

# Allied Attempts to Cover Nazi Crimes on Film.

## What Questions can the Footage Answer?

December 13-15, 2019, Gießen



Philip Drell takes photographs of the surrender of Dachau camp guards while liberated prisoners look on. Photographer: unknown 1945, April 29, Dachau, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Philip Drell, Photograph Number: 37187.

There is hardly any filmic evidence of Nazi concentration and death camps as they were before their SS personnel fled and Allied troops arrived. The SS obeyed the strict prohibitions against filming what went on inside, and the exception—the relatively little footage that was permitted to be shot – was intended to deceive viewers about the true nature of the camps. Allied footage of liberated camps is therefore often used, for example in documentary films and at memorial sites, to fill this void in the visual record. But can the footage really do that? What does it actually include? What exactly do these images show (and what do they not show)? And, after decades of academic research and public history, what can they still tell today's viewers, despite their having never been the intended audience?

## Program

### Friday, Dec. 13

- 10:30-11:00 am** Arrival, coffee  
**11:00 am** Welcome, introductory remarks by Ulrike Weckel, Ulrike Koppermann und Anja Horstmann (Gießen)

#### I. The iconic and beyond:

**Which images are the most famous and which are not well known?**

- 11:15 am-12:00 pm** **“Ikonen der Vernichtung” / “secular icons”**  
Round of introduction and exchange of initial thoughts.  
What images first come to our minds?  
moderated by Ulrike Koppermann
- 12:00-1:30 pm** **Unknown in the West: Soviet footage, 1943-1945**  
presented by Valérie Pozner and Irina Tcherneva (Paris)
- 1:30 pm** **Lunch**
- 2:30-3:30 pm** **Amateur films of the liberation**  
presented by Ingo Zechner (Vienna)

#### II. Liberation footage as Visual History of the Holocaust

- 4:00-7:00 pm** **Discussion of film sequences**  
Reassessing the footage: Excavating details about what camps and their killing facilities (had) looked like and consulting footage as documentation of the final phase of the camps and the death marches  
presented by Anja Horstmann
- 8:00 pm** **Dinner at Dach Café, Ludwigsplatz 11**

**Saturday, Dec. 14**

### **III. What did liberation look like?**

**9:00-10:30 am**

**Discussion of film sequences**

**Recording the end of SS rule: arrested camp personnel, Allies caring for inmates, and inmates celebrating liberation**  
presented by Ulrike Weckel

**The case of Hadamar: Interrogation and autopsy**  
presented by Roland Leikauf (Hadamar)

### **IV. Compiling the Footage and Showing Atrocity Films**

**11:00 am-1:00 pm**

**How to filmically tell a story: Examples from *Die Todesmühlen, Deutschland Erwache, Kinodokumenty o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov***  
presented by Ulrike Weckel

**1:00-2:00 pm**

**Lunch**

**2:00-3:00 pm**

**Hope and scepticism regarding the power of the images**  
presented by Ulrike Koppermann/Anja Horstmann

**3:00-4:00 pm**

**Final Discussion**

**7:00 pm**

**Dinner at Gianoli, Plockstr. 7**

**Sunday, Dec. 15**

**Kinocenter Gießen, Bahnhofstraße 37**

**11:00 am**

**German Concentration Camps Factual Survey**  
public screening of the official British film which remained unfinished 1945/46, recently restored by the Imperial War Museum, London

**followed by a discussion**