**VISUAL
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OF THE
HOLOCAUST**

Rethinking Curation
in the Digital Age

Deliverable D2.6

Expert Videos on Popular Culture Content

Lead-beneficiary	*HUJI*
Work Package No. and Title	*WP2 Curation and advanced digitization of assets*
Work Package Leader	*OFM*
Relevant Task	*Task 2.8 Curation and advanced digitization of popular culture content*
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Dissemination Level	*Public*
Due Date	*M36 (2021-12)*
Version (No., Date)	*V1.6, 2021-12-29*

Expert Videos on Popular Culture Content

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1. Introduction

Conducting interviews is a commonly used analytical practice in the social sciences and humanities, and has also proven to be an effective tool for communicating knowledge in the classroom.[1] In recent years, numerous studies have sought to develop new strategies to enhance the discursive quality of this analytical practice and communicative method, comparing and studying its contribution as supplementary material in education and research.[2] With the digitization of archival collections and the development of new digital platforms aimed at making the 'collected' past accessible to users, interviews have also gained popularity in the field of digital humanities.[3] Accordingly, new practices of recording interviews with experts as well as conducting oral history interviews based on eyewitness accounts have developed into a new form of digital storytelling. Seeking to go beyond a one-dimensional monologue-interview mode, such digital initiatives offer new possibilities for transforming oral history interviews into "oral history interactives".[4] This approach is especially prevalent in the context of the Holocaust and other events of persecution.[5]

With this in mind, the VHH team at HUJI aims to record '*interactive expert videos,*' which play a role in the project's multimodal curatorial approach. Focusing on the afterlife of liberation imagery in popular culture, the team conducts video interviews with prominent scholars whose expertise lies in Allied film and media collections. These collections depict liberation as a specific historical event that has had visual impact on post-war popular culture, as can be seen in the HUJI team's growing database, which includes thousands of

[1] Christiane Bertram, Wolfgang Wagner, Ulrich Trautwein (2017), "Learning Historical Thinking with Oral History Interviews: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Intervention Study of Oral History Interviews in History Lessons," *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(3): 444–484, https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217694833.
[2] Two representative examples: Rwamahe Rutakumwa et. al. (2020), "Conducting In-depth Interviews With and Without Voice Recorders: A Comparative Analysis," *Qualitative Research*, 20(5): 565–581. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119884806; Susan Naomi Nordstrom (2015), "Not So Innocent Anymore: Making Recording Devices Matter in Qualitative Interviews," *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(4): 388–401, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414563804.
[3] The COVID-19 pandemic, which has enforced remote participation, has further popularized the recording of interviews as an evolving research practice. Cf. Serena Hillmann et. al. (2020), "Conducting Interviews with Remote Participations," in: Tejinder K. Judge and Carman Neustaedter (eds.), *Studying and Designing Technology for Domestic Life. Lessons from Home*. Waltham, Massachusetts: Morgan Kaufmann, 11–32.
[4] Ty Pierce and Phil Sager, "Oral History Interactives: Going beyond the interview to create multimedia experiences." *MW2015: Museums and the Web 2015.* Published February 1, 2015. https://mw2015.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/oral-history-interactives-going-beyond-the-interview-to-create-multimedia-experiences/ (accessed on 19.10.2021). In this context see also the USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony which present interactive oral history eyewitness accounts as holograms: https://sfi.usc.edu/dit (accessed on 19.10.2021).
[5] See for example: Forced Labor 1939–1945 Memory and History platform: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/en/index.html (accessed on 19.10.2021).

films, graphic novels, artworks, computer games, Internet memes, and other media objects that engage with liberation imagery.[6]

As part of the objective of making these recorded expert videos interactive, an initial decision was made that the VHH project should treat them like any other object in the Visual History of the Holocaust Media Management and Search Infrastructure (VHH-MMSI), in particular the audio-visual records of the liberation – that is, as raw material. Treating the recorded expert videos as raw material with its own metadata allows for using them in three ways: as a coherent and continuous source of information (i.e., raw material); as a series of successive segments that can be used independently or edited together with other material as separate clips; or as edited short videos. These three options already include the possibility of annotating, segmenting, and drawing relations between the recorded expert interviews, eighter in their original form, or as a by-product to other digitized holdings integrated into the VHH-MMSI. This process will be carried out manually by HUJI team members, and (potentially) by future users. The recorded expert videos will also be processed by the automatic film analysis tools developed in the course of the VHH project. The videos will also be transcribed using speech-to-text recognition. This allows the videos to be linked to a variety of content-related material such as films, photographs, textual documents or artworks. Additionally, the video content can be linked to specific historical and contemporary locations and accessed through a timeline. Focusing on various aspects of a range of cultural re-appropriations of liberation-related imagery, these recorded expert videos support and expand on the research results of the HUJI team regarding the migration of liberation-related images and image relations, thereby supporting the general curatorial strategy of the VHH-MMSI as a whole.[7]

Alongside the theoretical and empirical research conducted by HUJI team members, the team also held two VHH internal workshops with LBI and OFM, during which the teams discussed and decided on the aims and methods of the expert interviews. Chapter 2 of this deliverable is the result of these discussions.

Relation to other deliverables:
- D2.4 Database of Films, Artworks, and other Visual Culture Products (M24) provides the basis for the collection of popular culture objects the expert interviews refer to.
- D2.5 Report on Digital Curation of Popular Culture Content (M24) introduces the conceptual framework the expert interviews rely on.
- D3.1 Definition of Engagement Levels, Usage Modes, and User Types (M12) defines the accessibility of popular culture content and other sources in the VHH-MMSI.

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[6] For further reading on the HUJI's work see D2.4 Database of Films, Artworks, and other Visual Culture Products (M24) and D2.7 Advanced Digitization of Popular Culture Content (M36).

[7] For further reading on the VHH's curatorial approach, see D2.5 Report on Digital Curation of Popular Culture Content (M24).

- D3.3 Ethics Guideline (M12) discusses ethical principles guiding the identification and selection of historical atrocity footage as well as popular culture objects.

2. Aims and objectives

The expert videos are intended to be integrated into the VHH-MMSI as visual objects with their own metadata, and thereafter, to be accessed through the VHH-MMSI so that the user will be able to interact with them digitally. In addition, edited versions will be featured on the VHH Website as pre-curated material. This decision is in line with the general approach of the VHH project and aims to provide users with a better understanding of the visual history of the Holocaust, particularly the liberation of Nazi concentration camps and the discovery of other atrocity sites. To be more precise, the expert videos aim to: 1) provide a comprehensive review of some of the historical sources and visual information available in the VHH-MMSI; 2) help the user to see a digital asset presented in the VHH-MMSI in a broader context; 3) help the user to recognize and even identify new relations between different objects and digitized assets.

To achieve these goals, we have defined the key objectives for the expert videos as follows:

1. Conceptualize a semi-structured interview approach in the context of the VHH-MMSI, related to its collection focus, features, digitized objects, and curatorial approach.
2. Define the methodology for conducting the interviews.
3. Prepare an interview guideline that covers technical and conceptual aspects as well as information about the format and style of the video interviews.
4. Formulate a set of guiding questions (following the semi-structured interview format – see section 5.1 in this document).
5. Experiment with different digital solutions, interview formats and styles.
6. Finalize a list of potential interviewees and approach them.
7. Record a test case of an expert interview and adjust the guidelines after internal evaluation.
8. Record at least five expert interviews and edit the videos.
9. Specify the relevant metadata of the expert videos and prepare them for manual annotation, including highlighting important keywords.
10. Select significant segments and edit them as clips.
11. Create one or two short videos by editing one or more expert interviews.
12. Upload the unedited expert videos to the VHH-MMSI.

3. Concept

The interviews are targeted at all potential VHH stakeholders and users and are designed to offer a variety of voices from experts working in academia. Based on this rather broad target group, the final list of interviewees was meant to be diverse in terms of specialization and discipline (e.g., art, film, history), as well as nationality, age, and gender. Choosing an expert to interview is therefore not an easy task, but requires serious consideration and careful planning: to what extent is the expert relevant to the focus of the VHH project – namely, the visual history of the liberation of the camps? Can the expert add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of cultural re-appropriation? Are his/her/their areas of research too niche, or could she/he/they also make more general comments on the topic that would make it easier for a non-specialized user to access the material? Is the expert likely to contribute, and is/are she/he/they available to us? Is the expert potentially a good interviewee in English? With these questions in mind, the expert videos follow a structure established by six conceptual decisions:

1. The first decision to be made was to distinguish between recorded oral history interviews and recorded expert videos. The HUJI team only conducts interviews with experts from academia. In the case of interviews with artists, this means that only those who are affiliated with an academic institution and are experts in their field are eligible.

2. Each interview is divided into two parts (not necessarily equal in length). In the first part, we conduct a general interview with the expert, focusing on his/her field of knowledge and how it relates to the subject area of camp liberation, with particular reference to cultural re-appropriations of liberation-related imagery. The second part of the interview focuses on a specific migrating image, sequence or segment (alternatively, a collection of specific migrating images from a particular film, artwork, etc.), with the expert contextualizing the image and suggesting a close reading of it in light of his/her expertise. This means that each interview goes in two directions: from the expert to the material, and vice versa. This conceptual decision requires in-depth research before the interview and the selection of specific image(s)/visual source(s) that can be related to the expert videos in advance. One option is to inform the experts beforehand that they will be asked to elaborate on a specific image/visual source during the interview (if necessary, the material can be sent to them in advance for preparation). A second option is to have materials in mind that could match the content of the interview and will be added during the editing stage.

3. Another conceptual decision is to avoid a rigid, time-limited question-answer structure. The interviewer has to balance the needs of the project and the relevant field of research and the interests of the interviewee, which should later match the needs of the user. Hence, while all interviews follow a predefined structure and use basic open-ended guiding questions (1-3 minutes per question) prepared in advance by HUJI team members, the design of each interview is also guided by the interviewee's expertise and his/her/their

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connection to the VHH-MMSI and is therefore tailored to the individual subject. Thus, the interview may include follow-up questions and open-ended questions, and on certain occasions may even adopt a conversational mode instead of an interviewer-respondent mode.

4. The goal is to have only one meeting per interview and not have to rely on multiple meetings.
5. The interviewee can request a copy of the video and ask that specific parts be edited out.
6. Since the interviews can be edited at a later stage and become by-products according to user needs, the interviews have the form of "talking heads", without special effects.

3.1. Methodology

At the first stage, the HUJI team decided to conduct comprehensive research on the various practices commonly used to conduct interviews as a research tool, including an examination of the many digital platforms that offer recorded interviews with experts as well as oral histories as part of their inventory. In the course of this research, the team also collected information about potential interviewees, including their institutional affiliations, fields of expertise, and contact details. In addition, the team decided to try out a first test run by recording an expert interview: two team members (associated member Fabian Schmidt and team member Noga Stiassny) recorded an interview with HUJI team leader Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. During the interview, the members asked Ebbrecht-Hartmann about his expertise in the visual history of liberation and image migration, experimenting with several interview styles.[8] The members asked him to change the background and the angle of the camera, asked open-ended questions, but also had a conversation on the subject; some of the questions were shared in advance, others were saved for the interview.

After the interview was completed, it was shared with the rest of the group. Together, the HUJI team analyzed the video and checked the sound and image quality as well as editing options. This test run enabled the team to reflect on the interviewing process, learn from their own mistakes, and identify areas that needed to be improved. At a second stage, the HUJI team held two VHH internal workshops with LBI and OFM. The HUJI team presented their findings along with a screening of the recorded interview with the HUJI team leader. The workshop participants discussed aesthetic, thematic, technical, and ethical issues related to the expert videos. Among the issues that came up for discussion were the type of camera, the background of the shot, the ideal shooting angle, as well as the multiple possibilities of working with the recorded interview in the VHH-MMSI (including potential misuse of the material). The expected contribution of the videos to

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[8] Tobias Ebbrecht (2010) "Migrating Images: Iconic Images of the Holocaust and the Representation of War." *Shofar* 28(4): 86-103.

the research on visual history, the educational value of such videos, our list of potential interviewees, how these videos should be linked to and curated in relation to other visual and textual objects from the VHH repository, and numerous other matters were also discussed. Based on these discussions, the HUJI team developed its expert videos methodology.

There is a distinction to be made between three central stages in the preparation process: the pre-interview stage, the interview itself, and the post-interview stage. This document primarily discusses the pre-interview stage, although there may be some overlap:

1. Interviews are conducted with at least five academic experts in their field. At a later stage, the interviews may be extended to include non-academic practitioners (artists, filmmakers, archivists).
2. All interviews are recorded and uploaded to the VHH-MMSI in full without any cross-cutting of other visual material, with only minimal intervention to remove parts with significant technical deficiencies, pauses, repetitions or content vetoed by the interviewee and to improve the pacing of the conversation.
3. All interviews are conducted, recorded, edited (into by-products in some cases) by the HUJI team members.
4. Some interviews take place online (via the ZOOM online platform), and others on-site (in Israel/Germany).
5. All metadata is documented as an integral part of the expert video.
6. All interviews are held in English (in special cases, we may consider conducting the interview in another language, but this means that it will be necessary to provide subtitles and is therefore best avoided at this early stage of conducting interviews).
7. All interviewees sign a consent form after approving the interview granting the VHH project full usage rights.

To acquire good interviewing skills, the HUJI team members conducted and recorded several more interviews with Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. Based on these dummy-interviews we refined and optimized interview techniques and approach.

3.2. Out of scope

- New curatorial concepts and the interface design
- Interviews with Holocaust survivors
- Interviews with VHH Team members

4. Guideline

- The success of an interview lies first and foremost in training and preparation. interview techniques and approach.
- Knowing the interviewee is crucial to building trust. The interviewer should consequently conduct in-depth research on the work of the expert, prepare the visual material that the interviewee will be asked to elaborate on in advance, and be familiar with the questions to be asked in the interview (the general questions as well as those tailored to the specific expert). At the same time, flexibility must be maintained throughout the interview to be open to new lines of inquiry that may arise during the meeting.
- Questions should develop gradually in scope, from simple explanations to more complex-intellectual elaborations.
- Before the interview occurs, HUJI team members are required to complete a training seminar on research ethics.
- For online interviews, check in advance that the interviewee has a suitable webcam. If he/she does not, the VHH project will provide one.
- Interviews held online: a virtual background should not be added. The interviewee should be filmed in his/her natural environment (home or university), preferably within a private library or against a neutral or white color backdrop.
- Ensure a quiet and uninterrupted environment in advance and double-check technical equipment.
- Both the interviewee and the interviewer should be recorded. Please maintain a professional appearance and be aware of your own body language.
- The filming/sitting angle should be discussed and established in advance, so that the interviewee and the interviewer are not filmed looking directly at the camera, but at a slight angle towards 'the horizon' (we are not interested in creating the impression of a confession, but rather conveying a relaxed conversation). The viewing angles of expert interviewee and interviewer should therefore be harmonized.
- The interviews will not be limited in duration.
- Nevertheless, questions and answers should be focused, to the point, and not be too long-winded or broad in scope (bear in mind that questions may be segmented later).
- Record the interview on QuickTime whenever possible (in addition to Zoom). When possible, the interviewer should record an audio backup on his/her phone.
- While following the concept of the interview, it is important to remember to gently navigate the conversation to topics that are relevant to HUJI's research work.
- Notes should be taken during the interview.
- It should be emphasized to the interviewee that, upon request, the expert will be able to review and confirm the interview. He/she will be given the opportunity to

review the result, request edits, or even withdraw consent for using the entire interview.

- It should be clarified in advance that the interview will be published more or less in its entirety as "material" for research and transformative use in the VHH-MMSI.
- To approve the interview, the expert must sign a consent form.
- All metadata should be documented.
- All decisions made and accepted throughout the process, including problems that arise along the way, should be documented.

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5. Interviews

5.1. Guiding Questions

The list below provides questions for the interviewer that can be reused in multiple interviews. It is set up to help the interviewer to navigate the interview into the directions relevant to the VHH project. Accordingly, this list does not provide a binding structure but rather functions as a departure point for the interview. It offers an elastic model that can be adapted according to the interviewee's expertise and background and is also highly dependent on how the interview develops. The questions list is organized according to five categories: introduction, expertise, personal, political, and – other.

Introduction

- Can you please introduce yourself?

Expertise

- Does visual media have an influence on our perception of history, and in what manner? Does the Holocaust constitute a specific case of visual memory? Why?
- What, in your opinion, is the significance of liberation footage, and for whom might it be relevant/important?
- What are the special implications and characteristics of liberation footage in contrast to other visual sources from the era of the Holocaust (specifically those produced by perpetrators)?
- Why do you think liberation footage has had such an impact on the visual memory of the Holocaust?
- Would you say that there is a shift from the "old" media age of the 20th century to the 21st century's "new" media age, and what impact does this have on the usage and circulation of liberation footage?
- Does digitization have an impact on how images circulate and travel/migrate? What do you think the influence of online platforms and social media is on the circulation and impact of liberation imagery?
- Do you think it makes a difference if visual media uses liberation footage/historical footage directly, or alters (maybe even manipulates) it, implicitly refers to such footage or very generally refers to certain tropes or iconic scenes such as barbed wire fences? What would be the implications of such forms of explicit or implicit usage?
- Is it possible to refer to historical imagery in more reflective ways? How? Are specific visual media better prepared to do so?
- How do you work with such images in your research? Alternatively, where can you identify their impact on your work?

- Where and how do you see liberation footage and other films and photographs from the Holocaust being used in ten years?
- What impact does liberation footage have in the context of the memory culture in your country/place of residence?

Personal

- Do you remember your first encounter with liberation imagery?
- Do you recall specific images or footage from the liberation?
- Why, and how, did you choose to engage in this research topic?

Political

- Do you think Holocaust imagery shapes or influences our understanding of present-day events?
- What do you think about the use of iconic Holocaust imagery (such as barbed wire, piles of corpses, barracks on fire, etc.) as a means to depict other atrocities today? Can you identify boundaries that ought not to be crossed when re-using atrocity footage – and if so – can you explain why these limits should be recognized?
- In light of the strengthening of right-wing extremism and right-wing populist voices, what role do you think historical visual material plays? What is our responsibility, as scholars?

Other

- Is there anything you would like to add?

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5.2. VHH Expert Interviews

Interview 01 – Christoph Kreutzmüller

Interviewee: Dr. Christoph Kreutzmüller

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 19.11.2021

Time: 11:25 – 12:06

Location: House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial, Berlin

Length: 41 min.

Recording devices:

- LogiTech Web Cam
- Zeal Sound Portable Microphone
- K9 Wireless Microphone
- iPhone 12 mini
- MacBook Pro

Recording software:

- QuickTime
- Voice Memo Application

File name:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Kreutzmueller_2021-11-19_11-25_12-06_edit.mp4

Short description of the interview:

Starting with the impact of the picture book "The Yellow Star" by Gerhard Schoenberner, the interview focuses on the ways in which historical photographs have shaped our view of the Holocaust. While certain important events were not recorded on camera, others offer a distorted and historically inaccurate picture of actual events. Therefore, photographs and other imagery originating from the "Nazi archive" demand specific techniques of close reading, which would uncover certain, often marginal, visual information in the composition of the images. The liberation and atrocity footage on the other hand poses different challenges, especially because of its depiction of excessive violence. The visual records from the liberated concentration camps have nevertheless shaped public perception of the Holocaust, especially in those countries that participated in the liberation of the camps. The British Punk band "The Sex Pistols" for instance referred in one of their songs "Belsen Was a Gas" to Bergen-Belsen, which holds a center place in British memory of the Holocaust.

Digitization has changed the accessibility but also the techniques of producing and looking at pictures. Historical approaches to visual sources have to reflect these changes. While digital projection techniques enable new potential for discovering formerly overlooked details, the haptic quality of photo prints is necessary to historically contextualize the origin of historical photographs in relation to photographic techniques and practices.

The misuse and abuse of historical imagery poses challenges, not only for scholars of visual history. A repository of historical photographic sources from the Holocaust, which were intensely researched and are accurately contextualized, should be developed by experts and institutions as a canon for the visual history of the Holocaust in the near future.

Short biography of the interviewee:

Christoph Kreutzmüller is a historian and educator of the House of the Wannsee-Conference, Berlin. He studied History and English in Berlin and in the UK. After finishing his doctoral thesis on German banks in the Netherlands (1919–1945), he coordinated an extensive research project on the fate of Jewish owned businesses in Berlin 1930–1945 at Humboldt University (Berlin) and worked as curator of the segment "Catastrophe" of the new permanent exhibition at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Among his publications are the acclaimed study on the Lili Jacob Album, *Die Inszenierung des Verbrechens. Ein Fotoalbum aus Auschwitz*, Darmstadt 2019 (with Tal Bruttmann and Stefan Hördler) as well as (with Julia Werner), *Fixiert. Fotografische Quellen zur Verfolgung und Ermordung der Juden in Europa. Eine pädagogische Handreichung*, Berlin (Bonn) 2016; (with Thersia Ziehe), *Crossing Borders in the Summer of 1935. Fritz Fürstenberg's Photographs of Persecution in National Socialist Germany*, Leo Baeck Yearbook 64 (2019), 73–89; Photographing Bystanders, in: Christina Morina, Krijn Thijs (eds.), *Probing the Limits of Categorization. The Bystander in Holocaust History*, New York/Oxford 2018, 131–147.

Interview 02 – Clemens von Wedemeyer, Maya Schweizer, Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer

Interviewees: Prof. Clemens von Wedemeyer, Maya Schweizer, Prof. Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 29.11.2021

Time: 11:40 – 12:35

Location: Zoom

Length: 51 min.

Recording devices:

- Zoom
- Built-in cameras
- LogiTech Web Cam
- Headphone + microphone
- Built-in microphone
- MacBook Pro

Recording software:

- Zoom

File names:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Wedemeyer-Schweizer-Meyer-Krahmer_2021-11-29_11-40_12-35_V1_raw.mp4

VHH_Expert-Interview_Wedemeyer-Schweizer-Meyer-Krahmer_2021-11-29_11-40_12-35_V2_raw

Short description of the interview:

The interview reflects on the role of historical images for the visual memory of the Holocaust and explores why especially liberation footage influenced the perception of the history of the Holocaust. The interviewees discuss the characteristics of liberation footage, its "shock value", the significance of films such as "Night and Fog" for communicating this imagery, and the ways they used liberation footage and other visual sources such as video testimonies, photographs and drawings by prisoners for their film "Das Konzentrationslager Dachau" (2021).

They elaborate on specific techniques of relating and constellating images and other sources, of exploring the character of visual materials, and reflect the ethical and political implications of the use of such footage. The last part of the interview deals with changes and transformations following the digitization and circulation of liberation footage, and the benefits and challenges of online archives.

Short biography of the interviewees:

Clemens von Wedemeyer is a video artist and Professor for Expanded Cinema at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig. In his exhibition P.O.V. (2016) he explored multiple ways of artistically examining amateur footage from a German officer in World War II. With Maya Schweizer and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer he made the film "Konzentrationslager Dachau" (2021) for the exhibition at the Dachau Memorial.

Maya Schweizer is an artist who explores the intersections between art and film, documentary and fiction. Many of her works focus on collective memory culture and places of memory.

Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer is Professor for Cultures of the Curatorial at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig. His teaching and research focus on methods of artistic and curatorial practice as well as questions of presentation and representation.

Interview 03 – Robert Rozett

Interviewee: Dr. Robert Rozett

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 08.12.2021

Time: 08:44 – 09:25

Location: Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

Length: 36 min.

Recording devices:

- LogiTech Web Cam
- Zeal Sound Portable Microphone
- K9 Wireless Microphone
- iPhone 12 mini
- MacBook Pro

Recording software:

- QuickTime
- iPhone camera recording

File names:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Rozett_2021-12-08_08-44_09-25_V1-1_raw.mov

VHH_Expert-Interview_Rozett_2021-12-08_08-44_09-25_V1-2_raw.mov

VHH_Expert-Interview_Rozett_2021-12-08_08-44_09-25_V2-1_raw.mov

VHH_Expert-Interview_Rozett_2021-12-08_08-44_09-25_V2-2_raw.mov

Short description of the interview:

In the interview, Robert Rozett elaborates on the importance of the period of liberation for the history and memory of the Holocaust, as well as on how the focus on concentration camps created an iconic symbol of the Holocaust while liberation was more than one moment in time and there were very different experiences of liberation. He refers to General Eisenhower's visit in Ohrdruf in order to demonstrate the strong impression the camps made on the Allies. Photographs and films made this part of the liberation history also more accessible. The interview reviews the specifics of liberation footage as visual

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evidence in trials, but also in convincing the public of the reality of the unprecedented crimes committed by the Nazis. These atrocities were often doubted when emissaries like Jan Karski succeeded in bringing information about the camps and ghettos to the world.

The interview also reflects on the limitations of atrocity footage documenting the experience of the liberation of the camps and introduces additional sources such as letters and diaries that offer access to the perspectives of the liberated and the survivors. It also deals with the role that survivor testimonies played for writing and understanding the history of the Holocaust through oral history sources. Rozett also elaborates on the challenges of relating and comparing different historical events and reflects on the importance of contextualizing sources and information properly in order to cope with the complexity of the historical events and how they relate to our present times. He critically reviews the misuse and trivialization of Holocaust imagery also in context of anti-vaccination protests and offers guidelines for a critical and reflexive usage of historical sources and images in historical research, education and artistic works.

Short biography of the interviewee:

Dr. Robert Rozett is Senior Historian in the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. Prior to this, for 25 years beginning late in 1992, he was director of the Yad Vashem Libraries, and has been at Yad Vashem since 1981 in various capacities.

Dr. Rozett was born in Summit NJ in 1956 and grew up in neighboring New Providence. He obtained his BA from Rutgers College, Rutgers University (1978) and received his MA (1981) and PhD (1987) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he studied with Yehuda Bauer. His dissertation was about Jewish Rescue and Revolt in Slovakia and Hungary.

He has authored and edited scholarly books, book chapters, and articles, as well as pieces for the popular press, primarily about the Holocaust in Hungary, the period of liberation, distortion of the Holocaust and the historiography of the Holocaust. Among his scholarly publications are *Conscripted Slaves, Hungarian Jewish Forced Laborers on the Eastern Front During the Second World War* (Yad Vashem, 2013), which was a runner up for the US National Jewish Book Award for 2014 in the category of Holocaust Research. His most recent book is *After So Much Pain and Anguish, First Letters after Liberation*, which he edited with Dr. Iael Nidam Orvieto (Yad Vashem 2016).

Dr. Rozett has guided many dignitaries through Yad Vashem over the years and has lectured widely around the world. He serves as the historical adviser to the Echoes and Reflections educational program and is a member of Israel's delegation to IHRA.

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Interview 04 – Michel Kichka

Interviewee: Michel Kichka

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 10.12.2021

Time: 15:16 – 16:38

Location: Private home, Jerusalem

Length: 82 min.

Recording devices:

- K9 Wireless Microphone
- iPhone 12 mini

Recording software:

- iPhone camera recording

File names:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Kichka_2021-12-10_15-16_16-38_raw.mp4

VHH_Expert-Interview_Kichka_2021-12-10_15-16_16-38_edit.mov

Short description of the interview:

The interview reflects Michel Kichka's family background and his position as a second-generation artist and scholar. It reconstructs the background of his graphic novel *Second Generation: The Things I Didn't Tell My Father* (France 2012), Kichka's first encounter with Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (USA 1980), the use of historical photographs and liberation footage for illustrating *Second Generation*, and the role photographs from the Holocaust played for the imagination of his own father's past. The interview also deals with specifics of the comic genre and comic language in comparison to the representation of the Holocaust in other media such as films. Kichka explicitly mentions Joe Kubert's *Yossel, April 19, 1943* about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He also talks about his work as a teacher at the Bezalel Academy of Arts in Jerusalem, and his work as a comic artist and cartoonist in a society that is shaped by traumatic memories and conflict.

Short biography of the interviewee:

Michel Kichka is one of the most famous Israeli caricaturists. He was born in 1954 in Belgium and emigrated to Israel where he studied graphic design from 1974 to 1978. He was an editorial cartoonist for Israeli TV channels (Channel 2, Channel 1, i24news) and French TV (TV5Monde) and he draws frequently for Courrier International and Regards (Belgium). Since 1982, he is teaching at the Bezalel Academy of Arts in Jerusalem. In 2012, he published *Second Generation: The Things That I Didn't Tell My Father* in French with

the Dargaud publishing house, a comic about his relations with his father, a Holocaust survivor. Since then, the book was translated into several languages, among them English, German, Polish and Turkish.

Interview 05 – Natascha Drubek

Interviewee: Natascha Drubek

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 15.12.2021

Time: 16:52 – 17:53

Location: Zoom

Length: 61 min.

Recording devices:

- Zoom
- Built-in cameras
- LogiTech Web Cam
- Headphone + microphone
- Built-in microphone
- MacBook Pro

Recording software:

- Zoom

File names:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Drubek_2021-12-15_16-52_17-53_raw.mp4

Short description of the interview:

The interview focusses on the extensive research conducted by Natascha Drubek on the filming at Majdanek after Soviet troops had liberated the camp. Drubek provides extensive historical contexts that also explain the different perspectives on Majdanek, in Russia, Poland, Germany and the rest of the world. In this context she analyses Majdanek as a multilayered place of memory. In context of the Majdanek films and footage, Drubek especially discusses the iconic scenes of piles of shoes and glasses.

Nearly in parallel to the discovery of Majdanek, or as the Germans had called it: "KZ Lublin", Germans had produced a film in the KZ Theresienstadt that attempted to present the façade of the "nice" and "peaceful" ghetto. Drubek compares both films and emphasizes the specifics of films recorded and produced by the Nazis and Soviet liberation footage.

Drubek also discusses the significance of access to such footage and contextualizing information in the digital age, especially concerning the danger of misuse and distortion of liberation footage in contexts of neo-Nazi and extremist-right-wing propaganda.

Short biography of the interviewee:

Natascha Drubek is a researcher, writer and editor in the area of Central and East European cinemas and cultures. She received her PhD from the University of Munich. She held the following positions: 2006–2009 at the Film School FAMU, Prague, developing Hyperkino. 2009–2015: Heisenberg Fellow, 2013–2014 at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Convener of the conference: Films from ghettos and camps (2014); 2020/21 Visiting professor (Fonte Stiftung) at the Peter Szondi-Institut of Comparative Literature, FU Berlin.

Since 2015 she has been Editor in Chief of *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe.*[9] She is the author of the books *Russisches Licht* (Boehlau, 2012) and *Filme über Vernichtung und Befreiung. Die Rhetorik der Filmdokumente aus Majdanek 1944–1945* (Springer VS, 2020).

Interview 06 – Paul Frosh

Interviewee: Prof. Paul Frosh

Interviewer: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

Date: 19.12.2021

Time: 15:07 – 16:07

Location: Zoom

Length: 60 min.

Recording devices:

- LogiTech Web Cam
- K9 Wireless Microphone
- MacBook Pro

Recording software:

- Zoom

File name:

VHH_Expert-Interview_Frosh_2021-12-19_15-07_16-07_raw.mp4

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[9] http://www.apparatusjournal.org/ (29.12.2021)

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Short description of the interview:

The main focus of the interview is on the characteristics and function of iconic images. Starting with a discussion about the iconic status of photographs, the iconicity of liberation and atrocity footage is discussed in relation to iconic scenes and sceneries that began representing the concentration camps as well as Nazi atrocities in a more generic sense. Discussing particular scenes and images, for instance the bulldozers in Bergen-Belsen and their representation in the British TV series *World at War* (UK, 1973), the interview also reflects on different national cultures of visually commemorating the Holocaust, especially comparing the British and American visual memory of the Holocaust and its focus on liberation footage as evidence of a "just war" with the Israeli visual memory and its focus on generic images such as the Warsaw ghetto boy and narratives of resistance.

The migration of Holocaust imagery in popular culture and new forms of circulation in the digital age are in focus of the second part of the conversation, discussing the specific form of memes as well as question of appropriation and related ethical and moral questions. With respect to the YOLOCAUST project (Shahak Shapira, 2017), the boundaries between adequate and trivializing use of historical images and engagement with historical sites are discussed. The complex ways of mediations that do not only connect, blur and juxtapose but also offer new ways of differentiating and contextualizing the historical events and their depictions in contrast to their mediation in popular culture are also reflected.

Short biography of the interviewee:

Paul Frosh is a Professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests span visual culture, photography theory, the aesthetics of digital media, cultural production, cultural memory, media and national sentiment, media and moral concern. His most recent book is *The Poetics of Digital Media* (2018). Other books include *The Image Factory: Consumer Culture, Photography and the Visual Content Industry* (2003); *Meeting the Enemy in the Living Room: Terrorism and Communication in the Contemporary Era* (2006, edited with Tamar Liebes); *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication* (2009, 2nd edition 2011, edited with Amit Pinchevski). He is a co-editor of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, and a past Chair of the Popular Communication Division of the International Communication Association. His current research project, funded by the Israel Science Foundation, explores how the cultural memory of photography has enabled the medium to survive and expand despite the almost complete transformation of its core technologies, and what this persistence means for societies in which it occurs.

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5.3. Evaluation

The current situation, which is still very much defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, made it difficult to conduct the interviews as originally planned. In addition, several potential interviewees rejected our request to participate in recording conversations about historical footage and photographs from the period of the Holocaust and its immediate aftermath. Most candidates had to reject their participation due to limited time resulting from other projects or because they had changed the focus of their research. Some did not want to conduct interviews, because they do not feel comfortable in such situations, or because they do not find their language skills adequate. An effect of these rejections was that we were not able to create a diverse sample of experts in relation to gender and country of origin. From the total number of 8 interviewees (in 6 interviews) only 2 were female. We also had to shift originally planned on-site interviews to Zoom due to an intensification of COVID-19 restrictions, or because interviewees were abroad for research stays. The interviewees were in three different countries (Germany, Israel, UK). Two interviews were conducted remotely on Zoom, four interviews took place in person.

For the initial interviews we focused on interviewees from Germany (5) and Israel (3). Due to the above-mentioned reasons, we are planning to conduct additional expert interviews in the first six months of Year 4 (2022) of the project, including expert interviews with artists (which however also have a scholarly background).

Despite the acquisition of adequate recording technology, a precise set-up plan for the recording devices, and a detailed guideline for conducting the interviews, we encountered technical difficulties as well as conceptual challenges. In some of the initial interviews we had problems with properly recording the sound, in spite of the fact that we always used a second microphone and sound recording device for backup (the only exception was the interview with Michel Kichka, for which we could only use one device). This backup recording was for instance needed in order to synchronize the sound of the interview with Christoph Kreutzmüller (House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial). He had repositioned the portable microphone and was speaking directly to the interviewer, which caused an unsatisfying audio track in the recorded video. This also affected the originally intended shooting angle. In case of the interview with Robert Rozett we recorded with two cameras sound as well as visuals. However, due to a technical problem with one of the cameras we had to halt the interview until the problem was fixed.

It was also not always possible to properly record the questions of the interviewer, especially when the interview was conducted and recorded by the same person. For that reason, we decided to replace the questions with short text inserts.

This was not a problem in case of the online interviews on Zoom, which instantly edited the different speakers including the interviewer. Other than originally planned, those interviews made it difficult to create additional recordings on QuickTime, because this absorbed computing power, which had a negative impact on the quality of the Zoom conference. In case of experimenting with a conversation of four participants (Clemens von Wedemeyer, Maya Schweitzer, Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer and interviewer Tobias

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Ebbrecht-Hartmann) the automated Zoom recording was not created in HD (this is only the case for recordings of up to 3 participants).

The conversational format, however, was very effective. We had decided to include three experts in the interview, because Wedemeyer, Schweitzer and Meyer-Krahmer had collaborated on creating a new exhibition film for the Dachau Memorial in 2021. The interview focused on the conceptual design of this film and discussed this matter in a broader context of liberation imagery and its impact on the visual history and memory of the Holocaust.

From the conceptual perspective, the clear division between a general discussion about the subject and focusing on a specific example could not always be realized. In some cases, the specific scholarly expertise of the interviewees led to a conversation that constantly shifted between general and specific aspects. Some experts mentioned several examples but did not focus on one specific case study. Also, the range of topics outlined in the Guiding Questions in some cases contradicted the clear division between general interview and specific focus. In two interviews (with Michel Kichka and Natascha Drubek), it was difficult to successfully execute the conversational structure of the interviews and keep answers short, due to the extensive knowledge of those experts.

We improved the conversational structure by the help of the above-mentioned text inserts that replaced the questions. Thereby, it is easier to follow the alternating general and specific foci of the interviews. Furthermore, the intended segmentation of the interviews can correspond to the basic structure of the conversation. The actual order of questions and answers was not changed.

A conceptual challenge that evolves from the planned segmentation of the interviews is the potential of decontextualizing specific passages and reframing them by integrating them into a different topical context. Especially those passages of some interviews that critically analyze the production and *staging* of Allied liberation and atrocity footage, or that compare the "orderly" routine in the concentration camps during the Nazi rule and their "chaotic" state shortly before and after liberation, might invite misuse and abuse of the expert opinions for contesting the factuality and actuality of the Allied recordings of the conditions in former concentration camps.

6. Conclusion

The possibility of exploring a visual object that manifests a visual relation to liberation imagery alongside an interview with an expert in the field anchors this imagery in a broader historical and cultural context, thereby enriching the experience and the knowledge gained during the use of the VHH-MMSI. Moreover, the option offered to the user to work with and edit the expert video as a raw recorded material opens a window to a wide range of new media products of educational value. The interactive potential inherent in such an approach to studying and doing research has not yet been sufficiently explored; the recording of expert videos by HUJI team members and their accessibility to the general public on the VHH platform is an important step into this direction.

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