentic objects. To be close to the object and at the same time far away; to return to the horizon of a past time when looking at an object and at the same time remain firmly grounded in the present – it is this tension that the museal representation of history has to take as its starting point, and it is from this tension that it has to draw its effect. (Korff 2007 [1984]: 120)

Thus, Korff, like Benjamin, considers the object as an agent in a dynamic of action and reaction between viewer and object: the object actively

brings about a special experience in the viewer. Korff (2006 [1984]: 120) sees the aura of an object residing in ‘the forgotten human life (das vergessene Menschliche), which can be remembered through the objects’.

For both Korff and Benjamin, aura and authenticity are thus a reality – something that is inherent to objects and can be experienced through interaction with those objects. What they disregard is that the conception of aura and authenticity depend to a large extent on the expectations of the viewer, and that aura and authenticity are the results of a process of legitimation defining the particular object as authentic and hence auratic. I wish to return here to the concept of representation. Unlike Korff and Benjamin, the cultural theorists Elisabeth Mohn, Christian Strub and Geesche Wartemann (1997) have defined ‘authenticity as representation’. They argue that ‘the problem of authenticity can only appear when, despite the awareness of a principled mimetic difference between representation and the represented, *doubts about the transparency of representation* appear’ (Mohn, Strub and Wartemann 1997: 1, italics in original). They define a ‘magical authenticity’, ‘a foil (that is imagined by the respective culture to be its pre-cultural origin)’. This magical authenticity, they argue, is negated every time the problem of authenticity appears and thus every time the means of representation are deemed inadequate for the intended representation. In the case of museum objects, the problem of authenticity appears in the sense that each object could – at least in principle – also be a fake. Most visitors would not, one supposes, note the difference between a fake *Mona Lisa* or a fake Greek vase and the originals. They do, however, expect the objects in the museum to be originals. Museums give their objects what Mohn, Strub and Wartemann (1997: 1) have called an ‘authenticity of authority’: they are a socially accepted authority that guarantees the authenticity of objects.

However, declaring an object as original is only the first step of its authentication in the museum. The result of this declaration is generally the entrance of the object into the museum’s collection. The second step is the actual exhibition of the object. It is through particular exhibition techniques that an object’s assigned authenticity is represented. This is achieved by means of its placement in the exhibition room, its juxtaposition with other objects and the use of labels, museum texts, graphs, audioguides or dioramas and thus by the intermedial relations that the object is put into.

For the museum visitors, the problem of authenticity arises where those means of representation do not correspond to their expectations. Walter Benjamin’s concept of ‘aura’ as a category of experience or Gottfried Korff’s special museum experience are only possible if the visitors accept the representation of the museum objects as originals and/or as legitimate

representations of the past. In this sense, an original can appear fake and therefore inauthentic, while a fake can conversely seem authentic.

If we consider Klas Grinell's tripartite definition of representation ('Vorstellung', 'Darstellung' and 'Vertretung'), then the codification of a museum object as authentic is based on representation in the senses of 'Vorstellung' and 'Darstellung'. A museum object is labelled as authentic if it appears to correspond to the mental image ('Vorstellung') of an original. The object is further authenticated and auritized through certain exhibition techniques and thus through representations connoted by 'Darstellung'. It is through representation in the sense of 'Darstellung' that the mental image, 'Vorstellung', of an authentic museum object is either created, approved or negated. In what follows, I will show how video testimonies are used as one of objects and the means in this process of creation, approval and negation.

The Authenticity of Witnesses to History

In their definition of the concept of authenticity, Suzanne Knaller and Harro Müller (2005: 40–65) differentiate between 'Objektauthentizität' (object authenticity) and 'Subjektauthentizität' (subject authenticity). While object authenticity refers to the originality and truthfulness-to-tradition of objects described above, subject authenticity describes lack of performance, that is, a lack of representation in the sense of 'Darstellung' in human behaviour. Subject authenticity can, in a Rousseauian sense, be understood as a return to an extrasocietal or presocietal self. It can also, with reference to the eighteenth-century concept of naivety, be defined as 'a trespass of the individual and a return to a place of origin in aesthetical modernity, when the artist finds his or her true self over his or her creative potential and originality' (Knaller and Müller 2005: 45). Subject authenticity, like object authenticity, is dependent on an outside observer who interprets an individual's gestures as being beyond representation.

In the sense of object authenticity, all witnesses to history are authentic representatives of the past because they have been there. The traces that the past has left on their bodies authenticate their testimonies. The witnesses to history's experiences in situ authenticate their testimonies given *ex post facto*. However, nowhere has the idea of authenticity been discussed as fervently as in the context of testimonies of Holocaust survivors. Object authenticity blends here with subject authenticity, and ideas of the juridical witness with those of trauma. Stefan Krankenhagen (2001: 187) observes that survivor testimonies generally serve as 'magical authenticity'

for other representations of the Holocaust: ‘The critical reflex to analyse the strategical, that is ideological, aspect of assertions and receptions of authenticity is missing in what concerns the reception and meta-reception of primary representations of the Holocaust [i.e. survivor testimonies]. A deconstruction of authoritative authenticity is not only missing, its absence is moreover considered to be morally and epistemologically necessary.’ Jürgen Fohrmann (2006: 194–95), in a reflection on the witnesses appearing at the Eichmann trial, puts forward a similar argument: ‘It seemed ... in fact to be sacrilegious to consider this form of survival narrative, this form of giving testimony of the Shoah, as a representation that could not do without prerequisites and without references to other forms of representation, and that necessarily had to use a spectrum of pre-existing modes of representation.’

Both Fohrmann and Krankenhagen thus argue that the representative character (*‘Darstellung’*) of the act of giving testimony of Holocaust survivors is not put into question. The gestures of the survivors are, on the contrary, seen as the epitome of authenticity – as the only possible way to give testimony on the Holocaust. Of course, this does not mean that the testimonies of Holocaust survivors have not met with criticism. As I have pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, the constructed character of memory has been apparent since the seminal studies of Maurice Halbwachs. Relevant scientific literature has cast further doubt on the historical facticity of survivor testimonies and has pointed out that traumatizing events are also, or perhaps especially, subject to refashioning (cf. Welzer 2000). This has, however, not hindered the reception of the Holocaust survivor as an authentic and authenticating figure. This reception is based on: Holocaust survivors’ victim status; the fact that their testimonies are based on suffering; and the conception of trauma as an uncontrollable memory that resides deep within the witnesses’ psyche.

As I observed in Chapter 1, victims come highest on the scale of trustworthiness of witnesses to history. In contrast to that of perpetrators or bystanders, the trustworthiness of victims is generally not questioned. This trust is further intensified by the fact that Holocaust survivors are survivors of extreme physical and psychological violence. The camp experience is seen as throwing people back to a state before civilization. This idea is, for example, reflected in Giorgio Agamben’s definition of the *Muselmann* as the true witness. Agamben (2002: 82) argues that the *Muselmann* is ‘the non-human who obstinately appears as human’. In the camps, humanity is reduced to ‘bare life’ (Agamben 2002: 69). This reduction should, however, not lead to questioning the humanity of the victims of the Holocaust. On the contrary, Agamben argues that after Auschwitz, the threshold

between what is human and what is nonhuman must be redefined. It is in this very argument of life in the camp as an experience that forces humans to react in a way that might put their humanity into question but still keeps them human that the idea of a subject authenticity of the victims of the camps appears: extreme physical and psychological violence force people to transcend their social roles and throw them back to bare life.

The inhuman conditions that the victims were in thereby tend to underline rather than question their humanity: 'while treacherous happiness is easily suspected to be a masquerade, in pain, man appears as an untainted being that is not bound to any rules of orchestration', observes Helmut Lethen (1996: 221). He points out that the discovery that different cultures have different ways of expressing pain is usually followed by irritation. The individual who has gone through an experience of pain is expected to have left it both traumatized and purified. As Anne Rothe (2011: 20f) observes, modern-day views on suffering see it both as pathological, as something that has to be corrected through therapy, and, in a Christian tradition, as purification. This has brought about a situation in which 'victims are revered as modern-day quasi-saints and suffering is invested with redemptive value and reinterpreted as sacrifice' (Rothe 2011: 20). Victims in this sense not only transcend their humanity at their moment of suffering, they also retain a suprahuman quality after this moment.

In the pathological sense that Rothe refers to, life in the camps and the trauma that ensues is expected to have left on the victims' mind traces that they cannot fully control themselves. Jürgen Fohrmann argues here that:

Since the first testimonies by survivors of the Holocaust, the tension between the need to speak and the inability to speak determines all forms of testimony. It is this tension that repeatedly manifested the 'authenticity' of their speech act by making apparent the traces of the incomprehensible event that they had experienced in such a way that the truth of what was being related was attested to through the mode of utterance of their words (or the impossibility of giving testimony at all). (Fohrmann 2006: 194)

In this sense, it is not so much what the witnesses to history say, but how they say it that determines whether their testimonies are perceived as authentic. As we have seen in the last chapter, especially extraverbal expressions such as the inability to speak, silence and uncontrolled weeping or twitches are interpreted as signs of their traumatization and as their actual authentic testimony. Video testimonies are used to draw their viewers' attention to those expressions. It is worth noting here that the idea of how a traumatized survivor ought to act also depends to a large extent on the expectations of their audience. For some people, it can seem

irritating if a Holocaust survivor does not break into tears or look sad enough while giving testimony (cf. Simon 2005:163; Barricelli, Brauer and Wein 2009: 10).

That the act of giving testimony on the Holocaust can also be faked has been exemplified by the cases of Bruno Dössekker, alias Benjamin Wilkomirski, or Monique DeWael, alias Misha Defonseca (cf. Bannasch and Hammer 2004; Fohrmann 2006: 195; Rothe 2011: 136ff). When Benjamin Wilkomirski published his autobiography *Fragments* on his childhood experiences during the Holocaust, the novel was praised for its authenticity. *Fragments* was later discovered to be a fake and was taken off the market. In the case of Defonseca's memoir, there were doubts over its authenticity even before its publication. These were only resolved after a long lawsuit ten years after the book had actually been published and turned into a film. However, those 'faux memoirs' (LaCapra 2001: 34), rather than leading to scepticism concerning the testimonies of survivors in general, have instead reinforced the view of survivor testimonies as being maximally authentic. Instead of their fake memoirs for example being reinterpreted for their narrative qualities, the writers were cast as traitors who had crossed an ethical line.

Video Testimonies and Relics of the Past

Let us at this point return to the beginning of this chapter and to the concept of object authenticity. There is a blatant discrepancy between Korff's view on objects (described above) and those of Tucholsky and Sebald's first-person narrator (cited in the first pages of this study). Korff sees objects as media through which the forgotten human life can be remembered. Sebald's first-person narrator, having passed through the material remains of the Breendonk Memorial, concludes that 'the world is, as it were, draining itself'. Tucholsky, having walked through the museum in Vincennes, fears that his generation will not be remembered in the right way. Hence, for Korff, objects are cues for memory, while for Sebald's first-person narrator and for Tucholsky, they are symbols of transience.

The contrasted positions of Korff, Sebald's first-person narrator and Tucholsky, point to a dialectic inherent in historical objects. Historical objects are, at the same time, eternal reservoirs of bygone human life, as well as symbols of transience and forgetting. For an object to work as a museum object, it has to be seen as falling either only into the first category or into both. This was, as we have seen, according to Luciano Boccalatte, the curator of the Museo Diffuso, not the case for the piece

of bread brought to him by the former resistance fighter, or of any other object for that matter. At the Museo Diffuso, objects are deemed to be only symbols of transience that have lost their meaning for anybody who has not experienced the stories in which they were involved. Objects that are seen as being without a purpose for present or future generations are, in accordance with Michael Thompson's (1979) rubbish theory, junk and can thus be discarded.

The dialectic characteristic of museum objects leads us to what I will call the different levels of authentication that exist in history museums in general and in Holocaust memorial museums in particular. These levels of authentication can be related to what Jana Scholze, reflecting on the semiotics of museum exhibitions, has called denotation, connotation and metacommunication (see the Introduction, pp. 21–22). The first level, object authentication, applies to the objects shown in the exhibition. As I have pointed out before, the originality of museum objects is authenticated through exhibition techniques. This is especially important for objects that represent the Holocaust. In the case of the Holocaust, transience and forgetting were not merely ordinary phenomena, but the result of brutal murder and the attempt to erase several cultures. The objects in Holocaust museums not only carry the traces of bygone life, they also carry those of the fight for survival, and of extinction. However, these traces are only rarely visible. With regard to the objects presented in memorial museums, Paul Williams (2007: 133) has observed that 'in a sense, it is the story that is the object, insofar as it is not the item itself that is distinctive, but the associated history to which it is attached'. As I will show later on, the interior of a bourgeois study in itself does not reveal that it belonged to a German Jewish family who fled to Palestine. Nor does a pair of woollen gloves disclose that it was knit in Bergen-Belsen. In both cases, the objects would not be worth exhibiting if they did not stem from the household of Jewish refugees or Bergen-Belsen. The furniture of the study would most likely have ended up on the antiques market and the gloves as rubbish. For many of the objects in Holocaust and Second World War Museums, exhibiting them therefore means also representing the extraordinariness of seemingly ordinary objects. Their extraordinariness in turn resides in their status as originals from a certain historical event: the objects have to be authenticated as reservoirs of bygone life. This level of authentication can be related to Scholze's concepts of denotation and connotation: the visitor learns what a given object is, what it was used for and what sociocultural significance it has.

These authenticated objects are exhibited as representatives ('Vertreter') of the history under scrutiny. The particular means of exhibition used in

museums therefore serve to authenticate the historical narrative of the particular museum. I will call this second level the level of narrative authentication. Through exhibition techniques, museums not only authenticate the objects as originals, pointing out the history that they were involved in, they also authenticate them as adequate representatives of this history, while the objects in turn are meant to authenticate the museums' narratives as genuine. Even if the originality of an object is accepted, the way in which a given museum exhibits this object and the narrative that it uses it in can appear as an inadequate – and therefore inauthentic – representation of the past. In the case of Holocaust museums, exhibiting also always means working against revisionism or denial: the authenticated object has to authenticate the history of a genocide that has been belittled or negated altogether.

The third level of authentication, exhibition authentication, applies to the exhibition design itself. Above, I have observed that museums are the guarantors of the originality of museum objects – and therefore apply what Mohn, Strub and Wartemann have called an authenticity of authority. This is only half the truth. The museum's authority as a guarantor of originality is still relevant, it is however also a remnant of modernity. The postmodern museum is aware of its authority and constantly puts it into question. The postmodern museum is therefore better analysed using Mohn, Strub and Wartemann's (1997: 3–4) concepts of the 'authenticity of authorship', 'dilemmatical authenticity' and 'instrumental authenticity'. According to the authenticity of authorship, everything is constructed. The act of authentication here resides in the disclosure of the constructedness of the representation. Dilemmatical authenticity, like authenticity of authority, is based on the idea that there is a 'relationship between the "I" and the "world"' that is beyond representation (Mohn, Strub and Wartemann 1997: 3). At the same time, this idea of a relationship that is beyond representation – and this is the dilemma – can only be broached by using means of representation. According to dilemmatical authenticity, an authentic representation therefore uses means of representation in order to represent the represented as not represented (Mohn, Strub and Wartemann 1997: 3). According to instrumental authenticity as well, there exists a desire for immediacy. However, unlike in the case of dilemmatical authenticity, instrumental authenticity does not try to represent the represented as unrepresented. Instead, Mohn, Strub and Wartemann (1997: 4) differentiate between first-level representations and second-level representations. First-level representations have 'a high acceptance according to the respective cultural standards of representation and are therefore rarely subject to criticism'. Second-level representa-

tions are the ‘interpretations of first level interpretations and have a lower acceptance’. This authenticity is called ‘instrumental’ because it serves the end of differentiating between the material that is to be interpreted by a group according to common cultural standards of representation and the actual interpretation of this material. Contemporary museums generally authenticate their exhibitions according to one of these three concepts of authenticity. However, the first concept, although used by other museums, is rare in memorial museums. Declaring the whole exhibition as a mere construction can be dangerous in the case of a topic like the Holocaust that is subject to denial and revisionism. Instead, the museums legitimize the chosen means of exhibition, through those very means, as the most adequate ones to represent what is represented. The chosen means are either established as socially accepted first-level representations according to the concept of instrumental authenticity or as unrepresented according to the concept of dilemmatical authenticity. Museums also use their very means of exhibition as second-level representations in order to comment on other first-level representations and on their very own exhibitions. As I will show below, exhibition authentication is especially relevant in the case where the chosen means of exhibition or the exhibited objects might not correspond to the expectations of the visitors.

The fourth level of authentication applies to what I would call visitor experience authentication. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 19–23), in an analysis of the means of exhibition of ethnographic objects, has differentiated between two modes of exhibition: in-situ exhibitions and in-context exhibitions. In-context exhibitions ‘use particular techniques of arrangement and explanation to convey ideas’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 21). These techniques range from labels, charts and diagrams to the arrangement of objects in space. In-context exhibitions apply what I have called the first, second and third levels of authentication. They serve to authenticate the object as an original and as a representative of history. At the same time, they legitimize the exhibition design as adequate for what they want to represent. In-situ exhibitions go one step further: ‘in situ approaches to installation enlarge the ethnographic object by expanding its boundaries to include more of what was left behind, even if only in replica, after the object was excised from its physical, social and cultural setting’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 20). In-situ exhibitions include dioramas or the re-staging of a particular event in the museum. Although Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to ethnographic objects, her insights can easily be applied to the objects in memorial museums. In in-situ exhibitions, visitors are invited to have authentic experiences – to immerse in history, to in a way become witnesses of the past themselves. These three latter levels of

authentication – narrative authentication, exhibition authentication and visitor experience authentication – can be related to what Jana Scholze has called metacommunication: they are the result of the intentions of the curators and are subject to the sociocultural context of the museums.

In what follows, I will analyse the intermedial relations between video testimonies and objects in these processes of authentication. The examples that I have chosen are not representative of all museums; they illustrate the most common ways in which video testimonies are used in exhibitions. I will consider: the remnants of extermination; personal objects that belonged to witnesses to history; archaeological finds; and the architectural remnants of concentration camps. As has been shown in the previous chapter, video testimonies are frozen human memory; they are communicative memory turned into cultural memory. Introducing video testimonies into museums therefore entails contrasting the vividness of memory with the lifelessness of exhibited objects. As I will show below, video testimonies can serve as crucial elements in all four levels of authentication. Museums also transmit some of the authority that they might otherwise put into question to video testimonies: while the authority of the museums can be put into perspective, that of witnesses to history generally is not. The processes of authentication that I will analyse here are not always straightforward and can sometimes even be turned against themselves; in some cases, authentication on one level may only be realized by putting authenticity on another level into question.

Mass Murder and Personal Stories: The Heaps of Shoes in the Imperial War Museum and in Yad Vashem

Objects, or rather heaps of objects, have become important symbols of the Holocaust. The masses of clothes and everyday objects that were taken from the victims upon their arrival in extermination and concentration camps, and that could first be contemplated in the Majdanek and in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorials and Museums, have become icons of the Holocaust. In particular, the practice of exhibiting heaps of shoes has by now been moved from the memorials of extermination camps to Holocaust museums and exhibitions at a distance from the sites of mass murder. In both the Imperial War Museum (see Figure 4.1) and in Yad Vashem, heaps of shoes are not only part of the exhibitions; they are also used to represent these exhibitions in secondary media. The Imperial War Museum uses a photograph of the shoes as the title page for its catalogue of the Holocaust Exhibition (Imperial War Museum 2000) and on its website. Yad Vashem has put a photograph of the display cabinet with the shoes on the title page of its book *Facts and Feelings* (2010), which deals with the design of



Figure 4.1. The glass case with the shoes of people deported to Majdanek and other concentration camps in the ‘Final Solution’ exhibition chapter in the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum © Imperial War Museum

the new exhibition. Both the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem thus seem to consider the heaps of shoes as their most iconic exhibition unit – and probably also as their most easily recognizable one.

However, what does it mean to exhibit these object masses and in particular masses of shoes? The mass murder in the gas chambers is the event of the Holocaust that is deemed to be the most difficult to represent. It is also the one event of the Holocaust that is most prone to revisionism or denial. Extermination is only representable through fragments – through what was left after the attempt to wipe out everything. ‘A marked feature of the memorial museum collection is that it is defined by – or even held hostage to – what the perpetrators in each event produced’, writes Paul Williams (2007: 26). The heaps of shoes are the prototype of a collection produced by the perpetrators. They are a byproduct of industrialized mass murder and are located on the threshold between life outside of the camp and life or – more likely – death inside the camp. Silke Arnold-de Simine observes that one reason why shoes might work so well as ‘trauma “icons”’ (Arnold-de Simine 2013: 80; cf. Landsberg 2004: 133–35; Williams 2007: 29; Hansen-Glucklich 2014: 129–36) is that they ‘are the closest one can get to bodily remains’. Exhibited as heaps rather than as individual objects

connected to a story, the shoes therefore refer more directly to the deeds of the perpetrators than to their former owners. Put differently, the piles of shoes echo Sebald's drained objects rather than Korff's repositories of human life.

Although the heaps of shoes are deemed an adequate means to represent the mass murder, they are therefore ethically not unproblematic: not unlike in the pictures of the heaps of corpses that have come to be equated with the Holocaust, and almost as their murderers would have wanted it, individuals recede into an anonymous mass of victims. Seeing the masses of shoes – and the heap of hair for that matter – in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is an overwhelming experience. In order to represent the mass killing, they probably work better than any other exhibit. Nevertheless, if they are given too much room, there is the danger that the deeds of the perpetrators will be given precedence over their victims' struggle for life: the exhibited heaps can tell us little about those who wore the shoes. Both the Imperial War Museum and the Yad Vashem Memorial have broken up this exclusive focus on the mass murder by juxtaposing the cabinets with the shoes with testimonies. Here, witnesses tell their very own stories of arrival and survival in the camps. In this way, the 'drained' shoes are, to a certain extent, filled with stories again – if not necessarily their original ones.

The examples from Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum serve to illustrate what I have called the first three levels of authentication: object authentication, narrative authentication and exhibition authentication. The exhibition chapters in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum are in-context exhibition chapters. In both museums, the display case with the heaps of shoes is located in a part of the exhibition dealing with the so-called 'Final Solution'. In the Imperial War Museum, the heart of the exhibition chapter is a plaster model representing arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. Behind this plaster model is located the horizontal display case with the shoes. Several hearing stations with audio testimonies are located on the opposite wall of the model and the display cabinet. In Yad Vashem, a plaster model of the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Polish artist Jan Stobierski has been placed close to the display case, which is sunk into the floor. Although the room itself does not contain a video testimony, in its proximity, visitors can watch several video testimonies with individual survivors. Both museums also show a blow-up of the now-iconic picture of the railway tracks behind the entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as 'everyday' objects from the camps and historical photographs. Together, the shoes, the pictures, the plaster models and the video testimonies authenticate each other as original representatives of the past in the sense of object authentication: each

exhibition fragment adds to the other what this one cannot represent. On their own, the shoes cannot illustrate where they come from, but the pictures of crematoria and women waiting in front of the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the plaster models and the testimonies that describe the smell of burnt flesh, smoke and the process of selection help to authenticate the originality of the shoes in the sense of object authentication. The testimonies in their turn are visualized by the photographs, the plaster models and the shoes and so on. The effect that is achieved in this way is that of what Andrew Hoskins (2003: 17) with reference to the same exhibition chapter in the Imperial War Museum has called a “layering” of memory’. Different layers of memory stemming from different times play together in order to authenticate each other.

Let us now move on to narrative authentication. At first sight, the exhibition chapters in the Imperial War Museum and in Yad Vashem seem quite similar. However, one major difference between both sections is that in Yad Vashem, as in the whole exhibition, the visitor can watch video testimonies, while in the Imperial War Museum, the curators decided to use audio stations and not, as in the other exhibition chapters, video testimonies. Moreover, the Imperial War Museum shows the shoes in a horizontal display case that can be seen immediately upon entering the exhibition room. In Yad Vashem, the shoes are located in a display case inlaid into the floor.² I argue that these minor differences in the exhibition design serve to authenticate very different exhibition narratives.

In an article on the planning phase of the museum, the chief curator and chairman of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev (2010), observes that from its beginnings, the present exhibition was intended to concentrate on the Jewish victims’ point of view. Shalev (2010: 11) differentiates between two approaches within Holocaust studies. The first approach focuses on the perpetrators and on their collaborators, and sees them ‘as the only active factors’. The second approach, which Shalev calls the ‘Jerusalem School’, ‘relates to the narrative from the viewpoint of the victim as an individual human being who is a subject of history’ (Shalev 2010: 11). While Shalev might be oversimplifying Holocaust studies here, his differentiation is fruitful for a study of Holocaust museums. In the latter, we find a constant push-pull between a focus on the perspective of the victims and a focus on the deeds of the perpetrators.

Both the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem communicate a lesson from history. For the Imperial War Museum, this lesson is: ‘never again a new Holocaust!’. The museum communicates this lesson by focusing more acutely on the deeds of the perpetrators than on the experiences of the witnesses. Thus, by choosing audio over video testimonies in the

exhibition sections on the 'Final Solution', the curators wanted to underline the gravity of the history that is being narrated (Bardgett interview 2009). Names and faces remain hidden from the visitors; only voices can be heard. Although the audio testimonies partially fill the shoes with stories again, the witnesses to history themselves cannot be seen and their identity remains unknown. Besides the Auschwitz model, the shoes – as representatives of the deeds of the perpetrators – remain the main visual focal point.

In Yad Vashem, the message of 'Never again!' is given a further dimension: 'Never again us!'. Located in the first Jewish state since the Diaspora, and the country that was to become the new home for a large number of Holocaust survivors, Yad Vashem tries to maintain the remembrance of 'Holocaust martyrs and heroes'. The new museum was designed in such a way as to 'tell the story of the *Shoah* from the perspective of the individual' and to 'emphasize the tragically unique Jewish experience of the Holocaust' (Goldstein 2013: 5). The exhibition in Yad Vashem follows a Zionist narrative according to which the State of Israel was born out of the ashes of the Holocaust. This narrative becomes especially apparent in Moshe Safdie's architecture for the Museum. The museum building consists of a long tunnel passing through the Mount of Remembrance. Visitors see the end of the tunnel when entering the museum. They can, however, only reach this end when moving in a zigzag through the different exhibition chapters, the main corridor being subdivided by what the exhibition designer Dorit Harel (2010: 25) calls 'ruptures': trenches in the floor that serve as introductions to the different exhibition chapters. The tunnel ends with a view over the northern suburbs of Jerusalem that is so striking that hardly any visitor can resist taking a picture. In this way, the city of Jerusalem and the foundation of the State of Israel appear as the ultimate end of the history of the Holocaust. One of the last museum chapters broaches the issue of Holocaust survivors as fighters in the Israeli wars of independence. This narrative is reflected in the exhibition chapter of the 'Final Solution'. Inlaid into the floor, the heaps of shoes are not visible at first sight. Their aesthetics are, at least partly, complemented by the video testimonies that can also be found in their proximity.

The exhibition narratives focusing on the victims in Yad Vashem and respectively on the perpetrators in the Imperial War Museum are thus authenticated by the representation of the witnesses to history in the exhibition chapter on the so-called 'Final Solution'. To return to Gottfried Korff, one could say that the Imperial War Museum points in the first instance to the brutal extermination of human life: the witnesses disappear in this section in favour of audio testimonies and the shoes are given a

prominent position. Yad Vashem more directly juxtaposes human life to this extermination: the shoes are inlaid into the floor and juxtaposed with video testimonies. In the Imperial War Museum, the visitors are invited to draw their lessons from the deeds of the perpetrators that have to be prevented in the future. In Yad Vashem, in turn, visitors are invited to draw their lessons from the survivors who fought for survival – and, according to the exhibition narrative, ultimately for the State of Israel.

Using the heaps of shoes, both museums make use of what Mohn, Strub and Wartemann have called first-level representations: they use a well-established icon of the Holocaust. However, by not letting this symbol stand on its own, by surrounding it with other objects and especially video and audio testimonies, they also comment on this symbol by partly breaking its traditional iconic status as visible in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In both the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the shoes are exhibited in a separate room and stand for themselves. The exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum and at Yad Vashem in turn were designed at a time when the focus in Holocaust exhibitions was moving from a focus on the perpetrators to a focus on the victims.³ They were thus designed at a time in which new first-level representations for the Holocaust were being established – one of them being video testimonies. This shift is apparent in the way in which both exhibitions exhibit the shoes. Both museums authenticate their exhibitions as first-level representations by resorting to ‘trauma icons’. At the same time, they work as secondary representations to those earlier exhibitions: they comment on earlier uses of ‘trauma icons’ as uncontextualized relics by embedding them in the above-mentioned different layers of memory and juxtaposing them with the voices and faces (in the case of Yad Vashem) of survivors.

Broken Aesthetics: The ‘Room of Dilemmas’ in Yad Vashem

The first video testimony in Yad Vashem is presented in a room that the curators have called the ‘Room of Dilemmas’. The room disrupts the aesthetics of the previous part of the exhibition. In the exhibition chapter ‘From Equals to Outcasts’, which illustrates anti-semitism and the consequences of the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws, history has up until the ‘Room of Dilemmas’ been represented through objects, documents, Nazi propaganda, videos and explanatory museum texts. In the ‘Room of Dilemmas’, the visitor is suddenly standing in a fully furnished, bourgeois study with a massive desk, a piano and a book closet. A menorah on the windowsill shows that the study belongs to a Jewish

household. One could imagine a similar room in a city museum where it might represent the German-Jewish bourgeoisie at the beginning of the twentieth century, or perhaps in a design museum. The furniture of the room belonged to Professor Hermann Zondek, the director of the Municipal Hospital in Berlin and the personal physician of German chancellors Gustav Stresemann and Kurt von Schleicher, who fled to Palestine after the Nazis came into power in Germany (Gutterman and Shalev 2008: 47). His widow, Gerda Zondek, bequeathed the furniture to Yad Vashem (Harel 2010: 70). After the anti-semitic propaganda material and the hateful tirades in the previous part of the exhibition, this room appears almost inviting to the visitor. The furniture is pretty and the atmosphere cosy.

Hermann Zondek's furniture is an example of an exhibition in which the chosen objects cannot either be recognized at first sight as originals or as adequate representatives of the history under scrutiny. It is only through a video testimony in which two witnesses to history talk about the dilemmas of the German-Jewish bourgeoisie after 1933 that the furniture is given its actual predication. The witnesses to history relate that, convinced that they were integrated into German society and in the belief that things would soon change, they often did not truly consider emigration. One of the two witnesses remembers his mother to have said that it was too hot in Palestine to emigrate there. The video testimony therefore authenticates the furniture in the room as original in the sense of object authentication and, more importantly, as a representative of the history of the German-Jewish bourgeoisie in the 1930s – and thus of a world that was brutally destroyed, in the sense of exhibition authentication.

On a fourth level of authentication, that of the experience of the visitors, the video testimony also has a corrective effect. The 'Room of Dilemmas' is an in-situ exhibition in which the emotional lesson given to the visitors is conveyed through the contrast between the video testimonies and the aesthetics of the furniture. The visitor, who might at first have felt at ease in the nice study, is disconcerted by the video testimony. This disconcertion is strengthened through the size and positioning of the video testimony: it is screened above the desk on a space the size of a small cinema screen. The witnesses to history thus speak admonishingly from above the desk to the audience standing beneath. The visitors cannot escape their stories by concentrating only on the furniture. It is thus by breaking the aesthetics of the study that the video testimony authenticates the visitors' experience: in an in-situ exhibition representing the comforts of bourgeois life, the visitor is made to feel the dilemma of leaving this comfort behind and starting a new, possibly less comfortable life somewhere else.

Personal Stories as Objects: Zofia Zajczyk's Doll in Yad Vashem and Yvonne Koch's Gloves in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial

The heaps of shoes and Hermann Zondek's study are examples of objects that represent history at large – the shoes the mass murder and the study the fate of the German Jewish bourgeoisie. We will never know the particular stories that each individual shoe was involved in and the video testimonies in Hermann Zondek's study tell their own families' stories, not that of the Zondek family. However, it has become the custom of many museums to represent history through the personal objects of survivors or victims – and consequently through the stories connected to them. Video testimonies appear here as a particularly pertinent means to convey those stories. The Holocaust exhibition in the Jewish Museum in London, for example, is entirely based on the biography of the Holocaust survivor Leon Greenman. The only display case in the museum exhibits objects that were once the property of Greenman, and of his wife and child who were murdered. In a video testimony that is also placed within the display case, Greenman talks, inter alia, about these objects, holding them in his hands.

In Yad Vashem, in an exhibition chapter on the Warsaw Ghetto, a doll that once belonged to the Holocaust survivor Zofia Zajczyk (now Yael Rosner) is placed next to a video testimony in which she talks about her memories relating to this doll. Zofia played with the doll in a cellar in the Warsaw ghetto while her mother smuggled children out of the ghetto. One day, on one of her missions, her mother was injured. She sent a young man back to the ghetto to fetch Zofia. He carried her out of the ghetto in a coal sack. When they had passed the border between the ghetto and the city, Zofia realized that she had forgotten her doll. She pleaded with the young man to go back with her because: 'A mother doesn't leave her little girl behind.' They went back, fetched the doll and left the ghetto again (Gutterman and Shalev 2008: 217). Everything went well.

A similar correlation between a video testimony and an object can be found in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. Here it is a pair of worn-out woollen gloves in yellow, pink and red that is placed next to the testimony of the child survivor Yvonne Koch (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). The story that Yvonne Koch tells is as emotional as that of Zofia Zajczyk. Yvonne Koch had been deported to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp on her own at the age of eleven. Looking for food in the camp, she met a woman speaking a Slavic language. This woman gave her something to eat. Yvonne Koch went to the woman's barracks every day, seeing whether she was there. She did not always find her, but looking for her became a ritual. One day in January, the woman was waiting for her. She gave Yvonne Koch a pair of gloves that she had knitted from several threads taken



Figure 4.2. Yvonne Koch's gloves © Bergen-Belsen Memorial



Figure 4.3. Film still from the video testimony with Yvonne Koch from 2003 © Bergen-Belsen Memorial

from blankets. While she is telling this story, Yvonne Koch handles the gloves. The camera zooms in on her hands: 'I always wore them, always had them on my hands. They always warmed me. And I always thought of this woman. I have such a strong memory of her because she was the first person to be good to me' (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 222). Unlike Zofia Zajczyk's story, Yvonne Koch's story ends badly. After the woman had given her the gloves, Yvonne Koch went back to the barracks several times, but did not find her anymore. 'I don't know if she

was shot because somebody had seen that she was looking after me. I cried a lot, and the time when I was given something to eat was also over', she concludes (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 222).

In an article on the use of video testimonies in the exhibition at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, the interviewers Diana Gring and Karin Theilen (2007: 197) argue that the juxtaposition of Yvonne Koch's testimony with her gloves has a 'corrective' effect on the aura of the object: 'By connecting the object to a concrete history and a concrete person – thus by contextualising it – it evades the risk of "staging" or "superelevation", which would complicate an approximation to the actual events.' I grant that by embedding it into the witness' biography, the object escapes dissociation from the context of its production and use. At the same time, I contend that both Yvonne Koch's and Yael Rosner's emotional stories, with their almost classical fairytale elements – the orphan looking for food, the adoption by the good foreigner, the metaphorical and literal donation of warmth, the salvation from the zone of danger – add to, rather than prevent, an auratisation of the gloves and the doll.

In fact, in the installations in Yad Vashem and in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, the perceived object authenticity of the objects and the perceived subject authenticity of the witnesses to history are put into a relationship of mutual authentication. While they are giving testimony, both Yael Rosner and Yvonne Koch hold the doll and the gloves in their hands. In this way, the video testimonies and the objects melt together. The materiality of the doll and the gloves, with the traces that time has left on them, with the pieces that are missing from the doll's head and the faded colour of the gloves – they all underline the truthfulness of the testimonies. In turn, the originality of the gloves and the doll, their actual presence in time and space during the events, is attested by Yael Rosner's and Yvonne Koch's testimonies. In this way, the video testimonies and the objects authenticate each other as originals. It is because of this truthfulness on a first level of authentication that they can serve as representatives of the larger history of the Holocaust. The authenticity of the stories and objects entails that there must have been others like them.

In Yad Vashem, the doll and the video testimony further serve to authenticate the visitor experience. In the case of Yad Vashem, the past that is represented through the doll, and that Yael Rosner talks about, is further illustrated by the in-situ character of the exhibition chapter 'Between Walls and Fences – The Ghettos' in which the video testimony is located. In this chapter, the curators have rebuilt Leszno Street in the Warsaw Ghetto using original cobble stones. Yael Rosner's video testimony has been placed on the sill of a half-opened window together with the doll and

a red jumper. In the background, visitors can see a picture of what appears to be the interior of a room inside the ghetto. According to Dorit Harel (2010: 42), the exhibition designer, the combination of 'authentic cobblestones of Leszno Street in the Warsaw Ghetto, surrounded by its sights and sounds, authentic artifacts, enlarged film-footage from the period, blown-up photographs, and other multidisciplinary means ... generate an experience that is close to authentic'. In other words, the object that has been authenticated in the sense of 'original' and the witness to history who has been authenticated as 'truthful' are framed by an exhibition chapter designed to impart the experience of being in the past. In accordance with dilemmatic authenticity, Harel wanted to represent the represented as unrepresented through the means of representation.

However, the authentic experience that visitors are supposed to have is, as I will further illustrate through an analysis of the in-situ exhibitions using original railway carriages in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum, never complete. In the sense of the museum experience as it was defined by Korff (2007 [1984]: 120), the visitors are invited to 'return to the horizon of a past time ... and at the same time remain firmly grounded in the present'. Several temporal levels interact in the exhibition chapter. Physically, the doll is located in the present, but it is representative of the past. This past is, in turn, illustrated by the story that Yael Rosner tells in the video testimony that, although it has been recorded in the recent past, still looks so fresh that it appears to belong to the present. The historicity of the doll and the story bring the past to life. At the same time, however, the doll is visibly old and no longer in use, and Yael Rosner tells her story in the video testimony as an aged witness to history. In this way, while inviting visitors to have an 'authentic' experience in the past, the integration of the video testimony into the reconstruction of the Leszno Street also communicates that this past is over. Thus, the message is: the past was horrible, but it led to a good present and a hopefully better future.

This message is further illustrated by the view over the green suburbs of Jerusalem at the end of the visit that stands in harsh contrast to the darkness inside the exhibition space of which the Leszno Street is a part. The affective message of learning from the survivor's struggle that the visitors are supposed to carry away is in Yad Vashem transmitted through a museum experience that is supposed to give them a feeling of the horrors of the past, and at the same time communicates that the world, and especially Israel, have moved on from there. The exhibition design and narrative are in this way authenticated through a de-authentication of the authentic experience of being in the past.

Experiential History Learning and Memory: The Railway Carriages in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum

For Alison Landsberg (2004: 129–39), in-situ exhibitions are an integral part of what she calls ‘experiential museums’, museums that combine cognitive with experiential modes in their transmission of historical knowledge. Landsberg bases her observation on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, which opened its doors in 1993, set standards for the musealization of the Holocaust, and quite obviously served as an inspiration for both the Holocaust History Museum in Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Exhibition in the Imperial War Museum. In-situ exhibitions using original objects are an important element of the exhibition design: the visitor walks on cobble stones that come from the Warsaw Ghetto; passes through an original railway carriage; and enters barracks from Auschwitz-Birkenau. The passage through the railway carriage is, in my experience, one of the most emotionally engaging parts of the visit. The interior is dark and, even without any other visitors being in the carriage, feels claustrophobic. A strange stench of dust and old wood adds to the feeling of discomfort. The material reality of the carriage, which appears to have been transported directly from Treblinka Extermination Camp to Washington DC, combined with the thought that it might have been used to carry up to one hundred people to almost certain death, leads to the dominance of the experiential over the cognitive. While they pass through the railway carriage, visitors do not cognitively acquire knowledge; they are supposed to feel. Most importantly, they are supposed to feel uncomfortable (cf. Hansen-Glucklich 2014: 140–42). Landsberg (2004: 132) talks of a ‘seductive tangibility’. According to her, such an experience will lead to what she calls a ‘prosthetic memory’. Prosthetic memory describes the appropriation of a memory that might originally have belonged to a certain individual or group by other individuals, without those individuals forgetting their own identity. Prosthetic memory is transmitted affectively and will, according to Landsberg (2004: 152), ultimately lead to empathy and as a consequence to ethical actions: ‘by bringing people into experiential and meaningful contact with a past through which neither they nor their families actually lived, prosthetic memory opens the door for a new relation to the past, a strategic form of remembering that has ramifications for the politics of the present’. As we will see in Chapter 5, Landsberg’s theory has met with considerable criticism questioning whether it is possible to adopt memory like a prosthesis and whether the desired effects might actually be possible to achieve (Arnold-de Simine 2013: 91f). Here, I wish to compare the exhibit of the railway carriage in the United States

Holocaust Memorial Museum to similar exhibits in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum.

Like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum also use original railway carriages that were in use at the time of the Second World War. However, it is not clear whether they were actually used to transport prisoners to concentration and extermination camps. Unlike the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum have integrated video testimonies into their exhibition chapters.

The train ride to the concentration camps has become a symbol of the Holocaust. Part of the reason for this might be that while historical pictures from inside the extermination camps are largely missing, there are numerous pictures of the departures of victims who knowingly or unknowingly boarded the trains that carried them to their almost certain deaths. The picture of the railway tracks behind the entrance of Auschwitz-Birkenau is probably the most iconic picture of the Holocaust and, while few Holocaust movies dare to go into the gas chambers, the train ride is a feature of almost every fictional representation of the Holocaust. Visitors, when confronted with these carriages, are likely – consciously or unconsciously – to remember those real or staged representations of the train rides.

Unlike the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem do not exhibit entire railway carriages. In the Imperial War Museum (Figure 4.4), the visitors walk lengthways through a partially dismantled carriage. Unlike the victims, the visitors enter the carriage not from the side, but from behind. The floor on which the visitors walk is made out of wood, as in a railway carriage, but the roof is at a much higher level. The outer side of the entrance door has been placed on the visitors' left-hand side. Explanatory texts, historical photographs and objects remind the visitors that they are actually in a museum and not in a real carriage. The visitors are thus at the same time inside and outside of the carriage – both participants and outside observers. In the Imperial War Museum, the sensation of being in the past, which the visitor might have experienced, is thus constantly disrupted by the manner in which the carriage is exhibited. It is at the end of the carriage, where the visitors leave, that they can watch a video testimony in which survivors remember the train ride. This video testimony of course serves to authenticate the railway carriage as original and as an adequate representative of history. However, it also has the effect of locating it in the past and of girding the visitors in the present. The video testimony, with its modern aesthetics and stories told in the past tense, helps to distance the visitors from the past and thus serves as a final exhibition technique that offsets full immersion.



Figure 4.4. Inside the railway carriage exhibit in the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum © Imperial War Museum

In Yad Vashem, one side of an original railway carriage has been put against a wall of the museum. Also here, unlike in the United States Memorial Museum, the carriage has not been treated like a holy relic. The carriage was purposefully destroyed for the exhibition. ‘To generate an effect of dynamism and movement I had the carriage cut at an angle, as displayed in the gallery’, observes Dorit Harel (2010: 79). In addition, planks have been sewn out, so that the concrete wall behind the carriage is clearly visible. While the Imperial War Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum represent departure and the journey to the camps, Yad Vashem has used the railway carriage to represent arrival. Dorit Harel (2010: 79) observes that she wanted ‘visitors to feel they themselves have just got off the train’. Thus, like in the case of the Leszno Street, Harel wanted to impart an ‘authentic’ experience on the visitors – to make them feel ‘as if’ they were in the past.

However, again, like in the case of the Leszno Street, this feeling is broken through the means of exhibition that Harel has chosen. Not only is the railway carriage damaged, it is also put next to a picture of the railway tracks in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The picture seems familiar and yet puzzling. It looks like the famous historical picture of the entrance of Auschwitz-Birkenau shot by Stanisław Mucha in 1945, but it is in colour instead of in black and white. Instead of snow, it shows bright green meadows. A blue parking sign indicates that the picture has only recently been taken. Unlike the famous historical picture of the entrance of Auschwitz-Birkenau by

Mucha – which can be seen on the reverse of the panel – the picture has been shot from outside the camp rather than from the inside. The video testimony for the section has been placed on the floor of the carriage. Like the exhibition of the railway carriage in the Imperial War Museum, the exhibition design invites visitors to take on several positions at the same time. While they are supposed to feel as if they are just getting off the railway carriage, they stand in front of a present-day picture of the outside gate to Auschwitz-Birkenau and look at a carriage designed to simulate movement, on which they also see a video with survivors talking about the past. The visitors are invited to be at once in the past and in the present, observers and participants, tourists and witnesses to history. The modern aesthetics of the video testimony and the past tenses used by the witnesses to history help to disrupt an experience that is supposed to make them feel as if they were part of history themselves: the visitors' experience in the present is corrected by the witnesses' memory of what it felt like at the time.

Andrew Hoskins (2003: 12) has argued that the exhibition in the Imperial War Museum 'creates an experience of an "illusion of simultaneity" of "being there" at points in history as one can "see" events ahead, but more often one can "hear" from ahead and behind'. He criticizes the exhibition's 'presentist perspective' (Hoskins 2003: 15f) for ignoring memory's 'present and "ongoing" interpretation and re-interpretation of the past'. I would argue that rather than inducing the visitor to have a 'presentist' experience, the exhibitions in both the Imperial War Museum and in Yad Vashem constantly disrupt this experience. While the way in which the railway carriage is exhibited in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum invites visitors to immerse themselves emotionally in the past, the modes of exhibition of the railway carriages in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum also inculcate a sense of distance from that past. The railway carriages in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum make clear the link between the past and the present, between communicative and cultural memory. The past, as it is exhibited in Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum, is not quite over, but it is also no longer fully there. The railway carriages can never be used again and the entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau shown in Yad Vashem has now become a tourist destination. A real picture of the past, the exhibition design tells visitors, can only be found in the memory of the witnesses of the past, and even there it is no longer complete. In a way, the dismantled railway carriages can be interpreted as reflecting the memory of the witnesses to history in the video testimonies, with all its distortions and gaps. The natural process of remembering and forgetting is represented by the deliberate process of

cutting out pieces and reshuffling others in order to prepare the railway carriages for exhibition.

Above, I have observed that the postmodern museum tends to put its own authority into question. Not unlike in the case of the heaps of shoes, by dismantling original objects before putting them into the museums, both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum reflect the very process of exhibiting in which objects are taken out of one context and put into the context of the exhibition. The destruction of the object in combination with the video testimonies that are located on the threshold between the 'now' and the 'then' impede a fully 'authentic' experience – and therefore possibly a 'prosthetic memory' as it is understood by Alison Landsberg. In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the visitor, when being inside the carriage, might – at least for a split second – forget that she or he is in a museum. Landsberg (2004: 137) even retells how when seeing smoke in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she for a moment was afraid of being gassed. It is of course difficult to guess whether other visitors did or would have felt the same as her. Nevertheless, the exhibition in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum allows for immersion. In Yad Vashem and in the Imperial War Museum, on the other hand, we instead find an interplay of authentication and de-authentication on the level of the visitor experience. This interplay in turn is the basis for an authentication of the narrative of the exhibition and the means of exhibition as adequate representatives of the past.

As observed above, Yad Vashem represents the Holocaust as a horrible passage of the Jewish people on the way to Eretz Israel. This narrative is underlined through a constant reminder to the visitors that this past is over – that they are in a museum. Also in the Imperial War Museum, the Holocaust is represented as an event from which we need to draw lessons, but nevertheless as an event in the past. In the final chapter of the exhibition, the museum shows two video screens. On one of those screens, the witnesses to history reflect on their experiences and on how those experiences have marked them. On the other one, pictures of the sites of terror as they can be seen today are shown. In the Imperial War Museum, the remains of the past are therefore shown to exist on an individual level in the psyche of the victims – however, the past itself, as the pictures of the sites of terror show, is undeniably over. In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, on the other hand, the past is represented as continuing in the present. After having visited the Holocaust exhibition, visitors are invited to visit an exhibition on post-Holocaust genocides. Also, in the Imperial War Museum, the visitor can of course visit exhibitions on conflicts that happened after the Holocaust. However,

the exhibitions in the Imperial War Museum appear as separate entities rather than as merging into one another. The experiential character of the exhibition at the United States Memorial Museum can therefore be interpreted as a reflection of its narrative that shows the past as going on in the present – although in a slightly altered form. In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, visitors are invited to feel like victims and draw their lessons from this feeling of helplessness and submission. In both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum, on the other hand, full immersion, like in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is prevented.

Moreover, not unlike in the case of the heaps of shoes, both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum authenticate their exhibition by reflecting on the character of the exhibition as representation and by commenting on an icon of the Holocaust. The railway carriage in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a classic example of a dilemmatic authenticity. Nobody knows whether the carriage was actually used in order to transport Holocaust victims. When the carriage arrived at the museum from Poland, it looked too new and was then restored to what was supposed to be its Second World War look (Hansen-Glucklich 2014: 140; Shenker 2015: 66). In this way, the means of representation were used to represent the carriage as unrepresented. The Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem, on the other hand, unmask the carriages as representation by partially destroying them. A prosthetic memory – if at all possible – is here constantly put into perspective.

The Emptiness of the Original Site: Archaeological Finds and Video Testimonies in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial

Visitors to the Bergen-Belsen Memorial typically enter the site of the former concentration camp after having visited the permanent exhibition that is located in a new, massive, bare, grey concrete building. When entering the exhibition, visitors see on their left-hand side, along the wall, ten dark grey steles with inbuilt flatscreens with video testimonies. The witnesses to history in these video testimonies talk about their life before and their journey to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. On the right-hand side, the history of Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp and the Prisoners' of War Camps on Lüneburg Heath is illustrated through copies of pictures and documents printed onto dark grey panels, as well as through video testimonies and scattered objects or reproductions. At the end of the building, a glass wall opens onto a view of the area of the former concentration camp dominated by forests and meadows. In front of this glass wall, between the exhibition and the video testimonies, several glass cases have been inlaid

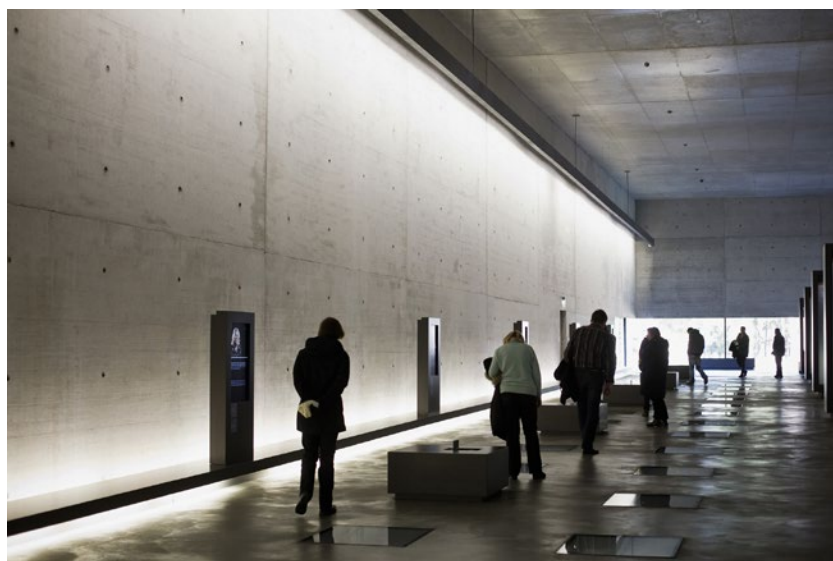


Figure 4.5. View of the permanent exhibition at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial with the video testimonies and the archaeological finds on the left-hand side © Helge Krückeberg/Bergen-Belsen Memorial

into the floor. Here, archaeological finds from excavations carried out on the location of the former camp are exhibited (see Figure 4.5).

It is the site itself that is the most important museum object of concentration-camp memorials. However, very often, little about the original site is original. At least in Western Germany, the former concentration camps were, in and after 1945, either left to decay, used for alternative purposes or transformed into graveyards with corresponding landscape architecture. The original camp infrastructure was destroyed or considerably changed, both by the perpetrators before their retreat and by the liberators (Mußmann 2001). In Bergen-Belsen, the original wooden barracks were burnt by the British liberators in their attempt to fight the epidemics that were raging through the camp at its liberation. A total of 14,000 former inmates died even after liberation on 15 April 1945 (Rahe 2001: 82). By October 1945, a little over six months after liberation, Brigadier MacReady of the British military government gave orders to Hinrich Wilhelm Kopf, President of the Hannover province at the time, to present him with an adequate garden design that would turn Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp into a place of remembrance. Ironically, the first architect who was commissioned to come up with a design had been a member of the Nazi Party and the second one, Wilhelm Hübötter, had worked for the SS.

Although, because of discussions about his past, his collaboration in the project ended before its realization in the summer of 1946, the present landscape architecture of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial still harks back to Hübötter's plans. Hübötter had, amongst other things, foreseen the exclusive use of domestic plants (a landscape practice in accordance with the Nazi ideology of blood and soil) and took as his inspiration First World War memorials (Wolschke-Bulmahn 2001; Wiedemann 2010).

The landscape architecture in Bergen-Belsen indeed blends perfectly into the heathland surrounding the memorial. A major part of the area that used to be Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp consists of meadows, forests and the typical plants on Lüneburg Heath. Only the mass graves that – according to Hübötter's plan – are marked by burial mounds, several monuments and single Jewish graves, point to the history of the place. Behind the mass graves, a massive, thirty-metre-high obelisk and a commemorative wall have been erected. Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (2001: 276) hits the mark when he observes that 'for many visitors it is an impressive and moving experience to look from the entrance over the large expanse to the obelisk. The view back from the obelisk is mainly dominated by the aesthetics of the beautiful heather landscape, in which the mass graves, the Jewish monument, and the symbolic gravestones, are easily overlooked'. Only in recent years has a landscape-architecture plan been adopted – one that has seen the opening up of the foundations of the old camp buildings. Signs now illustrate the camp topography (Wiedemann 2010: 216–217). Moreover, an app has been developed, with the help of which visitors can explore the old camp infrastructure in augmented reality (Pacheco et al. 2014).

In judging the landscape architectures at Bergen-Belsen Memorial, Olaf Mußmann (2001: 16) talks of 'elysische Landschaften' (Elysian landscapes) and observes: 'Those places are exclusively dedicated to mourning and eternal peace, but not to reflection on history. This kind of landscape architecture historicises with its negation of the authentic remnants. It assigns the past events to another era.' Mußmann's criticism might be slightly anachronistic in that it judges a past practice of commemoration from the point of view of a present-day memorial culture. However, it remains true that the landscape of what used to be Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp is uncannily idyllic. Or, to come back to Mohn, Strub and Wartemann's problem of authentication, doubts about the transparency of representation appear. The means of representation and what is to be represented do not seem to match at first sight.

The complete absence of 'authentic' in the sense of 'original' buildings at Bergen-Belsen therefore poses the problem of authenticating this place.

One strategy adopted by the curators is the inclusion of video testimonies into the permanent exhibition. The witnesses to history add the historical reflection that Mußmann does not find in the memorial's landscape. They point to the site's forgotten human life – or rather to its past inhuman conditions. Together with the objects and the documents in the museum and the demarcations on the territory, they authenticate the place as original and as a legitimate – if in this case not for everybody an adequate – representative of history.

However, through the way in which the video testimonies are exhibited in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, the visitor is also invited to reflect on the intractable void that followed the mass murder, as well as the destruction of the historical buildings after liberation. This is for one thing due to the contrast of video testimonies with archaeological finds. The museum texts accompanying the archaeological finds merely indicate the site of the find itself – no other indication on the objects is given. Indeed, for some of the finds, it is not certain whether they date from the time of the concentration camp or from some other time. In order to show that the finds are 'only a fraction of the relics from the thousands of people imprisoned at this vast site ... some of the floor displays were left empty' (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 25). The display cases with the archaeological finds are located in close proximity to the video testimonies. Benches with headphones for video testimonies alternate with the display cases where the archaeological finds are inlaid into the floor. The size of the benches corresponds exactly to the size of the display cases. Nevertheless, the archaeological finds and the video testimonies do not come into contact with each other (Figure 4.6). The archaeological finds are presented as empty objects that, to come back to Sebald's (2001: 23) first-person narrator, show that 'the world is, so to say, draining itself'. Through the direct juxtaposition of the display cases with the archaeological finds with the video testimonies, the stories that the witnesses narrate also appear as exceptions. The finds underline the exemplary character of the video testimonies. Their juxtaposition authenticates an exhibition narrative according to which both are insufficient remains of a large bulk of stories that have either disappeared or have not been told. The video testimonies that are never directly connected to the finds underline their random character.

This presentation of the video testimonies as part of an incomplete series of similar stories is further underlined by the aesthetics of the testimonies and their spatial integration into the exhibition design. The video testimonies in Bergen-Belsen, like most video testimonies, have been filmed in front of a black background and with a focus on the face. Although the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, unlike many other museums, has



Figure 4.6. View of the section with the archaeological finds and the video testimonies at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial © Helge Krückeberg/Bergen-Belsen Memorial

added short biographies to the video testimonies and has refrained from dubbing them – thus maintaining a certain individuality of the witnesses to history – all video testimonies are optically the same. In this way, the video testimonies appear as representatives for similar stories. They are placed along the highest wall of the exhibition building. This building can be read as a representation of the history of the place at an aesthetic level. Its big, empty, grey surfaces contribute to an oppressive atmosphere, reproducing the emptiness of the site of the former concentration camp. Placed along the grey wall, the video testimonies appear as highlights that nevertheless nearly disappear into the big grey space. Although they are one of the main focal points for the visitors when entering the exhibition, they are virtually swallowed up by the massive architecture of the documentation centre: the void is more important than they are. Through the architecture and the arrangement of the video testimonies, the exhibition therefore reflects on itself as an insufficient representation. In the sense of Mohn, Strub and Wartemann's instrumental authenticity, the exhibition makes use of first-level representations like pictures, documents and video testimonies. However, the exhibition design itself serves as a second-level representation making apparent the gaps in representation that inevitably appear in any attempt to represent the history of Bergen-Belsen.

The Complexity of the Place: The 'Walther-Werke' in the Neuengamme Memorial

Not only the dismantlement of the original buildings can lead to a problem of authentication. Such a problem can also appear when a large part of the original structure is still visible. At Neuengamme Concentration Camp, prisoners were – amongst other things – forced to work in armory production. Part of this production was a workshop from the Carl-Walther GmbH, the so-called 'Walther-Werke'. Today, the red-brick building that housed the workshop hosts the exhibition 'Mobilisation for the Wartime Economy: Concentration Camp Prisoners as Slave Labourers in Armaments Production' (Figure 4.7). The room that the visitor enters is bright. Large windows border three of its walls. On the wall opposite the entrance, two inscriptions read 'FAHRRAD + SCHLÜSSELWERKSTATT' (bicycle + key-workshop) and 'WERKZEUGAUSGABE' (tool store). Some machines and tools such as a double die cutter, a cart, a wheelbarrow, a hammer and a smithy's hearth with the inscription 'Rauchen Verboten' (No smoking) stand in the middle of the room. Here, a video testimony has also been placed (Figure 4.8).

The room, just like the whole memorial, eschews all sense of a concentration camp, or of slave labour, that visitors might bring with them. The rooms of the former barracks in which the main exhibition is located



Figure 4.7. View of the building of the former Walther-Werke at the Neuengamme Memorial © Emily Mohney/Neuengamme Memorial

are bright and have white walls. On the site of the former memorial, on a path of red pebble stones that leads, at least during the summer, through sap-green meadows, the names of the capitals of the home countries of Neuengamme Concentration Camp prisoners have been marked with flagging. Beside the path, benches invite the visitor to sit down. 'I expected it to be more shocking – to be a real concentration camp as it is in the movies. But when I walked around it was just buildings', observes a participant of a youth-work camp at the memorial in an introductory film in the lobby of the main exhibition (cited in Eschebach 2008: 40). Most of the other visitors in the film share her opinion.

Neuengamme belongs to that group of concentration camps that were used for alternative purposes after liberation. A reorganization of the buildings had already begun by the time the SS ordered their clearance with the approaching Allied frontline. Further transformations followed when the camp was turned into a prison after it had been handed over to the city of Hamburg in 1948. The old wooden barracks were torn down and prison workshops were installed in the old armoury factories. The so-called 'Schonungsblock' (sparing block), where weakened prisoners were forced to braid by the SS and that, because of its high death rate, used to be called the 'Sterbeblock' (death block), was refurbished for the prison administration. Other blocks were turned into a hospital, a kitchen or storage rooms (Garbe 2001: 51ff). The 'Walther-Werke' became a prison workshop. After the detention centre had been closed, all the prison buildings, except for one wall, were torn down. Today, there are more visible remnants from the topography of the old concentration camp than there are from the detention centres. The fundamentals of the old barracks have been dug out and marked with stones, and the old roll-call ground has been reconstructed. In some of the old barracks and workshops, exhibitions have been installed, while others host the administration of the Memorial.

This absence of clear memorial icons recalling representations of concentration camps in films such as *Schindler's List* or the TV series *Holocaust* poses a challenge. The friendly and bright rooms of the exhibitions may give the impression that everything was not so bad after all. The workshop in the 'Walther-Werke' could at first sight be a room in a museum of labour or industry. Moreover, like the finds in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, the exhibited tools and objects eschew complete auraticization and authentication. The museum texts present the origin of the tools from the time of the concentration camp as probable but not certain. The text that accompanies two shovels, for instance, reads: 'Two coal shovels given to the memorial in 2000 by Penal Facility XX. All *probably* date back to the time before 1945'

(my italics). On a first level, the room is therefore authenticated through the documents that are shown, the written eyewitness reports and – especially – through the video testimony in the middle. Here, former slave labourers tell stories about their experiences in the ‘Walther-Werke’.

However, while authenticating the room on the level of object authentication, the video testimony does not fully disrupt the impression communicated by the aesthetics of the room. On the one hand, the stories of the witnesses to history also do not transmit the image of ‘a real concentration camp as it is in the movies’. The majority of the survivors in the video do not tell stories of mistreatment, but rather of – if one compares them to the situation in the camp – humane working conditions. In the workshops at least, it was warm, they relate, and working there gave them a break from the mistreatment at the hands of the SS. On the other hand, the aesthetics of the video testimonies underline an impression of homeliness. Unlike the video testimonies in most museums, the video testimonies in the Neuengamme Memorial were, until a couple of years ago, not shown on flatscreens but on tube televisions. Due to the fact that the Neuengamme Memorial started recording video testimonies comparatively early, before a clear aesthetics for video testimonies had been developed, and that many of the videos have by now reached a considerable age, most of the videos have a rather amateurish character. They have, for example, been shot in the living rooms of the witnesses to history instead of in front of a monochromatic background. The lighting techniques, the camera angle and focus have not been as meticulously planned here as for most video testimonies recorded at a later date.

That the video testimonies, and the exhibition design, have a more inviting and homely character than in, say, the documentation centre in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is not a mere coincidence. In fact, the curators tried to prevent imposing an aesthetics of horror onto the site. The video testimonies are supposed to underline this effect (Garbe interview 2009). The example of the Neuengamme Memorial demonstrates how complex communicating the history of concentration camps can be, especially on the original sites. The Memorial, with all of the distortions that it has received since 1945, can only marginally communicate what the camp was like at the time. It is therefore always overshadowed by preconceptions of the camp derived from sources other than its material remains, as the statement by the participant of the youth camp illustrates. Films play an important role here, but also the pictures and films shot by the Allies at the liberation of the camp – especially, as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, the heaps of corpses and the pictures of haggard prisoners taken at the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

The historian Harold Marcuse (1993) sees two trends in the communication of the history of concentration camps: the idea of the 'sauberes KZ' (clean camp) and the idea of the 'dreckiges KZ' (dirty camp). The first idea goes back to National Socialist propaganda. According to the idea of the 'clean camp', everything was not so bad after all. This idea was deeply ingrained in large parts of the German population, especially in the first decades after the War. The second idea goes back to the pictures of corpses and haggard prisoners that were taken after the liberation of the camps. The mass-mediation of those pictures, along with fictional representations of the Holocaust, has led to the consolidation of the image of the 'dirty camp', so that this image is now the dominant one. However, the idea of the 'dirty camp' is, as Marcuse (1993) points out, one-dimensional:

it does not take into account the temporal and spatial development of the concentration-camp system. The heaps of corpses are understood as the normal condition of the concentration camps since 1933, and the systematic extermination of people through gas as a plan that existed since the 'beginning'. As horrible as the conditions in the German concentration camps were from the first day, the situation in the early 1940s and at the end of the war was the worst, while the use of prisoners in the armaments production brought with it a certain amelioration of the conditions at the beginning. There were also big differences between the different camps: Dachau and Buchenwald offered almost 'advantageous' chances of survival compared to Mauthausen or Flossenbürg, which in turn were outdone in horror by Auschwitz and Majdanek.

In the Neuengamme Memorial, the visitor is obliged to call into question precisely this idea of a 'dirty camp': the Neuengamme Memorial appears clean. Marcuse (1993) himself pleads for a multidimensional representation of the 'dirty camp'. In such a representation, the full complexity of the camp structure and the differences between the different conditions in the respective camps would come into their own.

It is exactly such a multidimensional representation that is communicated effectively through the video testimony in the clean, bright room of the 'Walther-Werke' still showing traces of its post-1945 use. The aesthetics and the content of the video testimony help to construct and underline the exhibition design, which prevents an 'aestheticization of horror' and to authenticate an exhibition narrative that eschews clear answers and constantly makes apparent the different uses of the place before and after 1945. Filmed in their living rooms, the witnesses to history in the Neuengamme Memorial are more clearly individuated than in most other museums. The video testimony underlines the different sociocultural backgrounds of

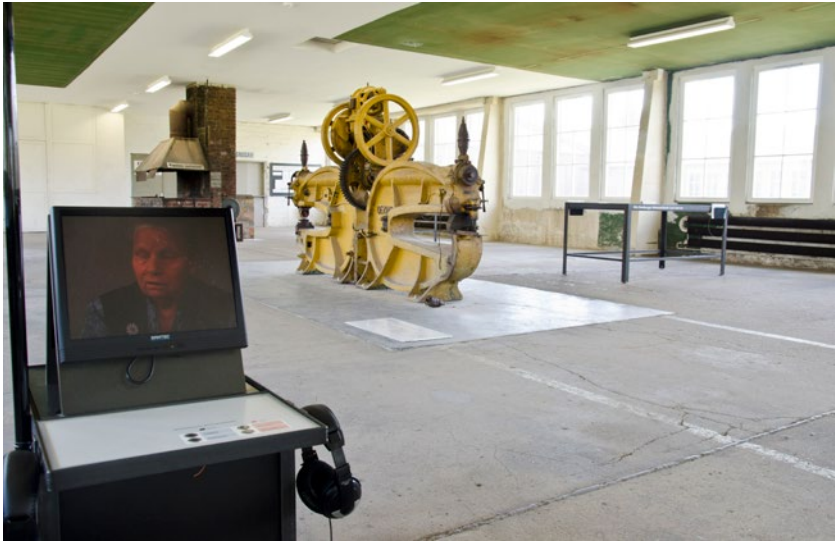


Figure 4.8. View of the ‘Mobilisierung für die Kriegswirtschaft’ exhibition at the Neuengamme Memorial © Emily Mohny/Neuengamme Memorial

the witnesses to history; they appear as ordinary men with different lives and consequentially different communicative and individual memories (cf. Bösch (2008: 68) for a similar argument on video testimonies in TV documentaries). The content of the video testimony in turn legitimates the exhibition aesthetics. The witnesses to history tell stories that do not embellish anything, but nor do they depict conditions as worse than they were. In this sense, the video testimonies help to authenticate the aesthetics of the exhibition design of the Neuengamme Memorial that might otherwise seem inauthentic to many visitors – in the sense that it does not correspond to their expectations.

Digital Reconstruction of the Site: The Treblinka Exhibit in Yad Vashem

In some concentration-camp memorials, the problem of the lack of original traces at the original sites has been countered with the introduction of audioguides with testimonies from former prisoners, often read out by actors. This is, for example, the case in the Neuengamme Memorial, the Sachsenhausen Memorial and the Dachau Memorial. In specific spots on the memorial sites, the visitors can listen to what former camp inmates endured in those locations. Also, digital reproductions of the camp are becoming more and more common (Knoch 2017).

Yad Vashem uses a digital reproduction of Treblinka Extermination Camp in its exhibition chapter on the so-called ‘Final Solution’. The

reproduction is linked to, and probably based on, the testimony of a member of the 'Sonderkommando' and thus of the group of prisoners who were forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria. While the witness to history is speaking about the camp and the different stations that the victims had to go through on their way to the gas chambers, the digital model of the camp changes. The visitor is effectively led from one location to another.

The authentication of this reconstruction of Treblinka as an adequate and faithful representation of the past happens through a juridical and a moral discourse carried by the witness to history. The exhibition chapter on Treblinka is placed on the entrance to the 'Final Solution' exhibition chapter. 'For illustrating the world of the extermination camps, the design team had only a few items to work with', writes Dorit Harel (2010: 80). Treblinka Extermination Camp itself was dismantled by the perpetrators as early as 1943. The digital reconstruction of Treblinka is therefore exemplary for the lack of exhibits available to represent the industrialized mass murder. It is mirrored later on in the exhibition chapter by Jan Stobierski's plaster model of the gas chambers in Auschwitz (see the subheading 'Mass Murder and Personal Stories' above). The witness to history in the video testimony that is placed next to the digital reconstruction here takes on the role of a 'moral witness' in the sense suggested by Aleida Assmann (2006: 88ff; see Chapter 1): he has got both a mission of truth and a juridical mission. The member of the 'Sonderkommando' in the video testimony in Yad Vashem acts as a guide – though one that is distanced in time and space from the location that he guides the visitors through. In this way, he repeats the role of survivor witnesses in the trials against concentration-camp guards and so-called 'Funktionshäftlinge' (prisoner functionaries), giving testimony on what had been destroyed and what could not be seen anymore. However, the testimony of the witness to history in Yad Vashem no longer serves a juridical end. Instead, it invites visitors to become morally responsible secondary witnesses to the testimony of the witness to history. This mission is emphasized through the presentation of the video testimony and the digital reconstruction. The videos that contain both the testimony and the digital reconstruction of the camp can be seen on two adjacent walls. On each wall, the video testimony is flanked by two digital reproductions. The visitor is thus surrounded by the video testimonies and the Treblinka reconstructions. He or she 'visits' the camp and listens to the testimony several times simultaneously. This multiple exhibition of both the digital reproduction and the video testimony in turn emphasizes the 'truth' of the witness to history's testimony on the level of object authentication. It also authenticates the

reproduction as an adequate representation of the past for a place where all physical remains have been wiped out. Ironically, therefore, the multiple simultaneous screening of both the video testimony and the reproduction emphasize the absence of remains of the mass extermination at Treblinka.

Authentication, whether on the level of object authentication, narrative authentication, exhibition authentication or visitor experience authentication, is, as the examples above show, always an interplay between exhibition strategies. The supposed authenticity of video testimonies as accurate representations of an untainted memory makes them particularly apt to serve as authenticating means. As we have seen, video testimonies serve to authenticate historical objects as originals and as adequate representatives of history by linking them to the stories that they, in the sense of Sebald's first-person narrator, have been emptied of. That these stories are only in rare cases directly connected to the objects themselves seems only marginally relevant. The individual video testimonies are used to stand in for other, similar stories.

However, while the witnesses to history's gestures and facial expressions are interpreted as untainted expressions of the traces that the past has left on their psyche, the fact that video testimonies show people in modern attire who tell stories about the past, underlines the fact that this past is actually over. While video testimonies appear as authentic representations of the past, they never fully disguise their modern character; they are located on the threshold between the present and the past. In museums, they therefore also serve to negotiate the character of objects as symbols of transience and as remnants of forgotten human life. If Korff observed that the 'authentic' museum experience emanates from the original object that brings the past closer to us but also distances it again, video testimonies intensify this experience. Video testimonies therefore also serve to reflect on exhibitions as representation. Museums like the Imperial War Museum, Yad Vashem, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial and the Neuengamme Memorial are self-reflexive exhibitions. In the sense of instrumental authenticity, they authenticate their exhibitions by making apparent their status as representations. The use of video testimonies prevents a full immersion of the visitors in the represented past. At the same time, the particular ways in which the video testimonies are used serve to authenticate the means of exhibition and the exhibition narratives as adequate ways to represent the past. In Yad Vashem, the overwhelming presence of video testimonies puts the focus on the struggle for survival of the victims and underlines a Zionist exhibition narrative according to

which this struggle has ultimately led to a better present in the State of Israel. In the Imperial War Museum, the audio testimonies underline a focus on the deeds of the perpetrators that need to be prevented in the future. In Bergen-Belsen the video testimonies underline an exhibition design that reflects on itself as never being able to represent the past in a sufficient way and an exhibition narrative according to which the exhibits can always only serve as insufficient representatives of the entire story. In the Neuengamme Memorial, the video testimonies, by underlining the multiple layers of the history of the camp, serve to authenticate an exhibition design that, at first sight, might seem inauthentic because it does not correspond to representations of the Holocaust in popular culture and an exhibition narrative that makes apparent the full complexity of the camp structure and its uses after 1945.

Using video testimonies in museums is a new phenomenon. It is also a phenomenon of a time in which museums no longer need objects to be accepted as adequate representations of the past, as the example of the Museo Diffuso shows. As has been shown, witnesses to history can serve as particularly authoritative means to authenticate exhibitions at the same time as they constantly remind the visitors that the museal representation is exactly this – a representation *ex post facto*. The use of witnesses to history is therefore also a phenomenon of the postmodern self-reflexive museum that puts its own authority into question. However, this self-reflexivity does not extend to the video testimonies themselves. None of the museums that I have analysed refers to the video testimonies' character as narrative constructions of individual memory recorded on film. Nowhere does the visitor get information on the interview situation, on the interviewers' background or on the interviewee's current situation. Instead, the witnesses to history's memory are represented as unrepresented – and the video testimonies as 'magical authenticity'.

Video Testimonies and Photography and Film

Film, and especially photographic pictures, have become amongst the most widely used means to represent the Second World War and the Holocaust in museums and exhibitions. The musealization of the Holocaust and the Second World War is part of a visualization that started straight after the war. The same pictures have here been used and reused in multiple different contexts and media – in newspapers, school books, documentaries, history books, exhibitions and art works – and have now become an important part of individual and cultural memory. They have, in historian

Cornelia Brink's (1998) words, become 'Ikonen der Vernichtung' (icons of extermination). The pedagogue Matthias Heyl (2004: 125) lists six pictures that come to everybody's mind when thinking about the Holocaust: the silhouette of the entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau; the signs saying 'Jedem das Seine' ('To Each His Own') and 'Arbeit macht frei' ('Work Sets You Free') on the gates to the camps; the picture of a Jewish boy in the Warsaw ghetto with his hands held up high being driven by armed men; the portrait of Anne Frank looking up from her exercise book; the pictures of heaps of corpses from the liberated camps; the picture of a half-dead survivor in Bergen-Belsen, clothed in rags and stretched out on his back; and the picture of the Sintizza Settela Steinbach with a headscarf looking out of the railway carriage of a deportation train from Westerbork. Indeed, a look at the daily newspapers – especially on the dates of commemoration – or a Google search for 'Auschwitz' or 'Holocaust' is enough to prove that we are constantly surrounded by these same pictures.

Photographs rate amongst the most convincing evidence. We trust our visual senses more than any other. We might mistrust the account of an event until we have seen photographs of it. Although we are aware of the potential to manipulate them, photographs and films still count amongst the most trustworthy sources. Perhaps the main reason why the Allies took pictures and filmed everything upon liberating the camps was that they wanted to be able to give evidence at a later date. The pictures were to prove what seemed unbelievable. In Bergen-Belsen, the British Army Film and Photographic Unit directly placed SS guards, camp physicians, former prisoners and members of the British contingent responsible for the administration of the camp after its liberation in front of mass graves and heaps of corpses, thereby combining oral evidence – or denial and attempts at justification – with visual evidence (Caven 2001; Haggith 2007: 74f).

Photographic pictures and film are generally accepted as a reproduction of reality rather than questioned as a representation ('Darstellung'). That they are the product of both a mechanical device – the camera – and the photographer's interpretation of reality is rarely taken into consideration. Thus, Cornelia Brink (1998: 9) observes: 'Because those pictures are for the most part taken as reality and not as a specific photographic adaptation of reality that needs to be analysed, they are primarily received in an emotional way.' Brink argues that with regard, in particular, to the pictures of the Holocaust, it seems almost a moral obligation not to question them: 'one knows what they are supposed to communicate and to prove, before one has really looked at the pictures' (1998: 9). Paul Williams (2007: 51), analysing the use of photography in museums,

points out that ‘although the camera was undeniably present, it is a notable initial paradox that, in the museum context, photographs are typically viewed as interpretive illustrations rather than as objects that existed in the world at the time’. Both Brink and Williams argue for an analysis of the pictures as historical sources and an exhibition that takes their production context into account.

In fact, the use of pictures as icons means that pictures that were taken at one specific moment and for a specific purpose come to represent a whole time period. With regard to the pictures taken by the Allies following the liberation of the camps, Detlef Claussen (1987: 149f), for example, observes that they are part of a false impression, one that:

consists of the illusion that the heaps of corpses are the reality of the concentration camp, whereas they are the result of a development process in the brutal sense of the word. We only see heaps of corpses because the crematoria in overcrowded Bergen-Belsen failed during the chaotic final phase of the Third Reich ... That is the only reason why we see heaps of corpses in the films. During the time that the concentration camps were operating normally, the dead were burned straight away.

The reasons behind why the pictures were taken are often not called into question. Only a few pictures exist of the time of the mass shootings and the time when the camps were actively working. These pictures were taken either as part of propaganda, by soldiers and SS guards as unofficial keepsakes or, very rarely, by inmates with smuggled cameras. The point of view and identity of the photographer in question is an important guide for how those pictures are to be interpreted. Many of the pictures that have today become ‘icons of extermination’ and that are used to represent the deeds of the perpetrators had at the time been taken as propaganda material representing, for example, the ‘degeneration’ of the ‘Jewish race’. In a worst-case scenario, an uncritical exhibition of these pictures will lead to the reproduction of the gaze of the perpetrators (Brink 1998: 209ff; Heyl 2004: 125).

The problems that can arise when photographs are exhibited without being sufficiently scientifically interpreted became apparent with the exhibition ‘Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’ (‘War of Annihilation. Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 until 1944’) by the Hamburg Social Research Institute, which toured thirty-three German and Austrian cities between 1995 and 1999. The exhibition, which drew almost 900,000 visitors, caused an unexpected stir in Germany. It met with protests and vandalism by right-wing extremist groups. Criticism of – or uncritical indulgence in – the exhibition became a question of positioning oneself either on the left side or on the right

side of the political spectrum. Eventually, charges that the photographs used in the exhibition had been unduly labelled were advanced against the curators. In 1999, the organizers decided to close the exhibition and assigned a commission to revise the use of photographs. The commission came to the conclusion that ‘the photographs had been carelessly sourced and sloppily used’ (Williams 2007: 59; Musial 2011). As a consequence, it developed criteria for the use of photography in museums. The commission recommended: first, that the archive from which a photograph is taken should be clearly stated; second, that the author of a given caption should be named; third, that the date, place and photographer should be specified and the people on the photograph named; and, finally, that the photographs should not be retouched, cropped or blown up (Thiemeyer 2010: 301ff). In 2001, a revised exhibition was opened under the title ‘Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944’ (‘Crimes of the Wehrmacht: Dimensions of the War of Annihilation 1941–1944’). It toured eleven cities in Germany, Luxembourg and Austria.

The closing down of the exhibition ‘Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’ was the consequence of insufficient scientific precision. As a result of the exhibition, the requirement of being historically and scientifically precise when exhibiting photographs in museums became an important issue. Source criticism is not the only challenge that arises when exhibiting the photographs and films of extermination. In recent years, the question has been raised as to whether pictures of haggard prisoners and heaps of corpses should be used as an educational tool at all.

Photographs from the liberated camps were shown by the Allies as part of the re-education programmes in Germany. The pictures were, and often still are, uncritically used as an admonition for the future. Brink observes:

Hardly anybody who published the pictures at the time [i.e. during the 1960s] in order to educate people about the crimes – not even the concentration-camp survivors – doubted that they would cause spontaneous horror of the deed, repugnance against the perpetrators and compassion with the victims. The general expectation was that the pictures would admonish their viewers, that what was shown therein was never to happen again. (Brink 1998: 203)

Since the mid 1980s, more and more memorials in Western Germany have become public institutions. As a consequence, questions about the didactics of history in general, and contemporary history in particular, have been discussed with ever more fervour. As a result of these discussions, the exhibition of pictures from the liberated camps has become a question

of ethics. In Germany, deprecatory words like ‘Leichenbergpädagogik’ (pedagogics of heaps of corpses) and ‘Schockpädagogik’ (shock pedagogics) are used in discussions to describe the undertheorized use of the pictures in historical education. Brink (1998: 204ff) discerns two positions in these discussions. One of them takes the victims shown on the pictures as the starting point for its reflections. This position asks questions like: is it morally justifiable to show the victims in the moment of their worst humiliation? Would the people in the pictures have wanted to be shown emaciated, dirty, in rags, half-naked, at the moment of being tortured or publicly exposed? And is it consequently voyeuristic to look at these pictures? The second position takes the targets of the pictures as their starting point. The questions that are asked here are: should people be forced to look at the pictures? Does the shock that these pictures necessarily evokes in the viewer have the intended effect? Might it not rather invite the viewers to look away, to try to distance themselves from the events and to locate them in a past that is long gone? Or might the viewers even be fascinated by the brutality shown on the pictures? And with the media’s overwhelming and neverending portrayal of pictures of atrocities, is it still possible to shock anybody anymore? Will the pictures meet with mere indifference? Thus, if with museum objects we found a dialectic between their function as bearers of forgotten human life and their function as symbols of transience, we find in the photographs and films of atrocities a push and pull between their function as historical sources and as evidence, their use as admonitions for the future and the voyeurism that might entail.

Another element that needs to be considered when analysing the exhibition of pictures of extermination is the ‘aura’ of the pictures. Unlike what Walter Benjamin (who wrote at a time when the use of film and photography was still in its early stages) anticipated, the ‘age of mechanical reproduction’ has not led to a loss of aura. On the contrary, historical photography and film are currently received as highly auratic (Huysen 2000: 30). Although they might in theory be reproducible in mass form, the negatives of photographs have often been lost, with the consequence that the first prints are now traded as originals. A sepia-brown colouring, the lack of sharpness and perforated edges are now recognized as signs that encode a picture as a historical source. Techniques of reproduction make it possible to emphasize the traces that time has left on the pictures and – in turn – to auraticize the pictures still further. What is more, photographs of the Holocaust represent the victims at a moment of extreme suffering that, as we have seen, has been interpreted as forcing humans to breach the borders of humanity into martyrdom – an almost sacred act. These pictures have also often been taken under the most adverse conditions. That

they exist at all – or survived the war – is a wonder in itself. The status of the pictures as a miraculous relic, combined with their representation of suffering, make the pictures appear as auratic remains of the past. Again, reproduction techniques permit the subject matter of the pictures to be further emphasized by, for example, zooming into a scene of torture or execution, or by blowing up a picture to super-sized dimensions. It is this auratic status of the pictures that makes them a particularly apt educational tool in exhibitions, and might explain the frequency of their use as such. Pictures of extermination can be used both as historical sources and as means to emotionalize the visitors.

It is not my aim here to resolve whether photographs should be used in Holocaust exhibitions or not – although I tend to be sympathetic to the critics of education-through-shock and I believe that anybody who exhibits pictures of victims of any genocide or mass murder should at least consider the dignity of the victims and ask themselves what would be the least humiliating way of exhibiting them, without at the same time belittling the crimes that were committed. What I want to analyse here are the methods for the exhibition of photographs chosen in the different exhibitions, and especially the interaction between video testimonies and photographs and film footage.

Unlike objects that have survived the ages and on which traces of forgotten human life might, or might not, be detected, photographs and film appear as a direct reproduction of the past – as the frozen remains of human life that would otherwise have been forgotten. By looking at a historical picture or at historical film footage, we have the feeling of looking into the past – of seeing what it was like. Unlike video testimonies that appear as authentic representations of the past, but still as representations *ex post facto*, pictures appear as authentic because we tend to forget that they are representations.

Reflecting on the massive use of the pictures from the liberated camps, James Young (1988: 163) observes that:

of all the obscenities inflicted upon Jews during the period of the Holocaust, one of the most perverse may have been the calculated displacement of a millennium-old civilization by what David Roskies has called ‘an enormous freak show of atrocity victims’. Unfortunately, the inassimilable images of the wretched dead and survivors have become for many in America not only the sum of European Jewish civilization but also the sum of knowledge about the Holocaust and its survivors. Too often the point of departure for the ‘popular study’ of the Holocaust begins and ends with these images alone, the unmitigated horror at the end of Jewish history in continental Europe, not the conditions of history, politics, culture, and mind – or the rich history of European Jewry – that preceded it.

Young sees video testimonies as a corrective to the dehumanization and deindividualization of the victims, committed by the perpetrators and perpetuated by the mass-medial use of the pictures of humiliation:

By showing us whole human beings, however inwardly scarred they are, the video tapes rehumanize the survivors, and in so doing, rehumanize the murdered victims as well. Instead of static black-and-white images of hollow-eyed victims, we find the survivors as they are now, which suggests to us the humanity of all the victims before the war. Both victims and survivors are thus relocated in the human community, which simultaneously rehumanizes and reindividuates them. (Young 1988: 163)

In museums, video testimonies are in fact constantly put in relation to pictures and film footage. As the following analysis will show, video testimonies can have a corrective effect on the overwhelming aura of the pictures of extermination. However, in most museums, the testimonies are dominated by the aura of the pictures. Pictures are presented as the most authentic evidence, and therefore also as the most adequate means to represent the events.

Pictorial Evidence and Survivor Testimony: The Blow-ups in the Imperial War Museum and in Yad Vashem

Despite the criteria developed by the commission that revised the 'Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944' exhibition, an ever-stronger call for treating photography and film as historical sources (cf. Barnouw 1996; Brink 1998; Knoch 2001; Sontag 2003; Heyl 2004; Thiemeyer 2010) and the moral and moralizing discussions on the use of pictures of extermination, most museums still use film and photography rather uncritically as emotionalizing reproductions of the reality of the time. The video testimonies can rarely compete with the overwhelming effect of the pictures. In both the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem, blown-up pictures with men and women being humiliated, haggard prisoners and heaps of corpses are shown in ample numbers. Many of these pictures have by now attained iconic status: the young Jewish man sitting on his knees in front of a mass grave looking into the camera before he is shot, an *Einsatztruppen* soldier holding a gun to his head and numerous soldiers behind him watching this happen; the picture of the boy holding up his hands in the Warsaw ghetto (referred to by Heyl); the picture of a woman carrying a child on an open field with an *Einsatztruppen* soldier behind her pointing a gun; the bulldozer pushing heaps of corpses in the liberated Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, to give only a few examples. Dorit Harel (2010: 53) justifies her use of the

pictures in Yad Vashem by claiming that ‘one means of building collective memory is through iconic photographs that are familiar to everyone and have become the foundations of a nation’s development’. For Harel, in addition to having an illustrative character, the pictures in Yad Vashem are therefore a means towards turning the (Israeli) visitors of Yad Vashem into a memorial community. The easily recognizable pictures work as cues for a process of national memorialization that also takes place outside the walls of the museum.

In both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum, the pictures are juxtaposed with video testimonies. However, the corrective effect that Young wishes for is only marginally successful. Of course, the video testimonies rehumanize the humiliated subjects on the pictures by linking them to ‘real people’. In Yad Vashem some of the video testimonies are beamed as oversized images onto walls and screens. Visitors will therefore, in addition to the blown-up photos, be repeatedly confronted with the larger-than-life faces of survivors. In both Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum, the sound of the videos is played into the open room. Even the visitor who is not consciously watching the videos will therefore hear extracts from the testimonies while looking at the blown-up photos – and the other exhibits for that matter.

Nevertheless, of the different visual layers in the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem, the photographs constitute the first layer: the video testimonies appear as subsidiary to the blown-up photographs, which affect the visitors after one look at them. Video testimonies must be approached and watched over a longer period of time in order for their messages to have an effect on visitors. Incidentally, few visitors take the time to do so. In Yad Vashem, for example, a video testimony is shown right next to a blow-up of the picture of the survivor in Bergen-Belsen (referred to by Heyl) and a video showing the liberation of the concentration camps. The picture and the video have the size of smaller cinema screens and are shown at some height above the visitor’s head on two adjacent walls. The video testimony is placed below on a small flat screen in the angle between the walls with the picture and the video. When entering the room, the visitor first sees the picture and the video with the historical footage. Only afterwards will she or he – possibly – approach the video testimony. The video testimonies therefore offer supplementary information to the evidence provided by the pictures – not the other way round.

The strong affective impact of the combination of testimonies and pictures becomes particularly apparent in the Imperial War Museum, when audio testimonies instead of video testimonies are used in the section on the ‘Final Solution’. In order to be able to listen properly to one of

the testimonies in which witnesses to history talk about their experiences in the camps, the visitor must face the picture of a prisoner who committed suicide by running into the electrical wires. The combination of the picture and the video testimony has an affective impact on the visitor that could not be achieved with testimony alone; the static picture illustrates what we dare not imagine. However, since the witness to history remains invisible, the potential rehumanization that Young advocates does not take place.

Estranged Pictures and Stories: The Inclusion of Film Footage and Photographs in Video Testimonies

'Footage and stills reinforcing the testimony can and should be integrated into filmed testimonies', writes Dorit Harel (2010: 55). The addition of archival photographs and film footage to video testimonies is frequent in museums. However, the footage that is used is rarely commented on. Rather, it appears as illustration – or indeed 'reinforcement' – of what the witnesses are talking about. It authenticates the witnesses' testimony, although what is shown in the pictures does not often bear any direct relation to the testimonies themselves. In the Imperial War Museum, uncommented historical footage has been placed inbetween the video testimonies. It often shows events that the witnesses have never been part of and places where the witnesses have never set foot.

A similar correlation of video testimonies with archival footage can be found in the Museo Diffuso. The films on the table at the end of the exhibition combine archival footage with the voices of witnesses. The correlation between the pictures and what the witnesses are saying is striking. While the visitor listens, for example, to the testimony of a woman who was part of the resistance movement, who relates smuggling leaflets to factory workers in her handbag, the visitor sees two films depicting exactly what the witness is talking about. The first film shows a woman who collects leaflets in a basement, puts them into her handbag and leaves the basement. The second film shows a small bus that passes through a roadblock in front of a factory, followed by a shot showing the workers of the factory. At no point does one come to know who has shot the images and whether they are footage of real events or whether they are staged (at least the film showing the smuggling of leaflets looks staged). Both the footage and the testimony have clearly been chosen because they fit well. The video testimonies authenticate and auratize the archival footage, and vice versa, exactly because they prevent a critical evaluation of both the testimony and the pictures. In this way, both the testimony and the footage are authenticated as originals and as adequate representations of the past.

Corrected Messages: Video Testimonies and Pictures in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial

Of the exhibitions that I have visited, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is the only one that has – almost – consistently adopted the criteria developed by the commission that revised the exhibition ‘Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’. The Bergen-Belsen Memorial does not present the originals of documents and photos in its exhibition, a decision that can be explained by: the difficulty of preserving original photographic prints and documents in an exhibition; the fact that a great number of the photographs in the exhibition are stored in archives outside of the memorial; and security issues. Instead, copies of the original photographic prints have been printed onto exhibition panels. The photos and documents have been slightly enlarged, but not excessively blown up. The pictures are further shown with their original degree of brightness and with the original captions.

The memorial has acquired, for example, two collections of a series of photographs that were taken by the soldier Franz Josef Z. between August and December 1941 in the Prisoners-of-War-Camp Oerbke. The pictures were subsequently distributed amongst his comrades (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 86f). The Memorial exhibits these pictures as collections. This means that if one picture appeared in both collections, it has been reproduced twice on the exhibition panels and if captions were scribbled onto the pictures, the reverse of the photographs has been printed on the panels as well. These captions are generally even more shocking than the very pictures that show haggard, sometimes half-naked, prisoners, prisoners in provisory bullpens made out of raw wood and netting wire, and caves that the prisoners dug into the earth for protection because they were initially kept on an open field. The captions go from the blandly descriptive – ‘Here we see dead and half-dead people being taken out of their dens’, ‘Life at the camp’ or ‘Special detention cells for “runaways”’. They have to stay in these day and night for three weeks on very little food’ – to the openly sarcastic and racist – ‘Russki kaput’, ‘The development of architectural art II’ or ‘He was probably going to delouse himself. But he’s already only skin and bone’ (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 86–87). By seeing the pictures in their original state and by reading the captions on the back, the visitors can establish contact with their very first intended audience – who we know are responsible for these horrifying scenes. In other words, the visitors are invited to receive these pictures in the context in which they have been taken and to judge them as the product of the gaze of the perpetrators and not as value-free representations of life in the camp.

What is possible with the pictures taken by Franz Josef Z. is, however, not possible in all cases. Also, the exhibition chapter ‘Hunger Rations’ is

illustrated by pictures taken by German soldiers. The chapter deals with the insufficient provision of food for the Soviet prisoners of war in the camps on Lüneburg Heath between 1939 and 1945. On the pictures, visitors see large stockpots, loaves of bread being distributed and prisoners with soup plates. What the pictures do not show is what the section is actually about: hunger. The photographs show food instead of its absence. What hunger might mean is transmitted only through two extracts from written records by prisoners, and especially through the video testimony placed next to the section. Only here do visitors learn that ‘people started to eat grass’, that ‘people ate belts too’ and that hunger was ‘worse than physical pain’, that it was ‘complete hopelessness’ (Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation 2010: 62–63). The video testimonies unmask the representative character of photographs. Photographs can only ever show what is present, but not what is absent. The video testimonies have in this case the effect of de-authenticating the pictures; they illustrate that there are many more layers to the past than pictures can show.

Unlike the other museums analysed here, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial has not integrated any film footage into its video testimonies. The overwhelming film footage of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen that shocked the world at the time, and that still serves as the principal icon of a concentration camp, is shown in a separate tower. Similarly, the photographs taken by SS guards, Wehrmacht soldiers and liberators – although juxtaposed with video testimonies – are nevertheless presented at some distance from them, and the sound of the testimonies can only be listened to through headphones. The photographs and the video testimonies are in this way shown as two different sources that have to be distinguished from each other.

Only a few photographs are included with the video testimonies. They show portraits of the witnesses to history before their deportation to the camps. In this way, a bridge between the present and the past is established. We usually recognize witnesses to history today as old people reflecting on their past. The portraits from before the war show young men and women with hopes for the future – hopes that were often brutally destroyed by the war and their imprisonment. In the introductory film to the exhibition, video testimonies of survivors who remember the time before the war are combined with pictures and short biographies of men and women who died in the camps on Lüneburg Heath. This film, which is screened onto a wall, can be seen again from the second floor at the end of the exhibition. The exhibition closes with a video testimony in which the witnesses to history reflect on their life after liberation. In this way, the exhibition, with its many pictures of corpses and haggard victims, is framed by the portraits of healthy-looking men and women. The effect of the numerous pictures

of haggard prisoners and corpses in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is in this way attenuated. The witnesses to history have the last word and the video testimonies the final visual impact on the visitors. This is a similar effect to the one arrived at in the Imperial War Museum, which, as we have seen, although giving the upper hand to the pictures in the exhibition, also uses a combination of video testimonies and pictures of concentration and extermination camp memorials in its last exhibition room.

Susan Sontag (2003: 26) has observed that photographs are ‘both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy or transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality’. The same could of course be said for film. With regard to the exhibition of film and photography in memorial museums, Sontag’s first characteristic is, as I have shown, usually taken for granted, whereas the second is often overlooked. Film footage and photographs can be counted amongst the most affective exhibits. Museums with a moral mission, in particular, prefer to communicate to their visitors ‘see, this is what happened’ rather than ‘see, this is how what happened was represented by one person at a particular moment in time’. One explanation for the frequent lack of contextualization could be a fear that too much contextualization entails the danger of relativizing the deeds of the perpetrators. Showing the heaps of corpses found in Bergen-Belsen after liberation has an immediate effect on the visitors that an explanation of the historical framing of those pictures might destroy.

However, as I have shown with the example of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, video testimonies can have a corrective function on the pictures, and not only because, as James Young observes, they oppose ‘real people’ to the corpses and living skeletons on the photographs and films. Video testimonies can also oppose living memory to the photographic representation of the past. As the example of the ‘hunger rations’ section at the Bergen-Belsen Memorial shows, they can expose the character of the pictures as representation rather than reproduction of reality.

Turning this argument around, the pictures could also potentially unmask the constructed character of communicative memory – and thereby the supposed authenticity of the video testimonies. However, this effect is hardly ever achieved or, one might suspect, intended through the contrast of video testimonies with photography and film. In museums such as the Imperial War Museum or Yad Vashem, pictures are presented as the primary evidence of the past and as auratic icons, whereas the video testimonies provide further information and serve to authenticate the pictures as originals and as adequate representations of the past. In the Museo Diffuso, the correspondence between the testimonies and pictures

is so tight that no difference seems to exist between the ‘reality’ shown on the pictures and the ‘reality’ of the testimonies. In this way, the films and photographs, but also the video testimonies, come to stand as representatives of the ‘reality of war’ or ‘the reality of the Holocaust’, rather than their representative character being addressed.

Video Testimonies as Museum Objects

In this chapter, video testimonies have so far been analysed in terms of their contrast and interplay with the other main exhibits in the museums: material remains, photography and film. I have, rather enthusiastically, treated video testimonies as the remains of human life that have not yet been forgotten and that can potentially fill drained objects. As the previous chapter has already adumbrated, this is of course only part of the truth. For one thing, video testimonies are of course no direct remains of the past. They are audiovisual representations of the act of remembering. Moreover, every medium that is exhibited must necessarily be adapted to the rules of exhibition, becoming, as it were, a museum object. These rules of exhibition are of course not static. The introduction of video testimonies into museums has also necessarily changed the self-understanding of museums and the way in which they are perceived and received by visitors today. By now, it seems almost surprising not to find video testimonies in memorial museums. That said, every act of exhibiting is always linked to questions of representation, aesthetics, spatiality and timing. Video testimonies, when being put into the exhibition space, cannot be shown in the same way as in the setting of the private home, the archive or the cinema. In the following section, I will therefore analyse video testimonies as museum objects. As I will show, several techniques are used in order to turn video testimonies into museum exhibits. These techniques, in turn, serve to make video testimonies resemble traditional museum objects. Hence, if in the last section I have been concentrating on intermedial relations, I will here concentrate on intramediation – on the effect that musealization has on the medium of the video testimony.

Production versus Conservation: The Aesthetics and Aestheticization of Video Testimonies

In general, the state in which objects enter an exhibition is supposed to be their final state. Museum objects are treated in such a way as to keep their

present state for the longest possible time – at best forever. Yet this does not mean that museum objects enter the exhibition galleries in the state they entered a museum's collection. Generally, a process of conservation and restoration precedes the exhibition of an object. This process serves to highlight certain features of an object to the detriment of others and consequently favours certain readings over others. Conservators might, for example, try to bring an object as close to the state in which they expect it to have been used. Thus, pieces will be glued together in order to reconstruct a Greek vase. Curators might equally highlight traces of use or destruction. This is especially the case in Holocaust or Second World War Museums, where objects represent in the first place the destructive powers of war and genocide. The railway carriage in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum mentioned earlier would be an example of this practice.

When I asked museum professionals whether they considered video testimonies to be museum objects, some of them answered that the exhibition of video testimonies, unlike that of objects, is preceded by a pure production process and that they would therefore not consider video testimonies as museum objects (Bardgett interview 2009; Barker interview 2009). However, as I have shown in Chapter 2, not unlike the processes of restoration and conservation, it is exactly this production process that serves to conserve the witnesses to history's bodies for the future. The medium of film further allows for the witnesses' bodies and faces to be put into the right light; highlighting some features to the detriment of others. The aesthetical choices for the video testimonies, 'talking heads' on a monochromatic background, serve to emphasize the emotional expressions of witnesses to history as external signs of the internal traces that the past has left.

That is not all. The camera angle also puts into the spotlight the witnesses' aged bodies, with their age spots and wrinkles. If Gottfried Korff (2006: 120) argues that the aura of museum objects is made up of the 'forgotten human life that can be remembered through the objects', witnesses to history are endowed with an aura because they are the human life that has not yet disappeared. Video testimonies are, as morbid as this may sound, conserved remains of human life in decay – and in this they are not entirely unlike the mounted bodies that Tucholsky wished to see in the museum in Vincennes. The focus of the camera on the face and – sometimes – on the hands emphasizes exactly those body parts on which time has left its most obvious traces and that remain uncovered by clothing that could reveal the moment when the video was recorded. In the case of traditional museum objects, it is their material aspects that create

a link between the past and the present. In the case of video testimonies, it is the witnesses' bodies that create this link. The witnesses' aged bodies serve to authenticate the testimonies. If nothing else, they prove that the past has existed and that the witnesses to history have existed in the past. Stories can be made up, but the traces that the past has left on their bodies cannot be hidden. This bodily authentication can sometimes, unwillingly, take extreme and tragic forms. Thus, in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, one of the witnesses to history has a disfigured face as a consequence of mistreatment in the camp. In the video testimony, she relates how she lost part of her nose when she was kicked by a guard onto a heap of bricks for carrying two instead of the requested three bricks. It is in this context interesting to observe that the tattooed numbers on forearms – the most iconic trace left by the perpetrators on the bodies of certain victims – have to my knowledge not been put in scene in the video testimonies in museums.

For an analysis of video testimonies as museum objects, it is also significant that the image of video testimonies is fairly static, at least when compared to most filmed images. What differentiates museums from other media is the physical effort that the recipient, the visitor, has to make in order to experience the exhibition. 'The visitors are unique amongst the recipients of culture and art, because their reception is linked to their own physical movement', observes Werner Hanak-Lettner (2011: 106), for example. In exhibitions we find a discrepancy between the inaction of the museum objects and the movement of the visitors. The introduction of video into museums turns this relationship between visitors and exhibits upside down. The visitor remains static, whereas the video decides the pace and movement of information provision. Films are often shown in separate rooms from the main exhibition for good reason as visitors can sit down and concentrate. Video testimonies are a toned-down version of film. By showing a minimum of movement and framing the witnesses to histories' faces, video testimonies allow – and even demand – a certain degree of agency on the part of the visitors. Guided by lighting techniques and camera angles, visitors are encouraged to read the witnesses' faces and to find traces of the past in those faces. In this way, the static image of the video testimonies adds to an auraticization of the testimonies. I have observed that the aura of historical photographs can be enhanced through reproduction techniques that highlight parts of the pictures. The blown-up photos in the Imperial War Museum and in Yad Vashem work as icons that dominate the video testimonies, not least because they are static and therefore have an immediate and direct effect on the visitors. By minimizing movement in the video testimonies, by depicting them more

as photographs than film, this auratization of historical photographs also finds its expression in video testimonies – though not to the same extent.

The Most Interesting and the Most Eloquent: Choosing and Shortening Video Testimonies for Exhibition

In his novel *City of Thieves*, David Benioff (2008: 4) describes an interview session that his narrator David, a writer collecting material for his new novel, carries out with his grandfather, a survivor of the siege of Leningrad. ‘A few hours in the morning, breaking for lunch, then again in the afternoon – my grandfather, a man who hated to speak more than two consecutive sentences in mixed company ... filled minicassette after minicassette with his words’, David observes and concludes: ‘Too many words for one book – truth might be stranger than fiction, but it needs a better editor.’ It rarely happens that interviews for video testimonies are carried out over several days. Nevertheless, most video testimonies last several hours. As anybody who has watched full-length video testimonies will be able to confirm, those hours can be very long for the viewer. As exciting or tragic as their lives might have been, many people are just not very good storytellers. In museums, however, the witnesses to history in the video testimonies generally tell interesting stories, and they tell their stories well.

The museum professionals that I have interviewed observed that questions of dramaturgy and storytelling played an important role in the choice of the video testimonies that were to enter the museums’ exhibitions (Barker interview 2009; Bardgett interview 2009; Gring interview 2009; Kinter interview 2009; Bocalatte interview 2010). When the curators at the Imperial War Museum, for example, selected the Holocaust survivors whose autobiographical accounts were to be presented in the Holocaust Exhibition, they went to the museum’s ‘Sound Archive’ and noted ‘those whose stories were especially well told, or who were special for some historical reason’ (Bardgett n.d.). The selected survivors were interviewed again in front of a camera. Annie Dodds, who together with James Barker carried out the interviews, observes that even during the interviews, she tried to produce the most suitable clips for the exhibition: ‘What we wanted above all was for [the witnesses] to try and remember what it really felt like then, when they were young ... and we did try to steer them towards this – away from the purely factual account’ (cited in Kushner 2001: 91f). She confesses that her interviewing technique compromised cohesion, but ‘it did not matter to us, as the editing process would enable us to sort that out, and we were never going to follow one person’s story through’

(cited in Kushner 2001: 92). Thus, not unlike Claude Lanzmann, who turned the witnesses to history in his documentary into actors in order to authenticate their memory, Annie Dodds tried to collect the images and the statements that would seem most authentic for the exhibition through her interview technique.

As I have shown in Chapter 3, unlike in the Imperial War Museum or the Museo Diffuso, video testimonies are not always expressly produced for exhibition. If this is the case, the clips that are going to enter the exhibition are meticulously selected from a larger collection. The best and most representative video testimonies are chosen, and of those testimonies, the best or most representative sections. The chosen video testimonies are meant to be representative ('Vertretung') of the larger group of witnesses to history. They are meant to represent the past in such a way that it becomes present again ('Darstellung') and, in this way, they are meant to evoke a mental image of this past in the visitors ('Vorstellung'). As in the case of other objects in a museum's collection, only a minority finds its way into the exhibition rooms, while the majority remains in the archive. What differentiates video testimonies from most other exhibits is that the capacity of film to evolve over time, instead of merely being present in space, makes it possible to defragment the future exhibits. With video testimonies, it is not only possible to select the particular testimonies that will be exhibited, but also their particular parts. Hardly ever is an entire video testimony presented in the exhibition. It is through this process of selecting the clips for the exhibition that video testimonies – or at least extracts – become part of the canon. They are actively chosen as carriers of memory in order to construct a particular narrative of the past – a particular history.

The practice of pushing witnesses to history towards providing clips that will be suitable for the exhibition, or of shortening video testimonies, raises ethical problems. For example, they run counter to the Fortunoff Archive's idea that witnesses should be allowed to tell their stories how they see fit and for as long as they wish, and that video testimonies should be watched in their entirety. The curators of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin have therefore decided not to show video testimonies in the main exhibition space, even though theirs is one of the most biographical Holocaust exhibitions in existence. Extracts from diaries and letters of victims written at the time are presented and family histories of Holocaust victims have been reconstructed with great attention to detail. However, the video testimonies are shown in a separate room. Daniel Baranowski (2009: 10) of the Memorial's video-testimony archive explains: 'we abstained from including extracts of the interviews with witnesses to history; those testimonies of complex biographies should not be used as

mere illustrations of the topics in the exhibition and thereby lose their character as sources in their own right'. By not exhibiting the video testimonies in the main exhibition, the curators want to invite the visitors to experience the testimonies in their entirety, according to the principles of the Fortunoff Archive. Whether this goal will be reached remains to be seen. The habitus we adopt when visiting a museum is a different one from that of doing research in an archive. Not least of all, we usually set aside much less time for a museum visit than for research in the archive. My rather brief observation of the visitors in the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe suggests that, in fact, visitors do not spend much time in this separate room or at least not more than they do in any of the other exhibition rooms. They do not watch the video testimonies in their entirety either.⁴

The exhibition of video testimonies thus always entails a dilemma between ethical considerations concerning the dignity of the witnesses to history and didactic considerations that take the particularities of the transmission of knowledge in museums into consideration. Already the very first visitor studies carried out at the Pennsylvania Museum in the 1920s came to the conclusion that museum visitors spent on average three seconds in front of each artwork (Wasson 2015: 616). For the majority of objects in an exhibition, a glance is usually enough to get at least an idea of what an object looks like and what it might represent. Video testimonies, however, need to be watched in order for their meaning to reveal itself. The gaze of the museum visitor is different from that of the cinemagoer or the TV watcher, and most museum visitors are not willing to sit for long hours in front of a screen. Deciding to exhibit video testimonies therefore means negotiating how far the viewing habits of the visitors and the laws of exhibition should be given precedence over the ethics of the testimonies of the witnesses to history. In order for them to work as exhibits, video testimonies need to be shortened, cut and edited – a process that in turn takes the agency and control of their testimonies away from the witnesses to history, and entails changing the original structure of their testimonies and statements. At the same time, the shortening of video testimonies and the choice of the most adequate sections for the exhibition might be the most truthful – if not the only – way to present the testimonies of witnesses to history in museums. Hardly any museum visitor will watch a video testimony of a length of two hours, but they will consume at least some of the easily digestible bites that are presented to them. In this way, at least parts of certain video testimonies will be consumed by a larger audience that might not have watched them in the first place. And maybe, just maybe, some visitors will be induced by the clips that they have seen to watch the full-length testimonies.

Curators are generally aware of the ethical obligations they have towards witnesses to history. Suzanne Bardgett (n.d.) of the Imperial War Museum, for example, writes of how relieved she was by the positive response of the witnesses to history to the video testimonies for the exhibition: ‘To our intense relief, the survivors liked the way their testimonies had been used and understood the reasons for their “fragmentation”.’ Other museums try to underline the particularities of the genre of video testimony, as well as the ethical and moral choices made by curators through the way in which they exhibit the testimonies. The Bergen-Belsen Memorial, for example, provides cards with the biographies of the witnesses to history for all of the video testimonies. Moreover, the Memorial has abstained from dubbing the testimonies, which would replace the witness’ voice with that of somebody else – as is, for example, common practice in the Neuengamme Memorial. Finally, the Memorial has chosen not only to present what they call ‘topical video points’, but also ‘biographical video points’. The ‘topical video points’ are composed of extracts from different video testimonies. They deal with specific topics. The ‘biographical video points’, which are the video testimonies that have been placed along the left-hand wall mentioned earlier, focus on individual testimonies. They are introduced by biographical details. In order to highlight the curators’ editing influence on testimonies, cuts have been made visible by separating two abstracts with a black screen. Unlike the ‘topical video points’, the ‘biographical video points’ invite the visitors to concentrate on the individuality of the witnesses to history and on their biography – or at least the part that is shown in the exhibition.

Selecting clips from video testimonies generally follows on from the initial collection of video testimonies. If recording video testimonies means turning individual and communicative memory into analysable and manipulable entities, collating video testimonies for an exhibition means analysing video testimonies and manipulating them. It means preparing the memorial carriers of the archive to be memorial carriers of the canon. In this process, the control over the video testimonies is taken away from the witnesses to history and passed on to the curators or a production company. No matter how truthful curators will try to stay to the biographies of the witnesses to history and to their narratives, as soon as video testimonies are exhibited in a museum, they become a means to transmit a specific historical narrative and a specific memorial culture. In Chapter 5, I will look more deeply into the particularities of this dramaturgy of video testimonies and into the messages that are transmitted by virtue of this dramaturgy. As unfortunate as it might seem, selecting clips and shortening might be indispensable for exhibiting video testimonies in

museums. The process of musealization is inevitably a process of choosing from a larger sample. Of the huge bulk of remains of the past that could be saved for the future, only a small amount is selected for the archive and of those only very few will become part of the canon. Exhibiting video testimonies therefore means making a compromise between considerations of video testimonies as ethically fragile sources and the requirements of museum visitors – a compromise that the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe wished to avoid.

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Museum Objects: Video Testimonies as Sources and Museum Text

Amongst the things that can be found in an exhibition, Roger Fayet (2007: 24ff) distinguishes between primary museum objects, secondary museum objects and tertiary museum objects. In the case of history museums, primary museum objects are the historical objects, documents and photographs shown in the exhibitions. In general, it is the primary museum objects that draw visitors to museums. They are the items on which Korff finds the traces of forgotten human life, and in which Tucholsky and Sebald see symbols of transience. Secondary museum objects are the ‘models, replicas, reconstructions or visual representations as well as textual information’ (Fayet 2007: 26) that are placed next to the objects and that the exposers use to signal their intended reading of the objects. Tertiary museum objects are those that are not part of a museum’s collections and that have no epistemological relevance for its exhibitions, such as CCTV cameras, signs for emergency exits, or fire extinguishers (Fayet 2007: 27). Video testimonies are special in the sense that they constantly shift between a consideration of them as primary museum objects and their use as secondary museum objects.

As we have just seen, unlike most other exhibits, video testimonies have been produced at a temporal distance from the events presented in the museums, and they combine visual and textual codes of communication. The witnesses to history have, like museum objects, been shaped by the time of which they give testimony. Unlike museum objects, but like the curators and historians who produce the secondary museum objects, they can also reflect on this time. These characteristics of video testimonies, their production at a temporal distance to the events and the witnesses to history’s ability to reflect make them appropriate for use as secondary museum objects for other primary museum objects, as illustrated by Zofia Zajczyk’s doll and Yvonne Koch’s gloves. In all museums,

video testimonies serve as comments and explanations for other exhibits. However, they are not merely this. Indeed, as I will show below, whether video testimonies are presented more as primary or more as secondary museum objects depends to a large extent on the way in which they are integrated into the exhibition.

We have seen that the Museo Diffuso does without museum objects and instead uses video testimonies as its main exhibits. Even the film footage and the photographs that are presented appear as subsidiary to the video testimonies. There is only one museum text – a barely readable timeline of the Second World War in Italy and in the world. As a combination of primary and secondary museum objects, the video testimonies here serve both as the main narrative and as authenticating comments to the film footage and photographs shown in the exhibition. Similar observations can be made in terms of Yad Vashem, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial and the Neuengamme Memorial, although the video testimonies are of course here contrasted with other exhibits. In Yad Vashem, it is hard to count the testimonies, let alone watch all of them. The exhibition in Yad Vashem is crowded – maybe even overcrowded. Countless objects, photographs, paintings, films – and video testimonies – fill the exhibition galleries. The video testimonies are here mostly presented on equal footing to other objects. In one instance, curators have even placed a video testimony inside a display cabinet together with other objects. Dorit Harel (2010: 40), the exhibition designer, has criticized the practice of exhibiting as many objects as possible: ‘The museological experience and ability of visitors to grasp and internalize the exhibits fell victim to the curating team’s indefatigable desire to display as many artefacts and texts as possible. That, to the best of my professional understanding, was a mistake, reflected in the proverb “grasp all, lose all”.’ In fact, in most rooms, it is only after a second look that the visitor spots that one of the pictures on a wall is a video testimony and not another historical photograph. One of the problems of the exhibition in Yad Vashem is that video testimonies tend to disappear in a conglomeration of things. In a way, what is specific about the testimonies – their individuality, their contrast with the historical objects and photographs – gets lost in stimulus satiation.

Walking through the exhibitions of the Bergen-Belsen (Figure 4.9) and the Neuengamme Memorials again feels at times like walking through a demonstration of the work of a historian. The different exhibits are presented as sources of equal value. This also counts for the video testimonies. ‘Because of the way in which the media stations are integrated in space, form and content, the testimonies appear as equally valid sources next to the other sources in the form of documents, text, pictures and



Figure 4.9. View of the permanent exhibition of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial
© Helge Krückeberg/Bergen-Belsen Memorial

exhibits', write the documentary filmmakers Diana Gring and Karin Theilen (2007: 194) who are responsible for the video testimonies in the exhibition at the Bergen Belsen Memorial. Visitors are invited to reconstruct the history of the camp by combining the different sources – photographs, documents, objects and video testimonies. They are guided in this by the museum texts and by explanations of how to read the different documents. Text passages from documents are, for example, highlighted, and the different sections of index cards for the prisoners of war in the camps are marked and explained. Also, the video testimonies in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial are, as we have seen, accompanied by more supplementary information than in other museums, including the date and location of the interview and its original length. The video testimonies are placed as prominently as, if not more prominently than, the other exhibits. The first thing that the visitor sees when entering the exhibition is the introductory film, which is collated from several video testimonies. The view from the entrance of the exhibition is dominated by the 'biographical video points' placed along the left-hand wall. However, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial's presentation of video testimonies as sources in their own right is limited to the content of the video testimonies. Like other museums, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial does not fully elaborate its critical evaluation of the video testimonies. While the Memorial is, as

we have seen, very meticulous in the historical contextualization of the photographs that it exhibits, it does not extend this preoccupation with details to its video testimonies.

For the Neuengamme Memorial, video testimonies have, as we have seen, played an important role in the research work of the museum from very early on. Even if it has taken until the present exhibition for video testimonies to become major exhibition elements, the Memorial's first exhibitions were already marked by a biographical approach, for which extracts from the interviews were included in the museum texts. However, almost paradoxically, the video testimonies in the exhibition are not placed as centrally as they could have been. The second room of the exhibition, for example, deals with the different prisoner groups. Here, the visitor can consult red memory books with documents, photographs and biographical information on prisoners, some of whom survived and some of whom died (Figure 4.10). The tables with the books are positioned in the centre of the exhibition space. On the left, along the wall, less prominently positioned, there are several television screens with video testimonies sometimes given by the same prisoners as those presented in the books. In the Neuengamme Memorial, the video testimonies, while being treated as a historical source equal to other museum objects, therefore tend to appear as secondary rather than primary museum objects.



Figure 4.10. View of the 'Häftlingsgruppen' exhibition chapter in the 'Zeitspuren' permanent exhibition at the Neuengamme Memorial © Emily Mohney/ Neuengamme Memorial

In the Imperial War Museum, the exhibition makers were at first sceptical of the introduction of video testimonies into the Holocaust Exhibition. Tony Kushner (2001: 91) lists four arguments that were forwarded by the museum against the use of video testimonies:

First, it was feared that in an information heavy exhibition it would overload the main narrative, which would be led by artefacts, photographs and text. Second, there was concern that it would give the impression that survival was the norm. Third, the disjuncture between the 'now' of the survivor faces and the 'then' of the artefacts would confuse the visitor as the rest of the material in the exhibition was almost exclusively contemporary. Fourth, that the appearance of the survivors would 'date' and could look out of time – neither then or now – to future generations.

The original plan had been to use audio stations – a practice that the museum had already undertaken in some of its other exhibitions. It was the two documentary filmmakers, Annie Dodds and James Barker of 'October Films' (employed by the museum for the production of audio testimonies), who eventually convinced the exhibition makers to use video testimonies instead (Barker interview 2009). Today, the video testimonies are the element of the exhibition that its makers appear to be most proud of. Incidentally, they have published several articles exclusively on this subject (Bardgett 2005, 2007; Dodds 2005). Nevertheless, in the main exhibition, the video testimonies hardly ever compete with the other main exhibits. The website for the Holocaust Exhibition stated until recently that:

photographs, documents, newspapers, artefacts, posters and film track the history of this persecution and genocide with toys, diaries, photograph albums, storybooks and hand-made mementos revealing people's efforts to survive. Testimonies from 18 survivors bring a moving and haunting perspective.⁵

The testimonies are thus not placed on the same level as other objects in the exhibition; they do not 'track the history', but only 'bring ... a haunting perspective'. Within the exhibition, the testimonies are indeed subordinated – or perhaps supra-ordinated – to the main exhibits. Spatially, they are often placed above or beside other exhibits, so that they are only consumed – or ignored – by the visitors once they have looked at the other exhibits. A case in point is probably the chapter with the train carriage described above. The video testimony at the end of the train carriage is easily passed over. No benches allow the visitor to sit down and watch the video testimony at her or his leisure. Moreover, the video testimony is placed on the visitors' left-hand side, whereas in order to follow the exhibition path, visitors have to turn right, where the large plaster model of the arrival in Auschwitz serves as a further visual point of attraction. The most centrally placed video

testimony in the Imperial War Museum is the one in the exhibition chapter on the ghettos, which is also, with a length of around ten minutes, the longest one. The video testimony has here been placed in the middle of the room, whereas the main object, a cart used to carry corpses in the Warsaw ghetto, is placed in a nook on the right. Several benches invite visitors to sit down and watch the testimony. I agree with Tony Kushner (2001: 92), who with regard to this video testimony comments that:

it is rare for the face of the survivor to last more than fifteen seconds before it is replaced by contemporary film footage relating to the images and events described by the survivors. The film often returns to the survivor for the key intense moment when the pain of separation from loved ones, or witnessing their murder, is described.

In other words, in the Imperial War Museum, objects, photography and film stand for factuality, whereas the video and occasional audio testimonies stand for emotion. While the exhibition starts with a video testimony in which witnesses to history remember their life before the war and ends with a video testimony in which they reflect on their memories of the Holocaust; within the exhibition, the video testimonies are shown separately and at some distance to the other exhibits. The video testimonies are secondary museum objects rather than primary ones. They offer a supplementary narrative to the main exhibition narrative, which might also work without them.

Presenting video testimonies as supplementary to other exhibits is in fact the most common way for them to be exhibited in museums. The Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn, for example, a museum dealing with the postwar history of the Federal Republic of Germany, has recently changed its main exhibition to add more video testimonies. Nevertheless, these video testimonies, for example, with witnesses of the uprising of 16 and 17 June 1953 in East Germany, with guest workers, but also with Holocaust survivors, are shown on small screens. The screens are easily overlooked and the testimonies have an average length of thirty seconds. They do not add anything other than a personal note to the main narrative. At the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History in Brussels, some video testimonies are shown in a niche next to the Second World War section of the museum. In the video testimonies, Belgian citizens talk about their experiences during the war. In order to see the videos, the visitor has to leave the main exhibition route. The video testimonies are consequently easily missed. The Haus der Geschichte and the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History in Brussels are typical of most museums. If museums decide to

introduce video testimonies into their exhibitions, they still often show them on a few screens hidden in dark corners.

Although video testimonies are thus, as we have seen, adapted to the laws of exhibition and thereby, to a certain extent, transformed into museum objects, they are rarely treated as equal to the other museum objects in the exhibitions. This is a circumstance lamented by many of the museum professionals that I interviewed, especially those who had been involved in producing the video testimonies. I was often told about disagreements between the curators or producers of the videos, who wanted to place them centrally, and the exhibition designers, who tried to banish the video testimonies into corners and refused to provide space for chairs or benches that would make it easier for the visitors to contemplate them (Barker interview 2009; Gring interview 2009; Kinter interview 2009).

Video testimonies are never just secondary museum objects, but in many museums, they are presented as second-class primary museum objects – as an attempt to bring some emotion into an otherwise factual exhibition. It is of course this characteristic of video testimonies to be both auratic museum objects and comments on other objects that makes them especially apt as means of authentication on the four levels analysed at the beginning of this chapter. To what degree video testimonies are used as primary or secondary museum objects ultimately depends on the exhibition designers' and curators' view as to whether they can be considered primary museum objects at all. These views find their expression in curatorial and design choices. Thus, while in the Museo Diffuso the video testimonies clearly are primary museum objects, in Yad Vashem they are presented as primary museum objects that disappear in a conglomeration of other exhibits, in the Bergen-Belsen Memorial as historical sources on an equal footing with the other objects, in the Neuengamme Memorial as less prominently placed historical sources, and in the Imperial War Museum as secondary museum objects. The use of video testimonies as primary or secondary objects further underlines the detachment of the testimonies from the witnesses to history. It is not necessarily the witnesses to history's biographies that are central anymore; these stories also become comments on other exhibits.

Underlining an Aestheticization of Horror: Exhibition Design

Since video testimonies can be expressly produced for exhibitions, they can also be used as design elements – or at least be adapted to the overall design of the exhibition. Of the museums that I have analysed, the one that has gone furthest in its use of video testimonies as design

elements is Yad Vashem. In Yad Vashem, the video testimonies do not merely underline the overall exhibition design, which is dominated by grey concrete walls, dim lighting and dark hues. The video testimonies are also occasionally arranged in such a way as to appear like semi-artistic installations. One example of this is the video section on Treblinka mentioned earlier. Another example is the installation representing the killing squads in Eastern Europe. The installation is entitled 'All the roads ... lead to Ponary'. Ponary is a forest around ten kilometres south of Vilnius where, between July 1941 and July 1944, tens of thousands of people were shot and buried (Gutterman and Shalev 2008: 130–31). In Yad Vashem, the killing in Ponary is represented by a pit in the floor. Behind the pit, pictures illustrating the killing are screened on the wall. On the left-hand side hangs a picture of the forest. In front of the pit, three screens show two video testimonies with a man and a woman. The screens are inlaid in a grey wall that reaches to about the visitor's hip. The same picture is screened simultaneously on all three screens, so the same witness can be seen three times over. This multiplication of the image of the video testimony contrasts with the emptiness of the pit. In the real Ponary forest, the pit was – as the visitor learns – filled with corpses: one of the witnesses to history in the video testimonies recounts the story of how he woke up on top of a heap of corpses after the bullet that was supposed to kill him had missed its target. Thus, the contrast of the three videos with the empty pit makes apparent the exception of survival.

A similar use of video testimonies as design elements like in Yad Vashem is still rare. Nevertheless, everywhere video testimonies serve to underline the overall exhibition design. It is the design of an exhibition – the disposition of the different elements in space, the colours, the type of glass cases that are used and the architecture of the building – that give visitors their first impressions of an exhibition. Recent exhibitions on the Second World War and the Holocaust tend to adopt what I would call an 'aestheticization of horror'. Dim lights, black or grey shades and large spaces of bare concrete dominate the exhibition design. The main exhibition of the Museo Diffuso, for example, is located in the cellar of an old palazzo (Figure 4.11). The exhibition rooms are dimly lit and muffled sounds can be heard constantly. The video testimonies on the dark shiny steles with their black backgrounds add to the exhibition's gloomy aesthetics. If one does not stand directly in front of them, the steles almost disappear in the darkness of the cellar. In the Imperial War Museum, the video testimonies, which mostly have a grey background, have been inlaid into the mostly greyish exhibition walls. In the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, as observed above, the monochromatic dark background and the grey steles



Figure 4.11. View of the exhibition at the Museo Diffuso © Museo Diffuso

also reproduce the dominant hue of the exhibition – grey – while in the Neuengamme Memorial, as we have seen, the video testimonies underline the exhibition aesthetics that eschew an aestheticization of horror. Thus, while video testimonies are not tertiary museum objects as defined by Fayet, they nevertheless serve a tertiary function in museums: they are used as design elements that influence the visitors' response even before they start watching them.

Conclusion

If collecting is the first step towards the musealization of video testimonies – turning them into memorial carriers of the archive – exhibiting video testimonies entails making them part of the canon. It means selecting

from a large pool those video testimonies that are going to be part of an exhibition and preparing them so as to make them fit for being exhibited. Video testimonies are thereby turned into authenticating museum objects.

In this chapter I have scrutinized the techniques that are used in order to do so and have analysed the dynamics that video testimonies enter into with other museum objects. I have analysed the arrangement of video testimonies in the exhibitions and the aesthetical choices that are taken in order to make them fit for being exhibited; in other words, I have analysed how video testimonies are represented in the sense of 'Darstellung'. I have looked at their intramediation into museums and at how they are put into intermedial relations with other objects. It is the aesthetics of the video testimonies described in Chapter 2 that permit their use as museum objects. While the process of restoring and conserving material objects serves to underline certain features of an object, the production process of video testimonies does the same for video testimonies. The camera focus is placed on the face that is filmed in front of a mostly monochromatically black or grey background, thereby putting the part of the body that has been most marked by time at the centre of attention. Markers of the time when the video testimony was recorded, such as clothing or room interiors, remain hidden: the videos are given a timeless character. The fact that video testimonies show a relatively static image further adds to the auraticization of the testimonies and makes them fit for exhibition in the main galleries. Moreover, the exhibition of video testimonies demands that the most aesthetically and narratively appealing testimonies be selected from the overall collection, that those testimonies be shortened and that their best parts be chosen for the exhibition. Consequently, the video testimonies presented in exhibitions are rarely longer than ten minutes. This process of musealization also turns video testimonies into representatives in the sense of 'Vertretung': they stand for other victims of the Holocaust and other similar stories.

With this process of selection and shortening, the agency over the video testimonies is passed on from the witnesses to history to the exhibition makers. As we have seen in the introduction, Mieke Bal (1996: 3–4) analyses the act of exposing as an interplay between three 'persons': the exposer, the visitor and the object on display. She underlines the power of the exposer whom she wishes to '[become] once again visible' (Bal 1996: 5). In the case of video testimonies, the power of the curator over the object is from an ethical standpoint particularly challenging. Exhibiting video testimonies means having to consider

the requirements of the visitors and therefore – to a certain extent – relinquishing the ethical considerations of the dignity of the life and testimonies of witnesses to history. Not all museums wish to make this choice, as we have seen with the example of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. Moreover, contrary to Bal's wish, none of the museums makes the production process and the role of the interviewers apparent. None reflects on the nature of memory. So far, the accuracy with which objects and documents are exhibited in most museums has not touched video testimonies. The latter are presented uncommented as untainted reflections of the past.

Video testimonies occupy a strange position alongside material objects. Material objects are constantly torn between their characteristic as symbols of transience and their function for remembering forgotten human life. Video testimonies can be considered as the human life that has not as yet been forgotten, but they are not active communicative memory either. As I have observed in Chapter 3, they are cultural memory in the form of condensed communicative memory, in the guise of individual memory. They can therefore refill drained objects with stories, but they can also help to underline the distortions and changes that time has left on objects and places. In relation to photographs and film, they can both enhance the authenticating messages of those photographs and correct those messages by referring to what is not represented on the pictures. Thus, video testimonies can both authenticate and de-authenticate, auratize and de-auratize.

The case studies above make clear the similarities and differences between the different museums. All museums select clips, cut and shorten entire video testimonies. Moreover, most of the museums use similar aesthetics for their video testimonies – aesthetics that, as has been shown in Chapter 2, are also used in TV documentaries. Of the museums analysed here, only the Neuengamme Memorial does not use a monochromatic background. In all of the museums, the video testimonies are – to a certain extent – presented as a combination of primary and secondary museum objects. They are also used in order to underline the museums' exhibition design. It is these commonalities that underline the character of video testimonies as a global assemblage that – and here the differences come into play – is always realized locally. Thus, in Yad Vashem, where the exhibition narrative concentrates on the survivors, the video testimonies are used as primary museum objects that contrast human life and survival with the exhibits that represent extermination, such as the shoes or the digital reconstruction of Treblinka. In the Imperial War Museum, where the focus is more on the deeds of the perpetrators, the testimonies are instead used as secondary museum

objects that emphasize destruction and extermination. In Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum, video testimonies disrupt the authenticating power of in-situ exhibitions, whereas in the museums located on the sites of former concentration camps, they fill the empty site with stories and at the same time underline that those places have changed. In all museums, video testimonies are therefore aesthetically similar, whereas their particular uses differ. It is on these uses that I will further concentrate in Chapter 5: which witnesses to history are chosen to be museum exhibits? What are witnesses to history as museum exhibits allowed to say and what messages are communicated to the visitors in this way?

Notes

1. Unfortunately, English-language translations do not distinguish between 'Echtheit' (originality) and 'Authentizität' (authenticity); both are translated as 'authenticity'.
2. Also in Yad Vashem, there was at first the plan to exhibit the shoes in a horizontal display case, 'scattered among barbed-wire fences', as Dorit Harel (2010: 83) observes. This option was however rejected for being too 'revolutionary'.
3. The United States Memorial Museum is located right at the threshold of this shift and can be seen as having engendered it. Although showing the point of view of the victims and survivors was a major issue during the planning phase of the museum, the final exhibition still relies heavily on already-established icons of the Holocaust – as exemplified by the heap of shoes. The point of view of the victims enters the exhibition through an audio installation with 'Voices from Auschwitz' and at the very end of the permanent exhibition where the documentary 'Testimony' spliced together from extracts from video testimonies is screened in an amphitheatre (Shenker 2015: 56–111).
4. Noah Shenker (2015: 79 and 92–95) describes similar procedures for the choice of witnesses to history for the 'Voices from Auschwitz' and the 'Testimony' installations at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He speaks of an approach 'often akin to film or television casting' (Shenker 2015: 93).
5. The website of the exhibition is: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/the-holocaust-exhibition>.