

Teacher's Guide to "Never Let It Rest!"
A Contemporary Art Exhibition by Hans Molzberger
On view at Holocaust Museum Houston April 16 – Oct. 3, 2010

Rationale / Purpose for the Lesson

Holocaust Museum Houston's contemporary art exhibition by Hans Molzberger, "Never Let It Rest!" is designed to ensure all who view these works remember the Holocaust and share that information with peers, family and others. In this way, the Holocaust and its lessons are not forgotten.

Many historians place the period of the Holocaust as 1933 to 1945, or the years of the Nazi regime in Germany. After the Holocaust, the United Nations adopted a resolution to prevent and punish genocide; this document defined genocide, and its signatories agreed to act to stop genocide when it is known to be occurring (See <http://www.un.org/millennium/law/iv-1.htm>). Genocide never happens by chance, and there are often warning signs of these events. To foster a sense of how genocide occurs, scholar Gregory Stanton has identified 8 possible stages of genocide (See <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stagesofgenocide.html>). According to this research, the last stage of genocide is DENIAL. There have been many attempts to deny the Holocaust outright or to deny the events through attempts at doubting information or claiming the information is presented to arouse sympathies for Israel.

In his briefing paper presented to the U.S. State Department, Stanton writes, "Denial, the final stage of genocide is best overcome by public trials and truth commissions, followed by years of education about the facts of the genocide, particularly for the children of the group or nation that committed the crime. The black hole of forgetting is the negative force that results in future genocides."

The current mayor of Salzwedel, Sabine Danicke, commented to Holocaust Museum Houston's director of changing exhibitions, "After a visit to Salzwedel by former concentration camp detainees in 1996, local students asked residents of Salzwedel if they knew what happened in Salzwedel during the Nazi period. They learned that eighty percent of those asked did not know, so a working committee about the past was created with many young people. In this way, our town has worked to not forget our past." The town of Salzwedel created an exhibition that was displayed for several years to teach about its history during the Nazi period. The town also has commissioned Molzberger to create a permanent memorial to the Jews who perished during the Holocaust.

Materials / Teaching Resources Needed

- Copies of "Background information about *Never Let It Rest!*"
- Copies of "History of Jewish Community in Salzwedel"
- Optional – Computer with Internet connection and an LCD projector
- Optional – Research by local historian into area where school is located

Activities

1. Pre-visit: Tying Local Information to the Exhibition
 - a. Discuss the memorials that exist in your community. These may include war memorials, memorials at hospitals or memorial scholarships created for area schools. Ask students to consider who put them there and why they exist.
 - b. The Holocaust destroyed many historic Jewish communities in Europe. In some places, notably in Eastern Europe, all Jews in a town – though they lived there for centuries – were murdered, and little to no trace remains of their existence. Ask students to consider how this situation could affect memorialization of the Holocaust within that community.

- c. Have students consider the different types of memorials that exist about the Holocaust using the Web sites referenced in “Additional Resources” below. Have students read the two attachments, “Background Information to *Never Let It Rest!*” and “History of Jewish Community in Salzwedel.” Let the students know that during their visit to Holocaust Museum Houston they will be viewing one man’s attempt to memorialize the Holocaust as it occurred in Salzwedel, Germany.

2. During visit: Considering the Exhibition

The exhibition is divided into two parts using both gallery spaces in the Museum: historical background and art installations.

In the Central Gallery space, visitors will be presented with key information relating to the town of Salzwedel during the Nazi era. Historic photographs, laws and current research will be presented. In this section, visitors may consider this question, “***How do people remember a community if no one remains from that community?***”

Students will then enter the Minckberg Gallery, walking through a tunnel structure created by Molzberger. In this gallery, visitors will be able to view Molzberger's works. A viewer's guide that highlights three pieces of art is available inside the exhibition. Below are some of the questions that visitors could consider as they view the pieces in the exhibition:

- ***How do art and history work together?***

- ***What are people supposed to do with the knowledge of the events of the Holocaust?***

3. Post-visit: Responsibility to Remember

- a. Many survivors who settled in the Houston area wanted Holocaust Museum Houston to be built so that our community – and all others who visit the Museum – would never forget the Holocaust and its lessons. This is the reason the Permanent Exhibition is titled, “Bearing Witness: A Community Remembers.” Lead a discussion about what students learned at the Museum and how they would wish to communicate it with others, how they could “bear witness.”

- b. Ask students which of the art installations interested them most and why.

- c. This exhibition features documents related to the attempts by the Stein family to immigrate to the United States. The following links are to files created by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that detail the documentation required to emigrate from Germany and immigrate to the United States; these lists of documentation requirements were displayed in the exhibition.
 - Documentation Required for Emigration from Germany:
<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/workshop/pdf/emigration.pdf>
 - Documentation Required for Immigration Visas to Enter the United States:
<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/workshop/pdf/immigrationvisas.pdf>

Extensions

1. In an effort to remember the children who perished during the Holocaust, Holocaust Museum Houston is collecting 1.5 million handmade butterflies for exhibition in 2013. Information about this project can be found on the Museum's Web site at http://www.hmh.org/ed_butterfly1.shtml.
2. Students could also be asked to develop a memorial place for victims of the Holocaust at their school or create memorials individually.
3. Consider using the lesson by Teaching Tolerance titled, "Does My Town Have a Racist Past?" <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-33-spring-2008/does-my-town-have-racist-past>
4. Students could also be asked to create local history walking tours (or short drive tours) of their community. Below are some Web sites that may help you develop this concept.
 - Exploring Community through Local History: Oral Stories, Landmarks and Traditions <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/98/community/index.html>
 - Austin Walking Tour Project <http://instructors.cwrl.utexas.edu/dean/?q=node/76>

Additional Resources

- Memorials to consider
 - Overview of several memorials: <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/>
 - Information about *Stolpersteine*: <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/stolpersteine/>
 - Art in Response to the Holocaust: <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/artRespo.htm>
- More information on the 84th Infantry Division (American unit that liberated Salzwedel)
 - <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10006138>
 - <http://www.railsplitterslivinghistory.org/>
- More information about Neuengamme (Salzwedel was a subcamp of this concentration camp)
 - <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?ModuleId=10005539>
 - http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205954.pdf

Assessment

There are a variety of assessment options including having students submit journal entries about their understanding of the purposes and importance of memorials and/or the visit to the exhibition itself.

Students also could respond to these quotes from Lawrence Langer's "Preempting the Holocaust:"

- As we occupy the landscape of catastrophe we call the Holocaust, we are tugged in two directions at once, prompted to identify with victims [. . .] whose lives are in peril, and to imagine [. . .] those who come to hunt human prey for reasons we may never understand. (p. 197)
- The bleak landscape of Holocaust atrocity requires a guide, not to lead us through the patterned horrors of Dante's Hell, where Divine Justice prevails, but into a far more lawless region, where turmoil rules. . . (p. 194)
- Only by multiplying voices can we begin to present the moral complexity of the Holocaust experience to individuals accustomed to basing their conduct on stable value systems. (p. 190)

Background Information to *Never Let It Rest!*

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>. Approximate location marked.



Salzwedel during the Holocaust

The persecution and exploitation of the Jewish citizens of Salzwedel by the Nazis is well documented. Those who were lucky immigrated abroad; the less fortunate were deported to concentration camps and murdered.

A concentration camp for women was erected in Salzwedel in the summer of 1944 as a satellite to the Hamburg-Neuengamme concentration camp. Up to 1,500 women, mostly Jewish women from Hungary and Poland, were imprisoned there between the summer of 1944 and March 1945. The women came from Auschwitz (Hungarians) or through Bergen-Belsen (Poles) to Salzwedel. They were forced to work in the production of ammunition, with the women divided into two 12-hour labor shifts.

At the end of March 1945, the camp functioned as a collecting point for transports from evacuated camps. This doubled the population of the camp within a short period of time.

After landing in Normandy in the summer of 1944, the U.S. Army moved eastward while troops from the Soviet Union continued to move westward. At the beginning of 1945, Allied war planes attacked the main train station of Salzwedel, killing 300 people. By April, American ground forces arrived in the area, and on April 14, the U.S. 84th Infantry Division liberated the Salzwedel camp. Eventually, the U.S. Army turned control of the city over to the Soviet Union; this led to the town becoming part of the German Democratic Republic ("East Germany") after World War II.

About Hans Molzberger

Hans Molzberger was born in 1953 in Höhr-Grenzhausen in Germany's Rhineland region, where his family has lived for many generations working in industrial ceramic factories. As a small boy growing up in the south of Germany after World War II, Molzberger remembers that when he asked about what occurred during the Holocaust, he was told to "let it rest."

He moved to a small town near Salzwedel in 1993, an opportune time. The town had begun its own inquiry about its identity and actions during the Nazi period. Molzberger worked with local citizens, archives and museums to examine documentation from the region. They read letters, examined photos and interviewed former detainees of the concentration camp. When a local museum created a historical exhibition about the Nazi period in Salzwedel in 1998, Molzberger was asked to create an art exhibit based on the research that had been done. Of this exhibition, Molzberger says, "This was unique in history. We will always remember what happened. They told me 'let it rest,' but we can never let it rest, we can never let it happen again."

Working mainly with assemblages and Raku ceramic objects, the artist recently turned to printmaking. He now creates woodcuts and large-scale silkscreens that contain political subject matter. Molzberger has worked in Israel, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Russia and lectured at several major universities. He currently divides his time between Germany and Houston. He is director of an artist residence program in Hilmsen, Germany and teaches as an artist affiliate at Houston Baptist University.

The city of Salzwedel has commissioned Molzberger to create the town's own Holocaust memorial.

History of Jewish Community in Salzwedel

- 1300s** The Jewish community in Salzwedel is established.
- 1510** The Jewish community is expelled from Salzwedel following a judicial decree.
- 1800** A Jewish community is re-established. The first Jewish cemetery is established.
- 1834** Approximately 103 Jews are living in the city of Salzwedel.
- 1850** The second Jewish cemetery is established.
- 1878** 80 Jews are living in Salzwedel.
- 1900** Jewish families have established businesses in Salzwedel such as stores and banks.
- 1914** World War I starts. Many Jews see it as their responsibility to join German forces including Willi Nelke, who died during the war at age 32.
- 1925** The number of members in the Jewish community drops to 64.
- 1933** **April:** Boycott against Jewish stores. On that day, Bertha Bacharach, along with all other Jews, is not allowed to shop. She tells her husband they must leave Germany.
- 1935** **August:** Hermann Bacharach "transfers" his bank to the banking house of "Zuckschwerdt & Beuchel-Magdeburg."
- 1936** Bacharach family leaves for Palestine.
- 1938** **April:** Jews are told they must fill out a form listing all of their assets.
- October:** Jewish passports are declared invalid property.
- November:** Jewish prayer house, one Jewish cemetery and Jewish stores are destroyed during *Kristallnacht*.
- Jewish businessmen are ordered to restore the streetscape following *Kristallnacht*.
- Jews can no longer attend cultural events.
- The Stein family applies for visas to leave Germany.
- December:** Walter Michaelis, a trader, is forced to close his shop.
- 1939** Only 20 Jews are still living in Salzwedel, among them the Stein family.
- January:** Jews must take additional middle names, Israel for men and Sarah for women.

April: Jews must declare all their property.

May: Walter Michaelis and his wife, Cacilie, board the ship the *St. Louis*, which is sailing to Cuba.

June: After most of its passengers are denied entry into Cuba and asylum in the United States, the *St. Louis* returns to Europe. Walter Michaelis and his wife, Cacilie, disembark the ship the *St. Louis* in France along with 224 other people. The Michaelis family's last known location was Auschwitz.

1941 **January:** The Stein family sells home and moves into Jewish Prayer House.

September: Jews must wear the "Star of David."

October: Memo from mayor of Salzwedel states that all Jews must be moved from their homes to barracks.

1942 **January:** Jews in Salzwedel are forced to move into the Jewish prayer house.

April: Municipal record dated April 3, 1942 states that all Jewish families in Salzwedel are "on a journey." This includes all members of the Stein family, of whose fate we do not know, though it is assumed they perished during the Holocaust.

October: Four Jews are still living in Salzwedel, probably protected by marriage to non-Jews.

1944 A subcamp of the concentration camp Neuengamme begins operation in Salzwedel.

1945 Prior to the arrival of American ground forces, Allied war planes bomb the main train station of Salzwedel, killing 300 civilians.

April: The U.S. Army liberates the Salzwedel women's subcamp.

May 8: Victory in Europe (VE) Day, the date when the Allies accepted Germany's unconditional surrender.

1980s While re-roofing a house, workers discover a roll of documents detailing the Stein family's attempt to emigrate from Germany during the Nazi period. They give these documents to a local historian, Dr. Ernst Block.

1988 On the 50th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, Rolf Oberst, a professional photographer, took photographs of all of the homes in Salzwedel where Jewish families had lived before World War II and held a memorial exhibit in his photography store.

1998 Hans Molzberger creates an art exhibition based on his research about Salzwedel during the Nazi era. It is displayed in Salzwedel.