12-2012

Why Are There So Many Diverse Holocaust Museums?: A Journey through the Holocaust Museums of Five Nations

Marjorie E. Carignan

Buffalo State College, carignme01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Advisor
Cynthia Conides, Ph.D., Associate Professor

First Reader
Cynthia Conides, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Second Reader
John Abromeit, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Department Chair
Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D., Professor of History

To learn more about the History and Social Studies Education Department and its educational programs, research, and resources, go to http://history.buffalostate.edu/.

Recommended Citation
Why Are There So Many Diverse Holocaust Museums?: A Journey through the Holocaust Museums of Five Nations

by

Marjorie E. Carignan

An Abstract of a Thesis
in
Museum Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

December 2012

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History and Social Studies Education
Abstract of Thesis

Holocaust museums around the world are unique in their respective missions, funding, architecture and exhibitions. Some of these distinctions are extreme, leaving museums seemingly opposites of each other. To better understand these diversities, this thesis analyzes Holocaust museums in France, Germany, Poland, Israel and the United States. Through analysis, unique facets in many basic areas of the museums can be found, with many of these being affected by which country the museum is in. By seeing what museums choose to include and leave out, we are able to see what parts of the Holocaust could use more attention and how this can be achieved.
Why Are There So Many Diverse Holocaust Museums?: A Journey through the Holocaust Museums of Five Nations

A Thesis in
Museum Studies

by

Marjorie E. Carignan

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts
December 2012

Approved by:

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Museum Studies
Chairperson of the Committee/Thesis Adviser

Andrew D. Nicholls, Ph.D.
Chair & Professor of History and Social Studies Education

Kevin J. Railey, Ph.D.
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
# Table of Contents

Abstract 1

Title Page 2

Table of Contents 3

Introduction 4

Chapter One: Ideas in the Making: Writings on Holocaust Museums 8

Chapter Two: Building Our Stories: The Creation of Holocaust Museums 26

Chapter Three: Holocaust Museum Architecture: Disturbing the Senses 45

Chapter Four: History, Heritage and Hope: Exhibitions: Interpreting the Holocaust 65

Conclusion 91

Appendix A: Museum Mission Statements 95

Appendix B: Photographs 101

Bibliography 122
**Introduction**

“For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.”

-Elie Wiesel

Museums of all types - whether history, science or art - are unique; no two museums are the same. They may share a mission statement with many of the same goals and objectives; they may have architecture that fits into a neoclassical or modernist vision; their exhibitions may cover the same time periods or subjects. However, differences can be found in all of these areas, making each museum unique. Holocaust museums, while covering a sensitive subject, are a wonderful example of this variation. With museums on this subject found throughout the world, it is especially interesting to see the distinctions between these museums in different countries, and why these variations exist.

The Holocaust was the Nazi Party’s persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews. The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*; or “Nazi” for short), who came to power in Germany in the beginning of 1933, believed that the Germans were “racially superior” and that the Jews were “inferior” and therefore a threat to Germany’s Aryan community. However, Jews were not the only targeted victims of the Nazis; they also persecuted other groups they believed to be “racially inferior”: Sinti and Roma, the disabled, and some Slavic peoples such as Poles and Russians. Other groups were persecuted for political, ideological and behavioral reasons, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and homosexuals.

---

At the rise of the Nazi Party, the Jewish population of Europe stood at well over nine million, with most living in the Eastern European countries that Nazi Germany would occupy during World War II. With the passing of the antisemitic Nuremberg laws in 1935, Jews were legally separated from Germans. Nazis began to boycott Jewish businesses, and Jews were turned away by German businessmen of whom they had been loyal customers. As the tension grew through the years, it reached its high point on 9-10 November 1938, *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass.\(^2\) This was a series of coordinated attacks against Jews throughout Nazi Germany carried out by soldiers and civilians, while the government did nothing to stop it. The attacks left the streets covered with broken glass from the windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings and synagogues. In 1939 law was passed forcing Jews to wear the Star of David on the outside of their clothing when in public so that their ethnicity could not be hidden from anyone.\(^3\)

In the first years of the Nazi regime, concentration camps were established to detain political and ideological opponents. In the years leading up to the outbreak of war, the SS and police incarcerated Jews, Roma and other victims in these camps. To concentrate and monitor the Jewish population (and to deport them more easily in the years to follow), the Germans created ghettos, transit camps and forced-labor camps for Jews during the war years.

After the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) followed behind German lines to carry out mass-murder operations against Jews, Roma and Soviet state and Communist Party officials.\(^4\) More than one million Jewish men, women and children were killed in this way, along with hundreds of thousands of others. By the end of the

\(^2\) In Germany this is now known by the less euphemistic name of *Reichspogromnacht*, or Reich’s Pogrom Night.


\(^4\) Ibid., 154.
year, the Nazis had come up with a plan for the annihilation of European Jews entitled the Final Solution. With the help of the ghettos in which Jews had already been concentrated, those not already killed by the Einsatzgruppen were deported to death camps, where they were murdered in gas chambers and their bodies burned in crematoria.

In the final months of the war, SS guards were forced to move inmates by train or by foot, often called “death marches,” in an attempt to prevent the Allied liberation of a large number of prisoners. As the Allied forces moved across Europe into German-occupied land, they began to encounter and liberate concentration camp prisoners, as well as prisoners en route by forced march from one camp to another. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many survivors found shelter in displaced persons camps administered by the Allied countries. Hundreds of thousands of Jews emigrated in the years immediately following the war, with the greatest number settling in Israel and the United States.

Today, museums about the Holocaust can be found in countries around the world and on six continents. The largest number are found in Europe, where the events were carried out, and in Israel and the United States, the two countries which received the largest number of survivors following the war.\(^5\)

As this thesis examines numerous Holocaust museums throughout many countries, including the United States, France, Germany, Poland and Israel, it becomes understandable that museums about this terrifying event are needed to make sure that the world never forgets how many lives were lost. They help to encourage visitors to step up and do what they can to stop the genocides that are currently happening and prevent them from happening again.

There is much diversity that can be found in these museums both within each country and in the countries themselves. The United States seems to have the largest variation of these countries. This can be found in the creation of the museums, their funding, their architecture and their exhibitions.

This thesis looks at the diversity among these museums, while also looking at what characteristics they share among them. Through looking at a variety of important areas of museums in a variety of countries, it is able to give an all-around view of what Holocaust museums wish to accomplish for their visitors and how they go about doing this. It provides ideas as to why these museums are so diverse, and whether they are appropriate for the country in which they exist.
Chapter One:

Ideas in the Making: Writings on Holocaust Museums

In comparison to the hundreds of writings on the history of the Holocaust, literature on Holocaust museums is fairly modest. Holocaust museums are recent creations, most opening only within the past twenty-five years. Most literature on the subject focuses on larger museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Jewish Museum in Berlin. However, as more Holocaust museums and monuments are opening every year, more and more articles and books are written. Literature can be organized into four themes. The first is Holocaust museums and monuments in the United States, while the second is Holocaust museums and monuments in Europe and Israel. The third theme is the architecture of Holocaust museums and monuments. The final theme is on the use of memory in museums, something brought to use quite often in Holocaust museums.

I. Literature of Holocaust Museums of the United States

Literature about Holocaust museums in the United States is much more available than literature about Holocaust museums anywhere else. Much of it focuses on specific museums, rather than looking at many in one writing. This is both good and bad. It is helpful in that there are books about specific museums, and therefore more information about those museums than just that found on websites. However, one misses out on the opportunity to view these museums side by side, displaying their connections to each other, while also showing that each is unique.

The majority of writings found on museums of the United States focuses on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The first book, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum, gives an in depth history of how the USHMM
was created, starting with President Carter’s request in the 1970s that something be done to commemorate both victims and survivors. It also discusses the complications faced by the museum committee in planning the exhibits, from such questions as: How intense can the exhibit be without horrifying visitors to the point of never coming back? How much detail should be given about the Nazi party? Should hair from Auschwitz be displayed? Should America’s participation (or lack there of) be discussed? Should other genocides be discussed? These are all questions this study will keep in mind when looking at different museum’s exhibitions.

Many other writings focus on the broad variety of exhibitions displayed in the USHMM, offering a description to the reader. Eleanor H Ayer, a professional in literary journalism who has authored many children’s books about the Holocaust, gears her book about the USHMM towards a juvenile audience. While very short and not in depth, it is helpful in giving a simple overall view of the museum. It is helpful in showing how professionals outside the museum wish to communicate the museum’s message. Finally, Eric David Fox looks at the use of memory in the USHMM, stating that it is essential to telling the history of the Holocaust. He believes that memory is essential to the relationship between experience and interpretation, and shows this in his observance of the USHMM exhibitions. For example, Fox states that the room of shoes takes visitors back to the Holocaust itself, implanting in them a memory which allows them to feel as though they are experiencing this part of the Holocaust themselves. Through this experience, the visitor is able to interpret what they have just seen. Many visitors believe this room to be the most moving and hardest part of the visit to the museum; perhaps Fox is right in saying that these shoes implant the memory of the Holocaust into visitors. While Fox’s

---


dissertation is highly complicated, consisting of much jargon in psychology, there are ideas he puts forward that help to explain why the USHMM has presented their exhibitions as experiential.\textsuperscript{8}

Another category of writings on the Holocaust museums focuses on specific topics of exhibits and on certain parts that create a topic for discussion. Rick Crownshaw looks at the USHMM’s use of photography and memory. While he states that preserving the memory of the Holocaust is one of the main uses of the museum, it is often misused, giving what he believes is the wrong message. He then states that photographs are the most effective way to transmit traumatic memory across generations and compares the photographs of death to the familial photographs found in the Tower of Faces, a three-story tower displaying photographs from the town of Eishishok, Lithuania, where the Jewish population was massacred within two days after the SS entered. Crownshaw’s ideas are helpful in that they give a critical view of the exhibition, rather than the straight-forward description that many other sources provide.\textsuperscript{9}

Another writing looks at how the USHMM represents the Holocaust, and the mistakes that the author believes have been made. Jennifer A Faber, a graduate student at Miami University, believes that the museum has created its permanent exhibition to make visitors feel like this event had become part of pop culture. As she says, “It seemed as the Holocaust had become as American as apple pie.”\textsuperscript{10} She also argues that the museum avoids the topic of how the United States did not work to try to prevent or stop the Holocaust from happening; rather, they focus on liberators arriving to camps at the end of the war.

Bernard-Donals’s essay shows how the USHMM changed after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. While the museum itself may not have changed its message about the Holocaust, visitors began to compare the Nazi party to al Qaeda. This was found in the comments left by visitors after viewing the permanent exhibit. He argues that this is not right because the two events had nothing to do with each other and happened under completely different circumstances. The author makes the reader think about this idea, questioning whether it is a bad thing for visitors to do and whether there is something the USHMM can do to teach visitors that the Holocaust and 9/11 are different in their own special ways.11

The final piece on the USHMM is an essay by James Edward Young titled “The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Politics of Identity”. This asks two much debated questions: Is it necessary to have a Holocaust museum in the United States? and What role does the Holocaust play in American history? These are very important and very complicated questions which must be answered by all Holocaust museums in the United States; however, this piece focuses on the USHMM. Young finds the answers to these questions in the history of the museum, its mission and its exhibits.12

There are two writings that focus on other museums. The first, written by Michael Berenbaum and Yitzchak Mais, examines the Illinois Holocaust Museum. The book surveys the museum, going through the exhibitions - the Core exhibition, Youth exhibition, Midwest Collection of Testimonies, the Legacy of Absence Gallery, the Temporary Exhibitions Gallery,

---

the Goodman Auditorium and the Education Center. It explains what is on display in great
detail, with descriptions and photographs helping the reader to feel as if they are at the museum
themselves. The detail that this book provides is much more than that found on the museum’s
website, and so it is helpful in examining the presentation and overall philosophy of the Illinois
Holocaust Museum and how it relates to other museums of its kind.\textsuperscript{13} The second, written by
Jerry Bleem who is an artist and Catholic priest, looks at the Jewish Heritage Museum in New
York City and a specific piece of artwork created for the museum to represent the Holocaust.
This art by Anni Albers is six toned and woven panels that hang next to each other, like people
standing side by side. In describing this art, the reader is able to get a better idea of what the
message of this museum is and how they portray it.\textsuperscript{14}

There are two pieces of literature that are not geared towards specific museums, but offer
a broad overview. The first, a book by Harold Kaplan titled \textit{Conscience and Memory}, looks at
how it was possible for the Holocaust to occur and what could make its recurrence improbable.
He also asks the question, “How does a visitor of any allegiance or identification concern himself
with the Holocaust, and how does the Holocaust affect his understanding of himself in the human
condition?”\textsuperscript{15} Kaplan approaches these questions through analysis of Holocaust museums,
determining how well they answer these questions and how they could be improved. The other
writing is a contribution to an anthology, \textit{Museums and Their Communities}, edited by Sheila
Watson. The article focuses on an even broader topic, that of many kinds of museums. The
essay by Tiffany Jenkins, “Victims Remembered,” gives a brief comparison of Holocaust

\textsuperscript{13} Michael Berenbaum and Yitzchak Mais, \textit{Memory and Legacy: The Shoah Narrative of the
\textsuperscript{15} Harold Kaplan, \textit{Conscience and Memory: Meditations in a Museum of the Holocaust},
museums in the United States to those of other countries, trying to give a reason for why there are so many found in the United States - more than any other country. Her main answer to this question is that countries find it “easier to look at the dark heart of other nations and times than our own” (449). She then points out that most of the Holocaust museums in the United States were founded during times when the United States was at war, such as the Gulf War of the early 1990s. It is hardly a coincidence that these museums were opened at this time because they took attention away from the damage America was creating overseas, and focused on the damage in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. She also notes, “To date, the [USHMM] has been visited by seventy-six heads of state and government, many of whom were engaged in unfriendly fire elsewhere.” This article provides a reason behind so much diversity of Holocaust museums in the countries that this study looks at - the nations were dealing with a multitude of political and defense problems as these museums were founded.\footnote{Tiffany Jenkins, “Victims Remembered,” in \textit{Museums and Their Communities}, ed. Sheila Watson, (London: Routledge, 2007), 448-51.}

Finally, the websites of these museums that are being examined here are reviewed for what they are able to provide. Some are more substantial than others with pictures and accounts of the museum’s history, though all are able to tell what their specific mission is. Other information provided may include the museum’s funding, the architecture and exhibitions found in the museum, both permanent and temporary. Some of the websites, such as Buffalo Holocaust Research Center’s or CANDLES’s are very rudimentary, providing basic information, such as the mission, location and contact information.\footnote{Holocaust Research Center of Buffalo, \url{www.holocaustcenterbuff.com} (accessed 5 November 2011). CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center, \url{www.candlesholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 8 November 2011).} Those museums with more information, such as the USHMM, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and the Holocaust Museum Houston, are
interactive, with numerous photographs of the museum and its exhibitions.\textsuperscript{18} The USHMM's home page keeps the public notified of the happenings at the museum through their news postings. The USHMM also has an abundance of educational information for teachers, explaining why the Holocaust must be taught in the classroom and what parts are alright to discuss with students. It provides lessons and activities for teachers to use in the classroom as well, with basic lessons, documentaries, online activities, audio podcasts and even guides to help the teacher present online exhibitions to students.\textsuperscript{19}

II. Literature of Holocaust Museums in Other Countries

Compared to the amount of published works available on Holocaust museums in the United States, there is very little to be found on similar museums in European countries and Israel. The literature available on this topic was based almost completely in Germany itself, with little mention of related museums outside the country. However, this literature contains some interesting ideas as to why there is so much diversity between these museums and those in the United States, such as the controversies in creating the museums as well as funding and exhibition topics. The literature also raised questions about why these differences exist.

Brian J. Miller’s M.A. thesis from Georgia State University, “The Politics of Memory in the Jüdisches Museum Berlin, 1999-2004: Curatorial Strategies, Exhibition Spaces, and the German-Jewish Past,” offered a lot of information that will be helpful when studying the exhibitions of the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB). Through surveys of German museum-goers, Miller was able to get an idea of what the public’s experience had been of Jewish museums in

\textsuperscript{18} Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, \url{www.ilholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 5 November 2011).

\textsuperscript{19} United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, \url{www.ushmm.org}, (accessed 9 September 2011).
the past, and what they were hoping the JMB would bring to them. Through the surveys completed, he looked at curatorial strategies with regard to exhibition design and content, and found that the museum staff lost their chance to make amends with the Jewish community when they decided to place their focus on commercial success instead of focusing on the socially necessary representations of the horrors of the Holocaust. While this is interesting, Miller’s surveys can be interpreted in a different way. It is this author’s opinion that the surveys help to show that a great number of German citizens did not wish for the museum to cover the topic of the Holocaust. This is a significant piece of information that Miller should not have overlooked, and it will be further analyzed in this thesis.20

Related to Miller’s thesis, is “The Spoiler’s Art: Embarrassed Space as Memorialization” by David A. Ellison. Ellison discusses the creation of the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the problems created by senators, art historians and artists. He states that petty bickering continued throughout the discussion of the museum and politics became the focus. As one senator had said, “Bad enough that we murdered the Jews of Europe...worse that we can’t agree on how to commemorate them” (89). He concludes that this museum could easily be called “an embarrassed space,” meaning the people are ashamed of what they’ve done in the past, and are hesitant to set things right.21

The book Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past, by Gavriel D. Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, takes the confrontations presented in Miller’s and Ellison’s pieces and gives examples in twelve cities throughout Germany of the way the public and government

---

reacted to the idea of presenting the Nazi history of their towns. Not all of these examples are related to the Holocaust, but the three that are - Potsdam, Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main - show struggles faced by those wishing to commemorate the Jewish population lost. The examples presented truly give Ellison’s definition of “embarrassed space” a meaning, such as Potsdam’s struggle to believe that a monument already built for a Communist leader who died in 1919 would suffice as a Holocaust monument because he was anti-fascist (231). Although none of the examples given are places this author has chosen to research, they are able to provide an overall summary of how Holocaust memorials are viewed in the country by many who believe it best to forget the past mistakes of the Nazis and move on.  

The last publication, “For Most of It I Have No Words: Genocide, Landscape and Memory,” by Peter Chapman, takes a different view than the other three. First, it focuses on the Imperial War Museum in London, rather than on museums in Germany. Second, it doesn’t focus solely on the Holocaust, but genocide in general. However, similar to the other writings, Chapman questions what should be placed in exhibitions on this topic. His main question is brought about by a specific photograph displayed of the gas chambers at a Nazi concentration camp. Chapman asks: How much should an exhibition on genocide show a visitor? How much do visitors wish to see, and what would they prefer be left untouched? In this short article, he does not answer the question very fully, but is able to leave the reader thinking on the question.  

The questions Chapman asks are important when designing exhibitions for any museum, but certainly for the subject of the Holocaust. While a curator may wish to display the most gruesome photographs in the hopes of helping the visitor understand the terror, there is a limit to

---

what people are able to handle. Thus the curator is left to decide to what degree of tolerance the public can deal with and keep this in mind while deciding what should be included in an exhibition, and what would best be left out.

Finally, museum websites are looked to for information about each specific museum that is researched in this thesis. The majority of these sites are very helpful, providing a plethora of information about the history of the museums, detailed information about both permanent and temporary exhibitions and- in eight of the twelve museums- a good amount of information on the architecture of the museums or the monuments they have created outside their museums. The amount and quality of information available on the websites seems to be related to the amount of visitors the museum receives. For example, the JMB’s website is much more substantial than the Bad Arolsen Holocaust Archives, which has much lower visitation numbers.24

III. Museum Architecture

The architecture of museums sends a message to people walking past, sometimes determining whether they choose to visit. In the past forty years, museum architecture has become unique and daring. Michael Brawne, in his book *The New Museum: Architecture and Display*, elaborates:

> Both in biology and architecture there is a complex and important interaction between function and anatomy. Each influences and modifies the other. The architectural anatomy of a museum will be strongly influenced by two aspects of function: the general role assigned to that particular museum and the crucial relation within it of object and spectator. The first will affect the relative disposition of spaces, the second their nature. The second aspect is also, of course, the characteristic which is likely to influence the


most important spaces, those in fact unique to the museum, and it becomes thus the cell structure, as it were, from which the anatomy is later to be built up.\textsuperscript{25}

In the 21st century, architecture has also become a means to communicate the theme or message of the museum. When used effectively with Holocaust museums, the effect can be quite disturbing.

Changes to traditional museum architecture started with the creation of the Centre Pompidou, built from 1971-1977 in Paris. Douglas Davis looks at the museum’s architecture, describing the importance of the Pompidou and the changes that it brought to the museum world as the public began to expect more from them, such as stores and restaurants. He notes that much of the reason for this change can be seen in the architects themselves, and their desire to express themselves more than they had before. Many began to realize that they could put their spirit and emotions into the shapes of the architectural design, leaving the museum as their interpretation of art and beauty.\textsuperscript{26} Building on Davis’s history of the Centre Pompidou, Francisco Asensio Cerver looks at the overall change in museum architecture and the benefits and complications behind it. One of the most important points he argues is how technology has affected museums in both good and bad ways. While technology can “offer information and broaden our knowledge of a subject”, this same technology can “become pure, senseless confusion in which all the works are taken out of context and converted into mere images - inert and unintelligent.”\textsuperscript{27}

James Edward Young looks at a very particular type of structure in architecture: Holocaust Memorials in the United States. While his essay does not discuss the memorials that will be examined in this thesis, because it was written before these memorials were created, it is able to explain the ideas behind Holocaust memorials.\textsuperscript{28} There is literature that also looks at the architecture of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Justin Henderson looks at the history of museum architecture, finishing with the example of the USHMM, discussing the complications faced by architect James Ingo Freed in attempting to make the building fit in among the neo-classical buildings surrounding it on the Mall.\textsuperscript{29} However, it is Adrian Dannatt’s book that truly gives an in-depth explanation of the USHMM’s architecture. With numerous pictures to help explain, he looks at all parts of the museum, from the inside to the outside. He discusses the building materials used inside, steel and brick, and its similarities to materials used at concentration camps. The book continues by taking the reader through the exhibition itself, pointing out the significance of the bridges that visitors must cross, elevators that must be used, and finally, the Hall of Remembrance, which is designed like typical Washington D.C. monuments and is used as a place of mourning. He truly makes the reader realize that the museum’s architecture is much more complicated than could ever have been known before reading this book.\textsuperscript{30}

There are numerous writings which attempt to interpret the complex architecture of Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB). While Suzanne MacLeod’s anthology looks at architecture in old and new museums, an essay by Lee H. Skolnick touches on this museum

and its connection to curators and their designing of exhibitions. Skolnick believes that the word “representation” is not a good word to use when describing a museum’s architecture because it can be misleading and sway away from the true message of the museum. Yet he goes into great detail about the JMB. Skolnick explains how the angles of the walls in parts of the museum are so extreme that it is nearly impossible to display on them, leaving curators to figure out what should be done with this empty space.\textsuperscript{31} Victoria Newhouse, in her general architectural history book, \textit{Towards a New Museum}, discusses the Jewish Museum Berlin and what one feels upon entering the museum, simply because of Daniel Libeskind’s architectural design. As she says, the visitor experiences dislocation which is brought about by the asymmetry of the windows, the acoustics which amplify the slightest sounds, and the multiple axes.\textsuperscript{32}

James Edward Young, who is also the author of the previous essay, “Holocaust Memorials in America”, has written another essay which focuses on the JMB. While giving his own opinion of the building’s message, Young also looks to Libeskind’s description of the design, providing many quotes from the architect, which is helpful in that the reader gets the true message being portrayed by the architect himself, who even explains why he gave his architectural plan the title “Between the Lines”.\textsuperscript{33} Young also provides an essay about Daniel Libeskind and the JMB in an anthology by editor Connie Wolf. This anthology is about Libeskind specifically and looks at numerous Jewish museums he has designed, sorting out their similarities and differences, which Wolf determines to be based on “a passionate belief and


investment in the future, in new ideas and human creativity.” While they may have differences in design, these museums share Libeskind’s beliefs and his power to show his beliefs not only to Jewish communities, but to the world. Much space is given to discussing the JMB because this was his first design to be accepted. Libeskind also provides an essay for the book, explaining his plan for the JMB.

IV. The Use of Memory in Museum Experiences

Memory and museums is a subject that has only recently gained the attention of the museum studies field. Therefore, there are not many sources to be found on memory in the museum, and the sources available are fairly recent- most being published in the twenty-first century, after a majority of the Holocaust museums had opened. Holocaust museums use memory as a source for much of their exhibitions. There are also important works which discuss experiential learning in museum exhibitions- something which memory helps to teach.

Three of the four significant writings on the subject of memory are by Susan A Crane, an associate professor of Modern European History at the University of Arizona, who specializes on collective memory. In looking at what she has written and edited, it is clear that she is a leading expert on the use of memory in museums. The first anthology edited by Crane, *Museums and Memory*, seeks to show that museums are more than showplaces of objects, but have also become places of interaction between personal and collective identities, and between memory and history. Crane has picked a broad variety of essays to include in the book, which represent many fields - including history, anthropology, art history and museum scholarship - and range

---

over time from the Renaissance to the second half of the twentieth century. They range in place from China, Japan, the United States and Germany. The essays consider three different ways in which memory operates: experimental ways of theorizing and designing contemporary museums with an explicit interest in history and memory; discussions of personal encounters with historical exhibits; and the professional risks at stake for collectors and curators who shape the institutional presentation of history and memory. Crane’s anthology, with its broad coverage of fields, time and place, gives a general idea of how memory is used in a museum, though not specifically a Holocaust museum.35

The second work by Susan A Crane is her most recent, published in 2006. In this article, “The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums,” Crane looks at the idea of “counter-memories,” something she believes is often seen in Holocaust memorials. By using the research of James Edward Young, she states that quite often those people who experienced the Holocaust - either as torturers or survivors - will have a loss of memory which they see as an achievement, meaning they want to forget the things they saw and felt during the Nazi era. This is an interesting concept, especially when considering the exhibitions in Europe, where so many more visitors were involved or have immediate relatives who were involved. It leaves one wondering how people who spent so much time trying to block the memories of the Holocaust from their minds react when they view these exhibitions. This idea of “counter-memories” is something this work will take into consideration when analyzing museum exhibitions.36

The final work by Susan A Crane is an essay written in 1997, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum.” As inferred in the title of the essay, distortion lies between national

history and personal memory, with the two often being at odds. As Crane says, quite often this
distortion is not so much of facts or interpretations, but rather a distortion from the lack of
congruity between personal experience and expectation, on the one hand, and the institutional
representation of the past on the other. In the essay, Crane explores the possibilities for a
redefined relationship between personal memory and history that is experienced in contemporary
museums, including those about the Holocaust. As can be seen, Crane has provided significant
literature related to memory in the museum field. Her range of subjects on memory is broad, and
she provides innovative ideas and insightful ways of analyzing Holocaust museums.

The last writing on the subject of memory is an anthology by editors Katharine Hodgkin
and Susannah Radstone entitled *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*. The book focuses on
the question of what it means to contest the past, or a struggle in the terrain of truth. Through
different case studies from around the world, this book focuses on contestation, showing that it is
not often conflicting accounts of what actually happened in the past so much as the question of
who or what is entitled to speak for that past in the present. It focuses on how the truth can best
be conveyed, rather than what actually happened. There is a debate between the use of the terms
‘memory’ and ‘truth,’ and ‘memory’ and ‘history.’ This collection of essays will be helpful as
we examine how different museums portray the past and who they entitle to speak for the past.

There are two important works about experiential learning in the museum, both written
by Hilde Hein, a scholar who has a Ph.D. in philosophy. Her research in aesthetics led to an
interest in museums, where she curated several exhibitions and published three books related to

---

37 Susan A Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum”, *History & Theory*, 36
38 Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds. *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*,
discusses the change from didactic to experiential exhibitions that have been seen in many museums in the past two decades. With exhibitions becoming people-centered, idea-oriented, and contextualized, the boundaries between museums and the "real" world are becoming eroded. Design has become a central element of display, while the integrity of the object, once the focal point of museum exhibition, ultimately has given way to more interpretive devices. Setting the transition from object-centered to story-centered exhibitions in a philosophical way, Hilde S. Hein contends that glorifying the museum experience at the expense of objects deflects the museum's educative, ethical, and aesthetic roles. Using numerous examples, she shows how placement has replaced growth as a goal and discusses how museums now actively shape and create values. She argues that rather than striving to be all-inclusive, museums should render more poignant, more precise, and more precious the magnitude of their audience's differences and the multitude of its agreements.\(^\text{39}\)

The second work by Hein is *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently*. In this book, Hein states that a museum is an agent, not a repository, and like public art, it interacts constructively with the public. It acknowledges the trend among contemporary museums to promote experiential exhibition strategies, while it also gives value to the object-oriented tradition that has long differentiated museums from other places which also commit to public service and the preservation of cultural values.\(^\text{40}\)

As can be seen, there is a wide variety of literature on Holocaust museums of the United States and Europe. Of course, some literature is specifically about these types of museums, and


there is much more written about American museums than those in other countries. The architecture literature is a very broad subject with the majority of the pieces not related necessarily to Holocaust museums, but museum architecture in general. Finally, there is the theme of the use of memory in museums; writings on this subject are not very numerous, most being written by one scholar, Susan A Crane. However, Crane’s work looks at the use of memory from many different angles, which will allow us to approach the museums’ exhibitions in different ways, finding the most common or best way to use memory in Holocaust museums. Overall, the literature provides information on the Holocaust, the architecture, exhibitions, and history behind the museums that focus on this subject, and how the museums use memory as a helpful source.
Chapter Two

Building Our Stories: The Creation of Holocaust Museums

I. Holocaust Museums in the United States

Holocaust museums exist throughout the United States, generally in bigger cities where there are larger Jewish populations and often in the cities that Holocaust survivors settled in after camps were liberated, such as New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles. While there are dozens of these museums across the nation, this study will look at twelve of the largest museums and monuments throughout the country and their creations, focusing on the locations, the founders, opening years, funding, the mission statements and reasons for being created. The research will show that the idea of a Holocaust museum is not something found in one part of the country or supported by only a specific type of people, but that emigres, Americans and the federal government came together to assure that the Holocaust would always be remembered, while hoping to prevent something such as this from ever happening again.

Approximately forty-six percent of Holocaust museums can be found on the East Coast, particularly in Florida (Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland; Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach; Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg), New York state (Holocaust Research Center in Buffalo; Museum of Jewish Heritage - Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City), and Washington, D.C. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM]). Another significant concentration (31%) can be found in the Central States: Illinois (Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Chicago), Indiana (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors [CANDLES] Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute) and Texas (Dallas Holocaust Museum in Dallas; El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center in El Paso; Holocaust Museum Houston in Houston).
Finally, the West Coast has the least percentage of Holocaust museums (26%), most being found in California (Holocaust Monument in Los Angeles).41

There are five types of founders of United States Holocaust museums: foundations, Holocaust survivors, state and federal governments, colleges and non-Holocaust survivors of Jewish heritage. The most common founders are foundations, often being Jewish or focused on the Holocaust itself. These foundations can be found throughout the country, in such states as California, Florida, Illinois, New York and Texas. The fact that they are found throughout the nation helps to show that there is not one specific area of the country wishing to help Americans to remember the Holocaust, but in nearly all states, these foundations can be found.

The second most common founders of these museums are actual Holocaust survivors, representing four of the selected museums this study is looking at in Indiana, Texas and Virginia. The founders of these museums, after years of silence about their experience, began to speak out, wanting the nation and the world to know how people suffered. For example, the Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors (CANDLES) Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, Indiana was founded by Eva Mozes Kor, who was a twin who survived the genetic experiments of Dr Josef Mengele at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. As the museum’s title states, Miss Kor chose to focus on a very specific part of the Holocaust, one to which she could contribute her experience, while searching for other surviving twins to help build her museum.42

The third type of museum founders are state or federal government acts. As an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Florida Humanities Council’s support of the

Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland helps to show the Council’s mission of exploring “the people, places and ideas that shape our state [Florida].” The USHMM in Washington, D.C., being a national museum - although not a Smithsonian affiliate - was chartered by an Act of Congress after President Jimmy Carter recommended a Commission on the Holocaust on 27 September 1979.

The fourth and fifth types of museums founders are colleges and people who are not Holocaust survivors. While different colleges and universities throughout the nation have supported the memory of the Holocaust, only one of these twelve museums were founded by a college, that being the Valencia Community College and its support of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland. The last type of founder can be found at the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, which was founded by the businessman and philanthropist, Walter P. Loebenberg, along with the help of the community. He was not a Holocaust survivor, but simply a man who wanted the world to remember this devastating time in world history.

As demonstrated by President Carter’s request for the establishment of a national museum devoted to the Holocaust, ideas about starting these museums began throughout the nation around this time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Given the time that these museums began to open around the country, it is quite possible that President Carter’s request motivated others to follow in his footsteps. The first of these twelve museums to be opened to the public was the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Chicago, which opened in 1981. While the majority of these museums began their planning in the 1980s, two-thirds of the museums did not open until the 1990s, with the last ones being opened in 1997, the Museum of

---

Jewish Heritage in New York City and the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond. Many of these museums required years of planning, with committees wanting to make sure that every part of the museum, from its architecture to its exhibitions, was perfect. For example, the USHMM was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1980 but was not actually opened until 1993.

Like many museums, these Holocaust museums are not-for-profit and tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. As stated by the Internal Revenue Service, these organizations:

must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes...and none of its earnings may inure to any private shareholder or individual. In addition, it may not be an action organization, i.e., it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates.\footnote{IRS, “Exemption Requirements - Section 501(c)(3) Organizations,” \url{http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html} (accessed 24 January 2012).}

Organizations such as these must rely on several sources to help to keep museum doors open.

Private and public donations from individuals, organizations and corporations are crucial for all of these museums. These donations come in many different forms, from money to objects the museums collect. Another thing many of these museums rely on are grants from numerous places, such as public and private foundations, state agencies for special projects and city departments. For example, the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center receives donations from four foundations: the City of El Paso’s Museums and Cultural Affairs Department, the Jewish Foundation of El Paso, the Robert and Evelyn McKee Foundation and the Shiloff Family Foundation.\footnote{El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center, \url{http://www.elpasoholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 8 August 2012).}

One of the most interesting facts encountered in researching these museums and monuments is that their mission statements contain many similar sentiments and goals, yet were all unique. The three most common phrases are: “teaching universal lessons that combat hatred,
prejudice and indifference; honoring the victims that perished or suffered through the Holocaust; and remembering and teaching about the Holocaust itself. The two monuments, based in Los Angeles and Miami Beach, also include in their missions the idea of being a place of mourning for loved ones by recognizing the need for collective healing. [See Appendix A]

The USHMM has the most in-depth mission statement. It summarizes all of the different missions of the American museums in this study, bringing them together to provide an idea for what the United States government and its individual citizens wish to do to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive for generations to come:

The [USHMM] is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust....The Museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy....the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs: exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art and artifacts related to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as Days of Remembrance; distribution of education materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.

This mission statement is able to serve, perhaps not intentionally, as a basis for the missions of other museums and monuments throughout the nation, truly presenting itself as the national Holocaust museum of the United States. With planning for the USHMM beginning in 1980, it was the first museum in this study to begin planning; most of the other museums did not begin planning or did not open until a decade or more later. It is likely that the mission statement of

---

the USHMM inspired these other museums, giving an example of goals and objectives to strive to accomplish.

One interesting fact that surfaces when reading through these mission statements is that it seems as though the real mission of these museums was not necessarily to teach and help remember the events of the Holocaust, but to teach about hatred, racism and prejudice in general, using the Holocaust as an example. Out of the twelve museums, ten of them included in their missions the idea of teaching about hatred and prejudice in order to help make visitors more aware of contemporary issues happening throughout the world, and even possibly to give ideas as to how visitors can help prevent tragedies, such as the Holocaust, from happening again. Only six museums included in their mission statements that they wished their museums to teach about and help remember the Holocaust. This is surprising, as one would think that more of these museums would include in their mission statements the specificity of focusing on the Holocaust itself.

The mission statements of the museums give a good idea of why the founders wanted to create these museums and monuments: to remember the Holocaust, to honor the victims of the tragedy, and to prevent such things from happening in the future. However, there were other reasons that brought along the creation of these museums. One motivation was racial and religious hatred.

In 1977 in Skokie, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, approximately one out of every six Jewish citizens was a survivor - or was directly related to a survivor - of the Holocaust. After these Jewish citizens had settled into the comfort of an American city, a neo-Nazi group announced a plan to parade through the town. The announcement of the parade plans created

---

50 Philippa Strum, *When the Nazis Came to Skokie: Freedom for Speech We Hate*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999).
much controversy not only in Skokie, but throughout the country. The neo-Nazis argued they had the right of free speech, while at the same time Jewish citizens argued they had the right to live without intimidation. Eventually, in a court decision, it was decided that the parade would assault the sensibilities of its citizens and bring on violence. While the parade was not held in Skokie, it was later held in nearby Chicago.\textsuperscript{51} Shortly after Illinois dealt with this issue of the late 1970s, The Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois decided that a museum about the Holocaust should be built in Chicago; four years later the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center was inaugurated in 1981.\textsuperscript{52}

Another motivation for creating these museums was to help schools in teaching their students about the Holocaust in a creative way that would make it understandable. In 1990, Illinois became the first state to pass the Holocaust Education Mandate, followed shortly afterward by Florida. The museum in Chicago, Illinois helped to secure the passage of this mandate, even being influential in expanding the mandate to the Holocaust and Genocide Education Mandate in 2005.\textsuperscript{53} The Florida Holocaust Museum opened to the public in 1992, with much of the reason being so that it could participate in teaching children about the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{54}

II. Holocaust Museums of Other Countries

Holocaust museums can be found throughout Europe and in other continents throughout the world. Those in Europe tend to be found in larger cities or at the site of places whose history relates to the Holocaust, such as concentration camps, ghettos or homes from which people were

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} IHMEC, \url{http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 8 August 2012).
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} FHM, \url{http://www.flholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 8 August 2012).
deported from. While these museums and monuments can be found throughout the continent, this research looks at twelve of the largest museums and monuments in four countries: Germany, France, Poland and Israel. As with the United States’ museums, focus will be on the locations, the founders, opening years, funding, the mission statements and reasons for being created, along with controversies the openings may have sparked.

This study will look at four other countries throughout the world which have Holocaust museums, based on information availability and type of museum or monument. The first country selected is Germany, the nation primarily responsible for this tragedy. Five museums in this country have been selected (Bad Arolsen Holocaust Archives in Bad Arolsen; Jewish Museum Berlin in Berlin; Buchenwald Memorial in Buchenwald; Ravensbruck Women’s Concentration Camp Memorial Museum in Furstenberg; and Bergen-Belsen Memorial in Lohheide). Next, the study looks at two European countries which lost many citizens to this disaster: France and Poland. Two French museums have been chosen to represent Western Europe (Memorial Museum for Children of Izieu in Izieu; and Memorial de la Shoah in Paris) along with two Polish museums to represent Eastern Europe (Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, both in Oswiecim). Finally, the study looks at Israel, a country which may not have lost many citizens to this tragedy, but like the United States, many refugees flocked to this country before, during and after World War II. Three museums in this country will be discussed (Ghetto Fighters’ House - Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum, near Nahariyya; Yad Vashem - Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Memorial in Jerusalem; and Beit Theresienstadt in Kibbutz Givat Chaim).

The museums and memorials in these countries were mainly founded by two groups of people. The most common group were survivors of the Holocaust. These can be found throughout all of these countries, some founded by specific groups of survivors and others by a large variety of survivors. For example, the Memorial Museum for Children of Izieu was partially founded by survivors of Izieu; Beit Theresienstadt was founded by survivors of the Theresienstadt ghetto; the Jewish Museum Berlin was founded by Jews born in Berlin who had emigrated during the ruling of the Nazi party. However, no matter which groups may have founded these museums, all had the same goal of telling their story to the public, as stated by Jorge Semprún in 1994 about the Buchenwald Memorial:

The day would come, quite soon, on which the last survivor of Buchenwald would have died. No longer would there be any direct recollection of Buchenwald: No-one alive to speak the words of physical memory, to say - not only in the words of a theoretical reconstruction - what the hunger, the sleep, the fear had been like, the glistening presence of absolute evil: absolute to the extent that it nests in every one of us as a possible liberty.  

Museums and memorials were also founded through associations, often related to the government. The museums already listed as founded by survivors often had help through associations created specifically for the museum, such as the “Musée mémorial des enfants d’Izieu,” created in Izieu, France. These associations were often connected to state or federal governments, with some even receiving international financial support. Through the help of survivors and government associations, it can be seen that many people wanted to be assured that these places would always be remembered.

Museums and memorials dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust were founded as early as 1947, with the opening of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. This was not the

only museum to be created so soon after the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. Throughout Germany and Poland, museums and memorials appeared at such places as Buchenwald, Ravensbruck and Bergen-Belsen. Of the dozen museums discussed in this section, six are located at the sites of camps; four of these were founded by 1960. Other museums throughout Europe devoted to the Holocaust, though not actually built around a camp, were opened at significantly later dates, with the Jewish Museum Berlin opening most recently, in 2001. This is not coincidental; people throughout these countries wanted to be assured that these camps would not be destroyed and that future generations would be able to observe the crimes committed in these places. Those museums not located on specific sites, while having acquired objects related to the Holocaust that must be preserved, did not have the worry of preserving a location which could be destroyed by natural causes, such as weather.

The country of Israel, like the United States, had refugees flock there before, during and after the Holocaust. Museums and memorials were created fairly quickly after World War II, around the same time as camp memorials were being opened. Two of the three Israeli Holocaust museums (the Ghetto Fighters’ House and Yad Vashem) were founded within the first decade following camp liberations; Beit Theresienstadt opened approximately thirty years after liberation.\textsuperscript{58}

These museums are funded in many different ways. The museums in France and Israel, along with the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, are non-profit. All of the museums receive some of their funding through donations, museum revenue and fundraising. However, of these

\textsuperscript{58}Ghetto Fighters’ House-Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum, \url{http://www.gfh.org.il} (accessed 11 August 2012).

Yad Vashem-Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Memorial, \url{http://www.yadvashem.org} (accessed 11 August 2012).

twelve museums, it is only the five museums in Germany and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland that are supported by government funds; each of these museums receive federal and/or state fundings, often being a large percentage of their annual funding.\(^{59}\) With Germany being the country where the Final Solution and the Holocaust originated, it is interesting to see that the government believes it is necessary to take part in the preservation of these concentration camps and museums devoted to telling the history of the tragedy for which their own country was responsible. What makes this even more interesting is the fact that many of these museums were highly protested by German citizens. This will be discussed in depth later in the chapter.

The two museums in Poland, both located in Oswiecim, the town where Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp was built, are mostly funded by numerous grants.\(^{60}\) Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest camp during the Holocaust and saw the highest number of murders, with victims not only from Poland but from many countries throughout Europe. The fact that victims from other countries perished at this camp has led other European nations to provide grants to the museums. The German federal state provides funding for the museums of Oswiecim, as well as the French Foundation for the Remembrance of the Shoah. Also, the European Infrastructure and Environment Operating Program has recently provided funding to help the museums to continue the conservation of the wooden barracks and camp blocks at both sites of Auschwitz.\(^{61}\) It is encouraging to see that countries other than Poland, where the camp is


located, wish to conserve the camp in order to teach future generations about the history that can be found in these acres of land.

The missions of these twelve museums cover a large range of topics from education, to memory, to research. With many different wordings to express their missions, the Ghetto Fighters’ House - Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum presents a large and in-depth mission, which embraces the missions of these dozen Holocaust museums located throughout four countries. There are nine concepts that make up the mission of this Israeli museum:

• to be a house of testimony for the founders in all stages of their lives and realm of memory for the Jewish endurance during the Holocaust;
• to be a declaration of the survivors’ spirit;
• to commemorate the memory of the Holocaust, youth movements, resistance and ‘life after the Holocaust’;
• to be a museum that works with, lives with and converses with a variety of populations in the Israeli society;
• to collect, preserve, catalogue and present testimony and documentation;
• to work together with institutions of research and commemoration in Israel and abroad;
• to increase the awareness of the universal significance of the Holocaust;
• to fight together against hatred, instances of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and denial of the Holocaust; and
• to intensify the commitment to the values of liberty, human dignity, tolerance and democracy.  

While other museums have phrased their missions differently, the Ghetto Fighters’ House encompasses all their missions. (See Appendix A)

Controversies and reasons for the creation of some of these museums and memorials can be found throughout Europe, though most often in Germany. The following discussion focuses on three very different examples, one in France and two in Germany. The Memorial Museum for Children of Izieu was brought to reality due to the Klaus Barbie trial in Lyon in 1987. Barbie

was the SS officer in charge of the Gestapo in Lyon, France from November 1942 until August 1944.\textsuperscript{63}

This trial brought forth many controversies. First, the prosecution could not decide on what crimes to charge Barbie with, given that he had committed so many; eventually it was decided that a focus on “crimes against humanity” would be most appropriate. Controversies grew as Barbie’s lawyer, Jacques Vergès, turned the trial around and began attacking the French political system, focusing on the French colonial empire and the war crimes it had committed since 1945. He argued that Barbie’s actions were no worse than those of the French government under the Vichy regime, helping Nazis and their colonial crimes; he argued that his trial could be considered “selective prosecution”. The prosecution was then forced to distinguish the difference between the Holocaust and regular acts of war. Through the help of dozens of witnesses, some of those being from the Izieu home, at the conclusion of the trial, prosecutors were able to show not only that the Holocaust was real, but that it was a unique category of crime.\textsuperscript{64}

This trial against the Nazi SS officer involved in the deportation of the Izieu home of Jewish children brought together many people who had been involved with the home during the ruling of the Nazi regime. These people included Sabine Zlatin, the founder of the home in 1943; Gabrielle Tardy, a teacher at the home; Paulette Pallarés, who helped the home over the summer of 1943; and some of the former Izieu children or their families.\textsuperscript{65} It is interesting that it took over forty years for these people to come together to create an association that would

\textsuperscript{65} Izieu, \url{http://www.memorializieu.eu}
eventually open a museum dedicated to these victims. While many museums throughout the countries discussed were not founded until the 1980s or 1990s, what makes this museum interesting is that its creation was sparked by this event happening in the nearby city of Lyon.

Although it cannot technically be called a museum, the Bad Arolsen Holocaust Archives’s priority is to maintain the memory of this time in history. These archives were created by the Allies as they conquered Germany, gathering detailed records that had been kept by the Nazis relating to the millions of people they persecuted. These documents were then sorted, filed and locked away, closed to the public. This closure to the public was based on the Bonn Agreement, which was signed in 1955. This agreement stated that no data that could harm former Nazi victims or their families should be made available. To give the victims privacy, only small amounts of information were released to survivors and their families.

After decades of this privacy, Holocaust survivors and researchers began to fight for the amendment of the Bonn agreement, arguing that this information should be accessible for anyone who wishes to see it. However, Germans were opposed to the idea of giving public access to the records, stating that misuse of the information would become highly possible. Because of the country’s financial responsibility of the International Tracing Service (ITS), the organization in charge of the archives, it created a large barrier for those wishing the archives to be open to all. After years of pressure from the United States and survivors’ groups, Germany changed its viewpoint, allowing for a revision of the Bonn Agreement. The ITS was finally able to open the archives to the public in 1998.66

Finally, the Jewish Museum Berlin faced many controversies on its road to creation. The museum began as an extension of the Berlin Museum, not as its own separate place. It was

---

agreed upon that Jewish history would be integrated into the city’s history, while keeping it separated in its own space. One of the first controversies brought on by the creation of the Jewish Museum was the architectural design presented by architect Daniel Libeskind. While it had been agreed that the Jewish Museum would be kept separate from the Berlin Museum, Libeskind’s design for the museum worked to show the trauma that the Holocaust and the Nazi regime had on the city of Berlin’s history, not just focusing on the Jews. Deeper discussion of the museum’s architecture will be covered in Chapter Three.\textsuperscript{67}

Another controversy was brought about by the reunification of East and West Germany in the early 1990s. With this, the city of Berlin made the decision that all city history museums would merge into the Berlin City Museum Foundation. With this decision the Jewish Museum’s importance was significantly lowered, becoming one of five “departments” with two out of 23 “sections” of the museum association. The idea of the integration of Jewish and Berlin history, from a minority and majority perspective, coexisting on an equal basis, became precarious.\textsuperscript{68} Around this same time Amnon Barzel, curator of the Jewish Museum Department, announced his interpretation of the integrative concept, stating that the museum should tell the story of the majority society from the perspective of the Jewish minority, the opposite of what had previously been planned. As Barzel asserted, this interpretation would truly make the museum Jewish. This idea did not sit well with the cultural administration of Berlin, which insisted that the Jewish Museum should remain part of the Berlin Museum, simply having their exhibitions separated.\textsuperscript{69}

A smaller controversy was brought forward when the museum’s collections were studied. While many objects were purchased or donated by Jewish citizens before 1933, those objects

\textsuperscript{67} Jewish Museum Berlin, \url{http://www.jmberlin.de} (accessed 11 August 2012).
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
acquired during the Nazi era were often taken by unethical means, under force.  Finally, with
the reunification of Germany, the country’s capital was brought back to Berlin, which had been
the center of the Nazi regime. The crimes committed under this regime had been overlaid by the
Cold War, leading many in the country to place these memories in the back of their mind,
wishing to forget. With the end of the Cold War, these memories were brought forward again,
and the question of how to appropriately display and remember this era became an important
debate throughout the country.

III. Analysis of the Analogy and Unlikeness of United States and Other Countries

Founders of museums in countries included in this study can be placed into two general
categories: survivors and foundations. In these two dozen museums, these two categories are
represented almost equally. The one difference is that the foundations are founded by different
groups. Those in Europe often have an association with the government, while those in the
United States are often separated from the government. Foundations are run by private citizens,
many of them Jewish, such as the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando or the Houston Council
of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

As stated earlier in this chapter, there is a significant difference as to when Holocaust
museums were founded in these countries. Museums throughout Europe and Israel were opened
to the public within the first decade following camps’ liberation. Of the twelve museums looked
at from these countries, only two were created in the 1990s or later. In contrast, ideas for United

---

70 Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War*,

States museums were not started until the 1970s and 1980s, and most museums were not opened until the late 1980s or 1990s. While one might think the reasoning for this is that the event did not take place in the United States, it seems as though this cannot be the complete reason because Israeli museums were opened in the early 1950s, with two of the three in this study opening within six years after the country’s independence. One explanation is that Israel is a much smaller country than the United States and, upon becoming independent from the British in 1947, a large percentage of the population were Jewish. While many Jews emigrated to the United States after World War II, they still were a small minority in the country.

Funding in these nations differ in a nearly cut-and-dry way. American museums do not receive government funding, with the exception of the USHMM. While they may receive grants through federal or state associations, eleven of these twelve museum rely on public and private donations to keep their doors open. In contrast, many European museums receive a large amount of their funding from the federal and state governments, particularly in Germany.  

Whether the Holocaust museum is located in the United States or another country, most all share the same basic ideas in what they want to accomplish in their missions: remembering those who suffered and/or perished and teaching about the Holocaust itself. However, there are some differences that are quite interesting. First, American museums tend to include a broader mission which focuses on problems with racism, prejudice, xenophobia and other genocides. While some museums in the other nations, such as the Ghetto Fighters’ House, include this in their missions, very few of these museums do - most only focus on the Holocaust itself.  

American museums also emphasize what it means to be a good citizen and to live in a

---

73 Websites of the museums.
democratic society, while those museums in other nations rarely discuss this. Third, there are more American museums that wish to be seen as a memorial, a place to mourn loved ones lost in the tragedy. This is ironic, given that many of the museums in Europe are based at camps and other places that are closely connected with the tragedy, and therefore, may be a place where more people would visit to mourn their loved ones; instead many have become tourist stops. Lastly, European and Israeli museums’ missions put a lot more emphasis on the importance of documentation, cataloguing and research than American museums did.

Finally, the controversy of these museums was very different in the United States and Europe. In the United States, museums were created without much controversy, although some of the museums have become targets of hate crimes since being opened. After being opened, the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana, was the target of an arson crime in which the criminal is still at large. Overall, most people did not speak out against the idea of a Holocaust museum being created. However, in Europe, creation of many of these museums was either sparked by or brought about much controversy. Feelings about the history were more intense in Europe, with many government and family members of victims worried about the privacy of survivors and descendants of those who were murdered. There were also many people, like city council members involved with the Jewish Museum Berlin, that had their own view of what the museum should and should not be, and would not give their approval for something different than their own ideas. It seems as though Europeans were less willing than

---

76 Forgiving Dr. Mengele, prod. and dir. Bob Hercules and Cheri Pugh, 79 min., First Run Features, 2006, DVD.
Americans to create Holocaust museums for generations to come; fortunately, these museums have come to fruition.
Chapter Three:

Holocaust Museum Architecture: Disturbing the Senses

While museum visitors may not see the architecture as anything worth discussing - many may view it as a simple building in which to hold the museum’s collections - museologists tend to view these buildings in another way. When looking at the history of museum architecture, one can see that there is a clear distinction between museum buildings built in the 1800s and those built in the mid- to late-1900s. In general, early museum buildings shared a large amount of architectural qualities with little reference to what collections the museum held, while modern museum architecture tends to put much more focus onto the topic of the museum, including this in the architectural design’s message. Holocaust museums are included in the category of modern museum architecture, with differences and similarities being found between those created in the United States and those in Europe and Israel. Often built with gruesome qualities, some believe the aesthetics to be too extreme for the average museum-goer. However, these architectural designs attempt to convey to the public some sense of what the Holocaust must have been like.

There are many questions that can be raised about the architecture of these Holocaust museums. What types of diversity can be found among museums in the United States and those in Europe and Israel? Is the Holocaust architecture appropriate for the museum, contributing to the visitor’s experience? Is Holocaust museum architecture aesthetically satisfying or emotionally disturbing? How does architecture contribute to educating people about the gruesome truth of the Holocaust? What path does the architect take to attain that truth? This chapter will answer these questions in the following pages, coming to a conclusion about the positive and negative outcomes of Holocaust museum architecture.
I. Holocaust Museum Architecture in the United States

The twelve American museums examined in this study can be organized into three categories - research centers, museums and monuments - and each group has its own unique way of approaching architecture. The research centers do not put much thought into their architecture. Museums, which make up the majority of the places researched, put much thought into their architecture, though do not devote one hundred percent of their message to it, like monuments, because they must also focus on the larger message sent through the exhibitions they hold inside. However, they must put some thought into their architecture because they wish to start sending their message to visitors the moment they arrive at the museum. Monuments, given that they are not buildings which display artifacts, must focus one hundred percent on constructed forms, doing everything possible to send the visitor a message about the Holocaust through symbolic visual messages.

Museums differ from research centers in that they utilize architecture to contribute to the educational mission of the museum. Many of the museums in the United States, having been built in large cities in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century, faced a problem of finding a piece of land on which to create their museum. Vacant land was hard to find in most cities, meaning that most museums faced the decision on whether to construct a completely new building in the suburbs of the city or to renovate a building already standing in the city. Most of these museums, such as the Virginia Holocaust Museum and the Florida Holocaust Museum, chose to renovate, with the idea that it would cost less money, and the building would be within the city, more accessible to visitors.77 Because of this, these museums had limitations on the

changes they could make to the building’s architecture, and therefore, the message it conveys to the visitors.

Other museums, such as the Holocaust Museum in Houston, were able to redesign an already existing building, but were faced with the problem of not having enough space when designing their permanent exhibition, and realized that an addition would be necessary. The museum began to buy land and buildings surrounding it, including a small medical clinic which was converted into administrative offices and the research library. Six steel columns were placed at the entrance to the museum, each representing one million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. (Figure 1) It also had steel trestles meant to imitate the railroad tracks on which many were brought to their deaths. Architect Ralph Appelbaum decided that two wings would be added on to the original building; these two wings would be the opposites of each other, each conveying a different message to the visitor. In the first wing, the permanent exhibition appears austere and forceful and is described as “a collage of basic geometric forms.”  

It is wedge-shaped with a sloping concrete surface and in the middle rises a dark and looming cylinder, representing a concentration camp crematorium. On the top surface of the wedge are engraved names of victims of the Holocaust. The second wing, on the opposite side of the original building is an area for reflection and remembrance. Filled with natural light, it looks like a “chapel” with high stained-glass windows. (Figure 2)

The Illinois Holocaust Museum chose to create its own building, which led its planners to look in the suburbs for vacant land. Designed by architect Stanley Tigerman, it shares many characteristics with the museum in Houston. There are two sides to the museum, one dark and

---


Ibid.
one light, with a “hinge” in between, which is actually a memorial to those lost.\textsuperscript{80} (Figure 3) The entrance to the museum is through the dark side which has dark walls and sharp angles, giving the visitor the feeling that they are descending into darkness. After the exhibition on this side, which covers the Holocaust itself, the visitor enters the light side, a space with soft round edges and rooflines filled with natural light. It is on this side that the visitor learns about the liberation of concentration camps, and the lives of survivors after the war. It also addresses the subject of contemporary genocides and how one may participate in stopping lives from being lost today.\textsuperscript{81}

Of all the Holocaust museums found in America, the most well known is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum located on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Because of its location on the Mall, the museum was faced with the complication of fitting in among the numerous museums, monuments and government buildings that would be surrounding it, while imposing itself as a major new building. James Ingo Freed was the architect given the commission of designing the museum. Freed uses two materials on the outside of the museum: limestone and brick. The limestone echoes the neoclassical style of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to its south, while the brick relates to the Victorian style of the Auditors’ Building to its north. With this design “the museum appears as an extension of these buildings and yet marks a break between them, as the Holocaust is both part of the twentieth century and an unbridgeable dislocation within it.”\textsuperscript{82} (Figure 4)

As one enters the building, they are standing in the Hall of Witness, the museum’s primary arrival and circulation space. With high ceilings, rough brick walls that resemble the

\textsuperscript{80} Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, \url{http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org}, (accessed 12 February 2012).
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
building material of the death camps, and steel bracing similar to that used in the crematorium ovens, Freed deliberately borrows the architectural styles of the Nazis “to subtly evoke the technology of death.” (Figure 5) As both a memorial and experiential museum, this Hall attempts to give the visitor a feeling of what prisoners in the camps endured. With windows on the upper floors allowing people to look down on those in the Hall, the feeling grows stronger as the visitor feels as though he is being constantly watched, just like the prisoners of the camps being constantly watched by Nazi soldiers. With the building working as both a memorial and a museum, Freed made a clear division between the two parts. The actual museum is self-contained so that it is possible to experience large sections of the building without seeing any part of the exhibits. With the experiential display starting on the fourth floor, visitors are directed into elevators at intervals. This first appears like a fairly standard procedure, although once inside, the visitor realizes it is not:

The elevators...generate claustrophobia, with stark lighting, raw metal, low ceilings and a video monitor that plays a short clip of liberators arriving at the camp. A voice intones: “We don’t know what it is; some sort of prison’ - almost a description of the museum. The clip stops just as the doors open.

The visitor to the museum finishes their trip in the Hall of Remembrance. In this place, Freed created a genuine contemporary religious space. With limestone that leaves one feeling as though they are in the interior of an ancient tomb, the hall also shows its similarities to the neoclassical monuments found throughout the rest of the nation’s capital. The room has six sides, symbolic of the Star of David and the six million dead. Unlike many religious spaces that are kept almost entirely dark, the Hall of Remembrance is flooded with light, with the room’s dome acting as a large skylight. With large steps that also serve as seating, visitors are

84 Dannatt, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, 19.
encouraged to sit and ponder over what they had just experienced, grapple with their emotions, and are even invited to light memorial candles. (Figure 6)

Lastly, the Holocaust monuments of the United States are the opposite of the research centers of Buffalo and Maitland; these places focus almost completely on architecture as a means of communicating the message of the Holocaust to visitors. Holocaust monuments in the United States vary and at times seem to focus more on the history and ideals of America itself, rather than on the history of the tragedy that took place across the Atlantic Ocean. Unlike a museum, a monument is not as easily able to tell the story of the Holocaust from many points of view, such as that of victims, survivors or liberators, but quite often must choose one group to focus on. It is also subject to the vision of one artist; therefore, historical facts become absorbed into aesthetic and creative interpretation. The artist must also decide whether to highlight political or religious views. Although not one of the memorials chosen for research in this study, artist Nathan Rapoport’s Liberation, in Jersey City, New Jersey gives a great example of a monument which takes a political view. It focuses on the moment during the Holocaust in which American liberators entered the camps and were approached by emaciated survivors, many looking as though they were breathing their last breath. (Figure 7) While this is an important part of the Holocaust’s history, many survivors and their families disapproved of the monument, stating that “a millennium of Jewish civilization in Europe and all the lives lost would be reduced to this one degrading moment they shared with American liberators,” while downplaying the ways in with the United States failed to help Jews escape from the Nazis sooner.  

The two monuments examined in this study are the Los Angeles Holocaust Monument and the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial. These two monuments, on opposite sides of the country, approach the task of teaching the public about the Holocaust in completely opposite ways. The monument in Los Angeles is very passive, and in this author’s opinion, leaves the impression that this is mainly a place of mourning more than anything else, including learning. As one approaches the monument, six eighteen-foot black triangular granite columns rise out of the earth towards the sky symbolizing crematoria smoke stacks; each of these columns represented one million of the Jews murdered under the Nazi regime. In the middle of these columns is, what as artist Dr Joseph L Young calls, an “invisible” seventh column representing us - those who must carry on the memory of the Holocaust. (Figure 8) On the platform are three concentric hexagons: the outer hexagon lists the countries conquered by Germans and the number of Jews annihilated in each; the middle hexagon lists the names of concentration camps and the year they opened; the inner hexagon lists the names of death camps. The back wall is gray granite which symbolizes one of the most gruesome death camps, Mauthausen, which was a rock quarry.86

In contrast to the Los Angeles monument, the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial is aggressive, easily leaving visitors such as this author walking away speechless or even sick to their stomachs. Approaching the monument, one comes across a reflecting pool filled with beautiful lily pads. Walls next to the pool give a background history of the Holocaust, even providing maps to help the visitor understand the Nazi’s complicated plan for the Final Solution. Continuing on, the visitor must pass through a tunnel. Passing through this tunnel with a

decreasing ceiling height, one gets the feeling of a “diminished self.” As one reaches the end of the tunnel and comes out into the main memorial, a visitor may be astonished at what lies before them. Around them are close to one hundred figures in different family groupings, some dying together, some parting ways, some mourning. These one hundred figures surround a hand extended upward from an arm bearing the ultimate mark of man’s dehumanization - a number tattooed on the arm which became prisoners’ means of identification in the concentration camps. At the outside of this memorial is a wall of black stone engraved with the names of hundreds of victims of the Nazi regime. (Figures 9 and 10)

There are many differences among all of these types of museums, both in their architecture and how they present their messages to the public. Some places put more thought into the design of their architecture than others; some museums were built on open land, while others were created in buildings already standing, presenting opportunities to adapt, extend and reuse architectural designs. Even with so many styles of architecture, the visitor is able to get some feeling as to what is awaiting him inside; and with many of these museums’ architectural plans, that feeling may be of dread or fright. Yet the architecture of each of these places is able to fit in with the messages they wish to share, sometimes remaining very passive, such as in research centers, and other times being very prominent, such as in monuments.

II. Holocaust Museum Architecture in Europe and Israel

The twelve Holocaust museums to be examined in France, Germany, Poland and Israel can be organized into three different categories. The first is the archive. Archives focus less on the architecture of their buildings and more on what they have inside for visitors to access.

Museums in the second category were built to commemorate those who fell victim to the Nazi regime. These places focus more on the architectural design as a message to their visitors and on reinforcing the main message for visitors stepping into the museum to view its exhibitions. With these museums’ messages opening the public’s eyes to the history and horror of the Holocaust, the architecture relates to this, with intense designs to represent the topic.

Of the dozen museums from France, Germany, Poland and Israel that have been studied, half fit into this category, the majority being in Israel. The three museums in this country have very different styles of architecture, some with more complex and detailed messages than others. The first, Beit Theresienstadt, is a museum that remembers the Terezin ghetto in Europe. The architect, Albin Glaser, wished to keep the architectural design fairly simple, due to financial complications. The one thing that he was certain of was that the Memorial Room must be made of bricks, in remembrance of the Terezin fortress.\(^{89}\)

The Ghetto Fighters’ House was the first Holocaust museum in the world and has a very simple construction. Rather than looking like a museum or monument, the building was designed to look like a house. The reason for this is behind the mission of the museum. Unlike most museums, the founders of Ghetto Fighters’ House did not wish to provide a comprehensive overview of the Holocaust; and unlike monuments, it did not want to be a place of revelation and mourning. The House’s founders wished it to be solely an encounter between survivors giving

\(^{89}\) Beit Theresienstadt, [www.bterezin.org.il](http://www.bterezin.org.il), (accessed 10 February 2012).
their testimonies through audio or visual displays and the visitors, who listened or watched.\textsuperscript{90}

Even with this architectural simplicity, the museum is able to send a powerful message through the voices of survivors. With architecture similar to that of a house, the museum helps the visitor to realize that the victims of the Holocaust were normal people such as themselves.

The last Israeli museum is Yad Vashem, which has a modern architectural style. Designed by architect Moshe Safdie, the building is nearly all underground, with a 590 foot long linear structure in the form of a spike. This spike cuts through the mountain with its uppermost edge, which also works as a skylight, and protrudes through the mountain ridge. As the visitor finishes going through the dark rooms of the exhibition, they come to the exit, which emerges out of the mountainside, with a wonderful view of the city of Jerusalem and the valley below.\textsuperscript{91} (Figure 11) This author believes that a design such as this not only helps send the message of the terrors of the Holocaust through its dark rooms in which exhibitions are displayed, but also helps tell of the journey of many Jews who suffered through the dark times of the Holocaust, then settled into Jerusalem and the rest of Israel after liberation.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin consists of very complex architecture with hidden meanings around every corner. Through a competition, architects from around the world submitted ideas for the museum’s design. In June of 1989, little-known architect Daniel Libeskind was chosen, with the majority of the committee deciding that his design was the best to portray the museum’s message. Born in Poland approximately a year after the end of World War Two, he was the son of two Jewish Holocaust survivors. When he was thirteen his family immigrated to the United States where he eventually began work in architecture. Libeskind’s

\textsuperscript{90} Ghetto Fighters’ House-Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum, \url{www.gfh.org.il}, (accessed 4 February 2012).

\textsuperscript{91} Yad Vashem-Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Memorial, \url{www.yadvashem.org}, (accessed 30 January 2012).
family history, having lost so many relatives as victims to the Nazi regime, can be seen in his design for the Jewish Museum. As Frank Gehry notes about him, “You feel his anger about the Holocaust in this building.”

Daniel Libeskind named his architectural design for the Jewish Museum in Berlin “Between the Lines”. As he states, he came up with this title “because it is about two lines of thinking, organization, and relationship. One is a straight line, broken into many fragments, the other a tortuous line, continuing indefinitely.” There are four things which inspired the design and its title. The first was the relationship between Germans and Jews, something that was similar in both East and West Berlin. From this inspiration grew the zigzagging form of the building, which Libeskind means to be an image of a distorted star. (Figure 12) The second inspiration was the music of Arnold Schönberg and his opera, Moses and Aaron, composed in the early 1930s but which was never finished; Libeskind wished to use architecture to finish the opera, even going so far as to present his design on music paper. The third inspiration, the names of people who had been deported from Berlin during the Holocaust, helped him to realize how important it was to tell their story. The final inspiration was Walter Benjamin’s “One-Way Street,” first published in 1928. Using sketches, Benjamin portrayed an urban apocalypse, which Libeskind also uses to create the zigzagging design of the building.

While Libeskind wanted the Jewish Museum to be integrated with the Berlin Museum, he also wanted to keep it separate and independent, imitating the segregation that could be seen in Berlin between Jews and Germans during the reign of the Third Reich. He accomplished this by

---

94 Ibid, 63.
having the two buildings appear unconnected from the outside, but have a subterranean junction where the only entrance to the Jewish Museum is by going underneath the Berlin Museum. As Libeskind describes this design, “it [preserves] this contradicting autonomy of both on the surface, while binding the two together in depth.”

As stated above, the entrance to the Jewish Museum is through the Berlin Museum. The visitor must then choose between three paths: the first leads to the Holocaust tower which can only be reached from the underground level. The second path leads to the garden, and the final path leads to the main stairway and the void. This void is what the building is built around, and the entire plane of the museum seems to “tilt” towards it. As James Edward Young says, “The building is as complex as the history of Berlin,” something which surely was the intention of Libeskind. Being left with these three choices of pathways also complicates the experience for the visitor, giving them a feeling of dislocation. Combined with the asymmetrical “windows,” which appear cut into the walls at random places, and acoustics that leave one being able to hear the smallest sounds, one may actually feel threatened. (Figure 13)

Yet the most ‘threatening’ part of the Jewish Museum Berlin is arguably the void, a straight, thirteen foot-wide structure that traverses through the zigzagging building. This void stops for nothing, passing through large exhibition rooms, misshaping them and leaving spaces which are too small or oblique to hold anything. (Figures 14 and 15) These voids are not meant to make visitors happy; instead, they are meant to remind visitors of how low humans can sink and that they will never truly emerge. As James Edward Young describes the voids:

---

95 Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, 236.
97 Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, 239.
Implied in any museum’s collection is that what you see is all there is to see, all that there ever was. By placing architectural ‘voids’ throughout the museum, Libeskind has tried to puncture this museological illusion. What you see here, he seems to say, is actually only a mask for all that is missing, for the great absence of life that now makes a presentation of these artifacts a necessity. The voids make palpable a sense that much more is missing here than can ever be shown.98

Through voids, windows and zigzagging buildings, Libeskind truly presents a complex image of the Holocaust, and Jewish history in Berlin, Germany.

The last type of Holocaust museum architecture is particularly special because it can only be found in certain countries of Europe. These museums and memorials are those opened at historical sites: the sites of Nazi concentration and death camps and other specific buildings immediately related to the Holocaust. The architecture of these museums is unique from all those already discussed because the land and its buildings work as primary sources to send a message, especially those buildings which were constructed specifically for the purpose of extermination. At these museums the buildings are able to speak to the visitor in more direct ways than Daniel Libeskind’s or James Ingo Freed’s symbolic spaces.

For example, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Poland still has many of the buildings standing on its grounds and these buildings literally tell the experiences of the camp’s victims and survivors. It is a historic site museum established by Polish Parliament in 1947. These buildings, each numbered as a separate block, serve as a place for a specific exhibition with artifacts and text added, from Block 5, which shows physical evidence of crime, to Block 7 which covers living and sanitary conditions in the camp. One crematorium and one gas chamber

---

are also still standing. These special historical buildings send their messages to the visitor without needing the help of an actual museum exhibition.99

The other camp museums are not as well preserved as Auschwitz-Birkenau, partially because of the Nazis’ attempt to destroy all evidence of the crimes committed. At these sites, nearly all original buildings have been destroyed and only their foundations remain. These camps must find other ways to use the building foundations and the surrounding land to tell the story of the site. The Bergen-Belsen Memorial focuses on the landscaping of the camp. Monuments can be found between the mass graves commemorating the thousands of people who lost their lives at this camp. Careful landscape modifications show the camp’s historical topography, preserve the remaining structural elements and make it easier for visitors to find their way around the site.100 (Figure 16) Similar to the Bergen-Belsen camp site, the Buchenwald camp was destroyed by the Nazis, leaving only building foundations in its place. However, unlike the memorial at Bergen-Belsen, the Buchenwald Memorial has abandoned more than fifty percent of the grounds, leaving it to the forces of nature, evoking the “impression of merciless desolation and inhospitality.”101

The Ravensbruck Women’s Concentration Camp Memorial Museum, while including parts of the former concentration camp buildings such as the crematorium and the camp prison, focuses much of its message on a memorial built outside the camp. Established in 1959, the memorial is next to a mass grave where the remains of prisoners from various burial sites were

---

reburied. The bronze sculpture Woman, Carrying (Tragende) by Will Lammert is at the heart of the memorial’s design and is considered to be the memorial’s symbol to this day.102

The last historic site was neither a concentration nor death camp; it was an orphanage in southern France, that was home to dozens of Jewish children. After a Nazi raid in 1944, these children were taken to concentration camps, where nearly all met their death. The Memorial Museum for Children of Izieu is similar to the camp museums in that the buildings of the museum tell their own story because these were the buildings in which the children lived and played. The museum uses the children’s home, an old barn and an old silkworm breeding house to display its exhibitions and tell the stories of these children.103 (Figure 17)

IV. Comparisons among the Museums of the United States, France, Germany, Poland and Israel

Distinguishing characteristics can be found among all of the museums in this study. With the four categories of places examined, many connections can be made. First, resource centers and archives can be found in the United States, Germany and Poland, and none of these places focus on architectural messages.

Monuments can also be found both in the United States and other countries, particularly at places of former concentration and death camps. The monuments found at camps are very passive, not standing out among the foundations of former buildings found on the land, such as the simple monument at Bergen Belsen which is designed as a site map. They are there to help visitors mourn the losses of thousands at these camps, and each monument is place specific,

---

while barely making note of those who suffered at other camps. The monuments found in the United States do not narrow in on a specific camp, but wish to mourn and remember all those lost during the Holocaust. The Los Angeles Holocaust Memorial is similar to those found in the camps in Europe in that it is passive with a simple design which resorts to towers to represent victims, while the monument in Miami Beach is conversely very aggressive towards the horrific event, leaving the visitor with images of those who suffered and the pain they felt emotionally and physically. The visitor is sure to understand the architect’s anger towards what had happened.

Museums share the greatest differences among them. In the United States five of the museums analyzed were placed into already-standing buildings, with an architecture not related to the Holocaust; these were the Dallas Holocaust Museum, Holocaust Museum Houston, Florida Holocaust Museum, Virginia Holocaust Museum and CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center. As stated before, the main reason for this was lack of untouched land on which to have these museums.

Those American museums which have architectural designs meant to relate to the Holocaust have many things in common, even though they are designed by different architects. For example, the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center are both designed so that visitors step into the museum in a disturbing, dark area with sharp angles. As they make their way through the museum, they feel trapped in this disturbance which surrounds them on all sides. However, they end their visit in a warm, light colored area with curves rather than sharp angles. The Holocaust Museum Houston and the USHMM both use bricks and steel in their designs, materials used in concentration camps, to give the visitor the feeling that they are stepping back in time to these camps.
Museums in Germany and Israel have some features in common with the American museums as well. The JMB uses sharp angles and metal to make the visitor feel uncomfortable. Yad Vashem, in Israel, has similarities with the museums in Houston and Illinois: as the visitors enter the museum they are taken into a dark, disturbing area. As they finish their visit, they are brought into a light, open area. The other two museums in Israel, the Ghetto Fighters’ House and Beit Theresienstadt, have simpler architectural plans, with the attempt to not look like a museum, but rather like a house and a ghetto respectively, signaling life before the Holocaust and in an attempt to humanize victims, showing that they are just ordinary people.

The rest of the places looked at were in Europe: the concentration and extermination camps at Buchenwald, Ravensbruck and Bergen-Belsen in Germany, and at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. While many also have monuments which play a large part in the focus of their museum, their architecture is fairly simple. They use the buildings (or foundations) which are already available. These help tell the story and the history of the camps, working as evidence to what had happened. Yet although the museums’ buildings were already standing, they are able to speak to the visitor perhaps in a better way than the exhibit displays in the museum itself. The buildings create a dark and chilling atmosphere much more than the conceptual interpretations found in the museums discussed above. In fact, the museums at the historic sites have inspired the architectural design of these other museums, through such things as building material like steel, wire and brick used at the USHMM, to open spaces used in places like the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Research Center.
Can Holocaust museums be noted for their aesthetic designs? Can one even call these designs aesthetic? To begin to answer this question, one must first define what aesthetic means: “pertaining to a sense of the beautiful”; however, much art eschews beauty for a wide variety of reasons, including, as many of these designs do, a use of the sublime. For example, when one approaches the USHMM, he gets the feeling that he shouldn’t be there, that he has entered a prison. With its dark limestone and towers, the building appears like a fortress, and that the visitor isn’t necessarily welcome. Upon stepping inside, the visitor feels as though he is being watched by others when he looks up and sees people viewing the exhibition are looking down on him. This space was clearly inspired by the camps and the real life experience of prisoners whose every moves were being watched by guards. Visitors also see the red bricks and steel, building materials found in camp buildings, evoking a feeling that they have entered into a concentration camp. In general, one does not feel welcome. From the beginning of the exhibit, which begins as one enters the elevator, visitors are crammed together, like they would be in a train or a gas chamber. Visitors are also guided through the exhibitions on a specific path just as guards guided camp prisoners.¹⁰⁴

The JMB conveys similar feelings. Standing next to the Berlin Museum, with its classic architectural style, the author could only describe the JMB as its opposite. Shiny metal, rather than stone; splinters of windows marked in what seem to be random places, rather than large, square windows or skylights; a zigzagging building, rather than a regular, symmetrical one. Although these two museums are connected from the inside, one cannot help but feel disoriented when entering the JMB. It’s three axes and void space confuse visitors, leaving them unsure of

where to go. Victims of camps also felt these disturbances and confused emotions when being
guided through the process of ghettos, trains and gas chambers.\textsuperscript{105}

The Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial was created by a truly gifted artist, Kenneth
Treister. While some see it for its beauty and talent, others are appalled at the shapes and
expressions on the sculptures faces. They may question whether this is an appropriate way to
honor and mourn loved ones lost to the Holocaust, by showing their pain, their struggling and
their death. However, this author believes that this is appropriate - the experiences of victims is
emphasized in the museums as well, and this is another way to interpret their pain through art.\textsuperscript{106}

All of these museums and memorials contribute to the visitor’s Holocaust museum
experience. The architecture prepares the visitor for what they will encounter inside. Looming
over the visitor like the USHMM, or with sharp corners like the JMB, one cannot possibly feel
that they are stepping into a place of comfort and happiness. The visitor anticipates a distressful,
uncomfortable feeling not traditionally associated with architecture. The architecture of these
museums clearly evokes the experiences one has at places where the atrocities occurred.

These three examples, along with others previously discussed, give examples as to
whether this architecture can be termed aesthetic. Seeing sculptures of emaciated people with
terror on their faces or a looming building shows an aesthetics of the sublime, providing awe,
fear or foreboding and. The designers of these buildings and monuments understood what the
Holocaust was, and how it had affected the world. In the only way they knew how, through their
talent of design, they expressed their feelings toward the Holocaust, and what it truly was.

Museum architecture is a much more complicated concept than most people realize, with

\textsuperscript{105} Jewish Museum Berlin, \url{http://www.jmberlin.de} (accessed 15 November 2011).
\textsuperscript{106} Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial, \url{http://www.holocaustmmb.org} (accessed 8 November 2011).
the buildings not only being designed in a way to best display its artifacts but also to help convey the message that the museum wishes visitors to come away with. Holocaust museums are no exception to this; in fact, some of them, such as the Jewish Museum Berlin, have some of the most complex architectural museum designs in the world, with voids found throughout the buildings and windows placed in what seem to be random places, often making it hard for curators to create exhibits. The designs for these two dozen research centers, museums and monuments are all unique. Yet one thing is sure: the majority of these museums chose to have buildings created that express the Holocaust through the design, allowing them to provide an even more intense experience to the visitor.
Chapter Four

History, Heritage and Hope:

Interpreting the Holocaust through Exhibitions

While the history and the architecture of the museums researched for this thesis contribute to the missions of Holocaust museums, the exhibitions play the largest role in helping the museums reach their goals. There are different kinds of exhibitions to be found in Holocaust museums. There are permanent exhibitions, which are the main focal points of the museums. These communicate the overall messages of the museums, often giving an overview of Holocaust history, though some may focus on certain parts of the Holocaust, such as the history of one specific concentration camp or one specific day during the Holocaust. There are temporary and traveling exhibitions, which are less related to the missions of the museums, in that they may not be solely related to the Holocaust in particular, but illustrate the idea of genocide worldwide. There are a wide variety of these exhibitions, and themes can be repeated throughout many museums, with some even displaying the same traveling exhibitions. Finally, less common are children’s exhibitions and outreach programs for younger audiences. The subject of when children should be exposed to the history of the Holocaust and how this is to be done is a much debated topic among curators, teachers and parents. Often, the museums approach this topic through the eyes of a Jewish child who experienced the Holocaust, partly because it is such a sensitive topic.107

One of the most important and complicated things any museum faces is how to present its permanent exhibition. This exhibition must be able to deliver the museum’s message to those who see it. For museums about the Holocaust, this can become an even more complicated task,

due to the terror involved in its history. How far should the exhibition take the visitor into the Holocaust? How graphic may displayed photographs be? Of course, everyone knows that the Holocaust was terrifying, but what is appropriate to show to visitors? One must keep in mind that if the exhibition displays some of the most gruesome parts of the Holocaust, it may upset visitors. Therefore, what should the exhibition discuss?

I. Exhibitions in Holocaust Museums of the United States

A. Permanent Exhibitions

For museums in this study, nearly all those museums in the United States follow the same historical narrative when creating their permanent exhibition, these being the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center, the Holocaust Museum Houston, the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Florida Holocaust Museum and the USHMM. For example, as the visitor walks into the Florida Holocaust Museum’s permanent exhibit, entitled “History, Heritage and Hope,” they are surrounded by information about the lives of European Jews before the reign of the Nazi regime. Sometimes the museum will show the lives of Jews all the way back into the nineteenth century, but most will start with showing what life was like for Jews after World War I. The exhibition then begins to follow a timeline, with the next part focusing on the rise of the Nazi Party in 1933. The exhibition shows the anti-semitism brewing throughout Europe, and the disruption and segregation that Jews faced; this is shown particularly in discussion of anti-Jewish legislation and Kristallnacht. The exhibition then turns toward 1 September 1939, and the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II. Rather than discuss the military history of the war, the museum shows how Jews and other victims were treated during certain
times of the war, beginning with them being rounded up and placed in ghettos, then being sent to concentration camps and on to death camps. Finally, the exhibition ends with the liberation of camps, particularly focusing on American soldiers, rather than British or Soviet soldiers. These topics are the basic groundwork for nearly all Holocaust museums in the United States, though many, such as the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland, Florida, will also include presentation of resistance in the ghettos and camps.

Through providing a historical narrative such as this, Holocaust museums are able to give their visitors an understanding of the social and economic factors which brought about the Holocaust, as well as the basic history of how it was carried out, then ending with a “happy ending” of Allied soldiers liberating the camps. These museums choose to take this path in their permanent exhibitions because it seems to cover everything, believing that few questions go unanswered. These same parts of the Holocaust are also taught in U.S. classrooms, which helps students visiting the museum to reinforce what they have learned.

However, when the museums and the classrooms follow the same story of the Holocaust, there are topics that are left untold and therefore, forgotten. For example, the museums in this study focus only on the liberations of camps and territories by American soldiers, not British or Soviet. While British liberations were very similar to those of America in that they were mostly friendly, this is not true of Soviet soldiers. If the museums truly wanted to provide liberation history for West and East Germany, the story would be quite different. Soviet liberation would best be described as rampant, with soldiers entering villages throughout Poland and East Germany, looting homes and raping women while they continued their journey west. While a

---

small percentage of American and British soldiers did these things as well, the Soviet liberation itself is important to the history of the Holocaust, because visitors need to know that not all Germans and Holocaust survivors experienced a peaceful liberation.

Artifacts in the museums are usually those that evoke strong emotions, such as humanizing elements like personal donations of photographs or objects, or objects that played a direct role in history. These items truly make the visitor feel the reality of the Holocaust, for seeing objects of victims such as a child’s toy doll or a wedding picture from before the Holocaust makes people see that these were normal people, just like themselves. Occasionally a museum is able to purchase or take out on loan an item belonging to another country or from a camp. For example, the Illinois Holocaust Museum, Holocaust Museum Houston, Florida Holocaust Museum and the USHMM all have German railcars (Figure 18), similar to those which would have carried Jews from their home to concentration camps. The Holocaust Museum Houston also owns a Danish rescue boat (Figure 19), which has become a major part of the museum’s permanent exhibition, going into detail about the three-week long task taken on by the country of Denmark in helping nearly all of their Jewish citizens escape to neutral Sweden safely. The USHMM also displays a barracks from the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, though recently, they have been experiencing complications in that Poland insists that it be returned because the museum’s loan is up. The USHMM argues that the barracks is too fragile to return. All of these objects - the German railcars, the Danish rescue boat and the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp barracks - are elements that incite horror and fear in the visitor.

Another object which curators at the USHMM realized could evoke strong emotions was hair from the concentration camps. Soldiers ordered prisoners to cut and shave off their hair

---

upon arriving at the camp; this hair was then took on multiple uses, such as being woven into clothing. Although the museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau had loaned piles of hair to the USHMM, curators agreed that it was too personal of an object, and would be upsetting to some visitors, who may feel they are looking at the hair of family members who were victims to the Nazis.  

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, the Holocaust Museum Houston, and the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center conclude their permanent exhibition with a film which shows the testimonies of survivors and liberators who witnessed the Holocaust. These films focus on survivors from the area surrounding the city, helping to show the museum’s significance as visitors see that there are survivors living in the area. Another way that some museums - such as the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, the Florida Holocaust Museum and the USHMM - conclude the exhibition is by showing material on genocides that have happened recently, such as in Darfur and Rwanda.

Of the dozen museums this study looks at in the United States, there are two museums that do not take this route in planning their permanent exhibition. The Dallas Holocaust Museum seeks to tell the history of this time, while also focusing on the behaviors of the Holocaust’s bystanders. Its permanent exhibition, titled “A Day in the Life of the Holocaust,” looks at three events that happened on 19 April 1943. It first tells the story of three men who tried to rescue Jews on a deportation train traveling from Belgium to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the only time that one of these trains was attacked during all the years of the Holocaust. Second, it tells the story of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, which began on this very same day: “Persecuted and starved residents...rose up in revolt to assert their human dignity and to fight back against their

oppressors with every last ounce of determination and every last drop of their blood.”

Last, it tells the story of the Bermuda Conference which was taking place on this day as well. It leaves the visitor shocked to see that while people were risking and fighting for their lives, British and American governmental officers were meeting at a fancy hotel on the resort island of Bermuda, where the countries discussed the question of Jewish refugees who had been liberated by Allied forces and those who still remained in Nazi-occupied Europe, with the only agreement being made that the war must be won against the Nazis. The museum in Dallas surely shows the diverse experiences in these three events that happened on the same day, and allows the visitor to see the Holocaust from the eyes of those experiencing it and those bystanders.

The other museum which does not follow the traditional plan for a permanent exhibition is the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana. The museum’s mission is not to tell the story of the entire history of the Holocaust, but to focus on one area: children in the Auschwitz concentration camp who were part of the deadly lab experiments of the Nazis, particularly the infamous doctor Josef Mengele. It discusses the genetic experiments of Mengele on sets of twins that were brought to him and became his “guinea pigs.”

These two museums, with untraditional ways of approaching the Holocaust, have many advantages and disadvantages. The Dallas museum only focuses on one day during the entire Holocaust, an event that from start to finish took over a decade. By focusing on this one day, visitors may be left wondering why the Holocaust happened in the first place. However, these three events are very different from one another. The men on the train and the Warsaw ghetto revolt show that not only were Jews revolting (as in Warsaw), but so were non-Jews (on the

---

Meanwhile, the museum shows the Allies seeming to be carefree and in no rush to save the Nazi prisoners, ignoring the fact that thousands of people were being annihilated every day. The CANDLES Holocaust Museum looks at one specific Nazi. While he played an important part in the Holocaust, many other museums do not include much information about Mengele. This museum is able to focus solely on him, and the crimes that he committed. However, focusing on Dr Mengele limits the visitor’s view of the Holocaust to one concentration camp and one specific part of this camp, twin experiments.

B. Temporary and Traveling Exhibitions

Holocaust museums in the United States have offered their visitors a wide variety of temporary exhibitions, ranging from those about specific people during the Holocaust, art related to the Holocaust, the museum itself, and topics only slightly related to the Holocaust, such as genocide in other countries; examples of these exhibitions will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Some of these exhibitions are traveling, and they have been displayed at more than one of these dozen museums. No matter what temporary exhibitions these museums decide to show, they are of great importance in helping visitors to understand specific topics of the Holocaust. While the permanent exhibition may provide cohesion and help visitors to learn of the Holocaust, the temporary exhibitions are able to advance their knowledge by focusing on one subtopic. These traveling exhibitions help to bring people back to the museum again and again.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, unquestionably the museum with the largest collection of Holocaust artifacts in America, has created numerous traveling exhibitions which are loaned to museums throughout the country, from Los Angeles to New York City. The six traveling exhibitions advertised on the museums website, www.ushmm.org, show what the
museum finds to be the most important or most interesting topics for display, based on the primary documents and artifacts they are happy to provide. The first is about the Olympics of 1936, which were held in Berlin during the time of the Nazi regime. While not completely related to the Holocaust, it contextualizes the topic by showing what the regime was like, and how Nazis worked to portray themselves to citizens of other countries that were visiting their nation. The Olympics were a perfect stage for fostering Nazi ideas of the Aryan race. The exhibition asks the question of how Germans could have helped the world to see the tyranny of the Third Reich, possibly through a boycott of the games. It also tells of athletes who did boycott the games, such as the Long Island University basketball team, made up largely of Jewish players, along with those banned because of their ethnic heritage, such as German Jewish high jumper, Gretel Bergmann.¹¹⁴

The second is titled “Fighting the Fires of Hate: America and the Nazi Book Burnings,” which discusses the day of 10 May 1933 when, throughout universities of Germany, students and intellectuals gathered to burn books written by Jewish scholars and other authors whom the Nazis deemed “degenerate” in their ethnicity or way of thought, such as Americans Helen Keller and Ernest Hemingway. The title relates this event to America not only by showing American authors whom the Nazis disapproved of, but also by showing Americans that there was more behind the Nazi regime than the swastika or the Nazi banner. Once America entered World War II nearly a decade later, the Office of War used propaganda to show Americans what life was like in Nazi Germany. Through these burnings, Americans could see that the Nazis were hostile

towards democracy and freedom of speech and were reminded that in their free nation, they could choose to read whatever they pleased.\textsuperscript{115}

The next exhibition is about Varian Fry, an American journalist who ran a rescue network in Vichy France and was able to help thousands of anti-Nazi and Jewish refugees escape the Holocaust in 1940 and 1941, ending only after being expelled from France. This exhibition is a pro-American stance and shows that there were people, even from the United States, who were willing to risk their lives to save those in danger.\textsuperscript{116}

The next traveling exhibition which can be borrowed from the USHMM is entitled “Schindler” and is about Oskar Schindler, a German who is credited with saving over one thousand Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his enamelware and ammunition factories. Popularity of Schindler grew in 1993 after the award-winning movie, \textit{Schindler’s List}, was released. However, while popularity of Schindler grew after the release of this film, most Americans saw him only as director Steven Spielberg depicts him in the film: as a man who was initially driven by profit-desired amorality, but who at some point made a silent but conscious decision that preserving the lives of his Jewish employees was imperative, even if requiring massive payments to induce Nazis to turn a blind eye. This exhibition is able to help visitors learn more about the man behind the movie.\textsuperscript{117}

The fifth exhibition is about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals during their reign. Homosexual men were believed to have a degeneracy unacceptable to the Aryan race which they were working to perfect; therefore, they were often arrested and imprisoned as a means of terrorizing them into social conformity. It looks at the lives of victims, such as artist Richard

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Grune, who had trained at the Bauhaus school. Homosexuals are victims often overlooked in discussion of the Holocaust, so this exhibition is able to help visitors learn more and also reminds them that Jews were not the only victims of the Nazi regime. It also reminds visitors that prejudice against homosexuals is still present today in America, as the USHMM quotes the *Baltimore Sun* from 2002 on its website: “[This] new exhibit shows how slow prejudice is to wither, if it ever does.”\(^{118}\)

The final traveling exhibition is entitled “Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race”. It discusses the Nazi regime’s campaign to “cleanse” the German society of individuals viewed as biological threats. With the help of medically trained people, racial health policies were created which included the mass sterilization of “genetically diseased” persons, which led to the Holocaust. The exhibition wishes for visitors to reflect on the continuing attraction of biological utopias that promote the possibility of human perfection, such as the eugenics movement whose goal was to eliminate inherited disabilities through genetic manipulation.\(^{119}\)

Many of these exhibitions provided by the USHMM have been used by numerous museums across the country, such as the Holocaust Museum Houston and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.\(^{120}\) There are also other traveling exhibitions found in many museums. The Museum of Jewish Heritage offers a traveling exhibit, “Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges,” which explores the unlikely coming together of these two groups, each of which had experienced exclusion and hatred. Beginning with the arrival of European Jewish scholars to America in the 1930s and 1940s, it looks at their ongoing

\(^{118}\) Ibid.

\(^{119}\) Ibid.

\(^{120}\) Holocaust Museum Houston, [www.hmh.org](http://www.hmh.org) (accessed 4 November 2012).

encounter as they experienced the challenges of life in the segregated South through the Civil Rights Movement. The exhibition opens visitors eyes to the fact that the United States, while not executing an entire race, was still a very racist nation, even in the years following the Holocaust. The Holocaust Museum Houston offers “Darfur: Photojournalists Respond” which looks at the genocide in Darfur which began in 2003 when Darfuri rebel movements took up arms against the Sudanese government, who responded by attacking hundreds of villages throughout Darfur. It works to show that following the Holocaust, the world proclaimed that it would “never forget” the genocide so that it could “never again” be repeated. Sadly, the exhibition shows that this is not so, and works by numerous photojournalists, who witnessed the genocide firsthand, such as Pep Bonet and Chris-Steele Perkins, show injustices in this region of western Sudan. With these contemporary photographs, the reality of genocide is brought to the visitor’s eyes, and the exhibition literally presents them with the question, “How long can we go on saying ‘never again’?” and encourages them to speak out and take action. Finally, another traveling exhibition created by the MJH is “Scream the Truth at the World - Emanuel Ringelblum and the Hidden Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto.” This exhibition which tells the story of Ringelblum and his careful documentation of Jewish life in Nazi-occupied Poland. Collecting reports on deportation, ghetto artifacts and photographs, Ringelblum was forced to place the archives in containers and bury them when the Nazis began to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto.

Museums also display their own temporary exhibitions based on what they may have in their collections. The themes of these exhibitions could be placed into three categories: specific

---

123 Ibid.
people or communities, art, and the museums themselves. The largest is that which focuses on specific people of Jewish origin or communities who experienced the Holocaust. For example, the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City has an exhibition on view through February 2013, “Emma Lazarus: Poet of Exiles,” about poet Emma Lazarus who is famous for the voice she gave to the Statue of Liberty through her message of exile, refuge and the promise of America: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free....” Yet, not only does it look at this, it discusses her background and her work for Jewish causes and a Jewish homeland in Israel.\textsuperscript{124} Another temporary exhibition from the Museum of Jewish Heritage is “Ours to Fight For: American Jews in the Second World War,” which was displayed from November 2003 until December 2006. As the title implies, it explores and celebrates the achievements of Jewish men and women who were part of the American war effort on and off the battlefield by telling their stories through interactive artifact explorations. The exhibition tells the stories of what the war was like for the “Greatest Generation,” while focusing on Jews in particular.\textsuperscript{125} An exhibition in the Illinois Holocaust Museum focused on one of the most well-known victims of the Holocaust, Anne Frank, and reveals the challenges faced by all Jews during the War and the difficult decisions people were forced to make.\textsuperscript{126}

The second category encompasses a variety of art. It may be art that was created during the Holocaust; it may be art created by a survivor of the Holocaust; or it may be art created by someone who has no distinct connection to the Holocaust, but wishes to show their feelings towards it. The art may be traditional paintings or drawings; or it may be more recent, such as photography or technological art. For example, the Florida Holocaust Museum displayed an

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{125} MJH, \url{www.mjhnyc.org}, (accessed 8 November 2011).  
\textsuperscript{126} IHMEC, \url{www.ilholocaustmuseum.org}, (accessed 5 November 2011).
exhibition from July 2011 to September 2011 entitled “Where the Past Meets the Future.” This featured the artwork of Bostonian Fay Grajower, a second generation of Holocaust survivors. She uses her artwork to send the message of her memories of her mother’s and siblings’ experience, which helps her to work through issues of the past.\footnote{FHM, \url{www.flholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 5 November 2012).} (Figure 20)

The last category relates to those exhibitions which focus on the museum itself, whether it is celebrating the anniversary of the museum, displaying the history of the creation and architecture of the museum, or showing off their most prized collections. One museum that does this is the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, with their exhibition displayed from April 2009 through Fall 2009, “Building the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.” The exhibition looks back at the history of the museum, and the neo-Nazi march in Skokie in the late 1970s which inspired local Holocaust survivors to create the museum.\footnote{IHMEC, \url{www.ilholocaustmuseum.org} (accessed 5 November 2012).}

As this shows, the subjects of these temporary exhibitions is nearly unlimited and ranges from looking at one specific part of the Holocaust to the history of genocides in other countries throughout the world. Such a large amount of choices helps museums bring visitors back regularly, while also teaching more than the overall history of the Holocaust.

C. Children’s Exhibitions

The subject of children’s education of the Holocaust is a sensitive topic in Holocaust museums, as the event was so gruesome and very difficult for children to understand. Museum curators must ask themselves if they want to attempt to teach children about this subject, and if so, how will they go about doing it? What age groups should the exhibits be for? Many of the American museums researched in this study have decided not to tackle this difficult task, with
only four of the twelve actually having exhibitions or activities for the education of children: the USHMM, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, the El Paso Holocaust Museum and the Buffalo Holocaust Research Center.

The four places listed above are all museums or research centers; none of the monuments attempt to teach children the history of the Holocaust. This is actually not surprising because, unlike museums or research centers, they have no artifacts or libraries; they simply have sculptures with which to send their message to visitors. These sculptures, particularly the one in Miami Beach, Florida, portray the Holocaust much in the way that it actually was, which is breath-taking in a very disturbing way. Creators of the monument would agree that the sculpture is inappropriate for any children, and that they should be kept from viewing it until they are in their mid- to late-teens.129 (Figures 9 & 10) However, the monument found in Los Angeles (Figure 8) could be defined as the opposite of that in Miami Beach and be described as very subtle, very abstract and difficult to analyze. With six large columns displayed in a circle, the message is not immediately apparent. This author believes children could be brought to the monument and would most likely have difficulty understanding the message being portrayed; therefore, the message of the monument would not come across to them, and there would be little benefit in them visiting the monument.130

Only two of these Holocaust museums have an exhibit exclusively for children and families; these are at the USHMM and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. “Remember the Children, Daniel’s Story”, at the USHMM, is inspired by the children’s novel by Carol Matas.131 For ages eight and older, curators have decided to create an exhibit which tells

131 Carol Matas, Daniel’s Story, (New York: Scholastic Paperbacks, 1993).
the history of the Holocaust from a child’s point of view. It has taken the experiences of children who survived the Holocaust and recorded what happened to them and turned it into an interactive exhibition that helps children to understand the concept more clearly by personalizing the story. The museum’s website describes the experience of the exhibition: “As they walk through...the young visitors witness the increasing restraints of Nazi policies on one family’s life, from smaller food rations to deportation to a ghetto and finally up to, but never through, the gates of a concentration camp.”¹³² As visitors finish learning of the family’s story, they are invited to express their feelings by writing a letter to Daniel. This is the sole museum which tackles the complication of teaching children Holocaust history. The Illinois Holocaust Museum’s youth exhibition focuses less on the Holocaust itself, but relate the event to current issues that children may be experiencing, such as bullying, exclusion from mainstream culture, standing up against prejudice, and responding in a positive way to hate crimes, while encouraging youth to speak out and make their voices heard.¹³³

The Buffalo Holocaust Research Center and the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center both have outreach programs for youth, including workshops and summer camps. For example, the Buffalo Holocaust Research Center offers workshops with local Holocaust survivors, Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration, and November Kristallnacht Observance. The research center of Buffalo also holds workshops for teachers on how to present the Holocaust within the classroom, book boxes available for loan, a writing contest for youth in grades eight through twelve and student and teacher trips to the nation’s capital to visit the USHMM.¹³⁴

II. Exhibitions in Holocaust Museums of Other Countries

Holocaust museums in France, Germany, Poland and Israel face the same complicated questions as museums in the United States when planning and designing their permanent exhibitions. Yet even more exhibition designs can be found in the museums in these countries because it is on these lands that the Holocaust took place. Because this tragedy occurred in these countries where civilians were bystanders, the subject can be seen as much more delicate than in the United States.

A. Permanent Exhibitions

The Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) in Germany and Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters’ House, both in Israel, give comprehensive overviews of the Holocaust’s history. They begin by showing what the lives of European Jews were like in the decades leading up to 1933, when the Nazi Party gained power over Germany. However, being a museum not specifically about the Holocaust but about Jewish history overall, the JMB’s exhibition, “A Journey through Two Millennia of German Jewish History,” looks back at Jewish life from the past two millennia. After giving the background history of Jews before the Nazi rise to power, the exhibition looks at how the Nazis changed the lives of Jews, turning them into even more oppressed outcasts than they had been before in such a small amount of time. It then looks at life for the Jews once World War II started, and the deportation of Jews to ghettos and camps. Continuing, the exhibition portrays the Final Solution and how the Jews were exterminated, using such things as a document announcing the forthcoming deportation of Frieda Plotke from Berlin in 1941 or the diary and photographs of Elisabeth Wust from 1944 to 1945.\(^{135}\) It ends

with their liberation and how lives were changed once the Holocaust was over. The Ghetto Fighters’ House also dedicates a large part of its permanent exhibition area to the “Righteous Among the Nations,” those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews, and also Jewish resistance, particularly in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. It also looks at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which took place in Jerusalem in 1961.136

The displays in these three museums are able to provide large amounts of information for visitors in a small amount of time. This is beneficial because visitors are able to see that Jews in Europe had been victims of prejudice for centuries leading up to the Holocaust. It is beneficial to show how European Jews who survived the Holocaust got on with their lives after the Holocaust, by either returning to their countries or starting lives in other countries around the world. However, with such a large amount of information given to the visitor in such a short amount of time, it can be difficult to absorb all of this information and some important concepts may be lost amid surrounding facts.

The other museums in Germany and Poland are at the sites of former concentration or extermination camps: the Buchenwald Memorial, the Ravensbruck Women’s Concentration Camp Memorial Museum, the Bergen-Belsen Memorial and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Because they are at these sites, their permanent exhibitions do not give an overview of Jewish history before, during and after the Holocaust. Rather than give an overview of the entire Holocaust, they focus on the history of that specific camp and the role it played in the Holocaust, such as the extermination or survival of its inmates. While the camps at Buchenwald, Ravensbruck and Bergen-Belsen no longer have buildings to tell their story, they do have the building foundations which the museums use as part of their permanent exhibition.

For example, at the Ravensbruck site memorials have been built throughout the area where buildings once stood, while the museum is in a close building which had been used by Soviet troops until the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{137}

However, the museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau has a large portion of the original buildings on site, and uses these to its advantage, making it the ultimate experiential exhibit. Traveling through each building, visitors learn about the camp: physical evidence of the crime, the life of the prisoners, living and sanitary conditions, all including signs and photographs from the camp. Visitors then come to the dreadful death wall where prisoners were lined up and shot, followed by the gas chamber and crematorium. The visitor is placed in the actual setting where these crimes were committed; one cannot help but empathize with the human suffering. The museum then looks at the murder and destruction of European Roma, also using signage and photographs, and the Russian liberation of the camp. The museum visitors continue by travelling through the nation exhibitions. These are exhibitions provided by the countries which lost citizens to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp and tell the story of their countries’ victims. These include Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{138}

The Auschwitz-Birkenau site, with some buildings still standing, leaves the visitor feeling as if they are in the victim’s shoes. While the museums previously mentioned, such as the JMB, are able to provide objects from the concentration camps, this museum offers

\textsuperscript{137} Buchenwald Memorial, \url{www.buchenwald.de} (accessed 13 October 2012).


\textsuperscript{138} Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial & Museum, \url{http://en.auschwitz.org} (accessed 15 November 2011).
something found nowhere else. Seeing the buildings, the crematoria, and the wall against which victims were lined up to be killed leaves the visitor with a better idea of suffering of so many at this camp.

The museum in Izieu, France also has the original buildings which had been on site when Jewish children were taken by the Nazis to be deported. There are two buildings at this museum: the house and the barn. The house exhibition shows the daily life of the children, including where the children received their school lessons, where they helped prepare meals and where they slept. The exhibition in the barn looks at the background of some children’s family stories, such as those who were moved throughout Europe trying to escape the Nazis. In order to shield these children from being murdered, humanitarian organizations such as this one in Izieu, brought Jewish children into the orphanage, often housing them until they could be taken to neutral Switzerland. It also discusses crimes against humanity, including the Nuremberg trials, the Klaus Barbie trial and other genocides that occurred in the twentieth century such as the Armenians in Turkey, the Tutsi in Rwanda and the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica.\textsuperscript{139}

B. Temporary Exhibitions

Nearly half of the Holocaust museums outside the United States that this thesis researches are at the sites of what used to be concentration camps. As stated before, these sites focus their message on the specific camp; because of this, they rarely display temporary exhibitions. The museums created to tell the complete story of the Holocaust do have temporary exhibitions, some with a significantly larger number than others. The three museums with the

\textsuperscript{139} Memorial Museum for the Children of Izieu, \url{www.memorializieu.eu} (accessed 20 November 2011).
largest number are the Jewish Museum Berlin, the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

The JMB, as can be seen by its name, is not specifically about the Holocaust, though a large portion does cover this topic. The museum is meant to share the history of Jewish culture before, during and after the Holocaust. Therefore, many of the temporary exhibitions are unrelated to the Holocaust, often focusing on specific Jews, such as journalists (“I Want to get my Fingers Burnt” - The Journalist Theodor Wolff, 1868-1943), perfumers (“You’ve arrived at the perfumers”: The Cosmetic Companies Scherk and Dr. Albersheim) or those with large success in the cigarette industry (Total Manoli? - No Problem! Jewish Entrepreneurs in the German Cigarette Industry). Other common topics of the exhibitions are the lives of Jews in other countries (whose family had most likely immigrated there because of the Holocaust) or in showing clichés of certain ethnic groups, sending the message that one should not stereotype based on ethnicity (Typical! Clichés about Jewish and Others). Of the Holocaust-related temporary exhibitions, there is one about forced labor during the reign of the Nazi regime (Forced Labor during National Socialism), one showing looted Jewish items from the time of the Nazis (Looting and Restitution: Jewish-Owned Cultural Artifacts from 1933 to the Present) and one about a Hungarian filmmaker, Péter Forgács, who documented the Jewish exodus from Slovakia on the Danube shortly before the beginning of World War Two (Péter Forgács: The Danube Exodus The Rippling Currents of the River). The JMB has also borrowed the USHMM’s traveling exhibition, “Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race.”

The Memorial de la Shoah in Paris, focuses solely on the Holocaust, meaning that its temporary exhibitions do as well. The museum makes a point to display exhibitions that take a

---

140 JMB, [www.jmberlin.de](http://www.jmberlin.de), (accessed 15 November 2011).
more detailed look at certain events such as “La nuit de Cristal,” which looks at Kristallnacht or “Les Juifs de Tunisie pendant la Second Guerre mondiale,” which looks at Jews in the French colony of Tunisia during World War Two. Many of the exhibitions are of artists who are inspired by the terror of the Holocaust. These include the photography of Ruth Goodwin and the sculptures of Shelomo Selinger (Figure 21). The Memorial de la Shoah, along with the Jewish Museum Berlin, has also displayed temporary exhibitions about genocides in other countries, such as Rwanda and Darfur.  

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem had over forty temporary exhibitions listed on its website from the beginning of the 21st Century. These exhibitions ranged in topic from children to women to specific people and places related to the Holocaust. For many of the exhibitions the website explains why they were chosen to be displayed. Many are about specific people such as Rabbi Dr. Zvi Asaria-Hermann Helfgott, who was a Jewish POW for four years. Most often in these cases, the aforementioned person donated a significant amount of objects or primary documents to the museum with the assurance that their story would be told. There are also many exhibitions that focus on specific communities, such as the Munkács in the Carpathian mountains, in Mir and in Balti. In these cases, a significant number of objects from these locations were acquired by the museum, making it enough to be able to tell the community’s story. For example, the Jews of Munkács, Czechoslovakia, made up more than 40% of the town’s population before the German invasion. The exhibition tells the story of how these people were forced into labor with the Hungarian army, and in 1944 were sent to Auschwitz, leaving the town with no Jews. Their

---

story is told through photographs, primary documents and artifacts which had belonged to these families.\textsuperscript{142}

Another topic which has received its own temporary exhibition at Yad Vashem is the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in Poland. With five exhibitions, the camp has been looked at from numerous viewpoints including the architecture of the camp, visual evidence of the mass murder in the camp, the “Righteous Among the Nations” who had been in the camp, a soldier who had liberated the camp, and the community of Trzebinia, a mostly Jewish town only nineteen kilometers from the camp. Other common topics were the Eichmann trial and how Holocaust survivors have began their lives in Israel.\textsuperscript{143}

C. Children’s Exhibitions

Similar to the Holocaust museums of the United States, those found in other countries view the task of educating youth as a difficult process. Questions are asked: At what age are children ready to be exposed to the terror of the Holocaust? How should the subject be presented without overwhelming them, making them too afraid to ever learn about the subject again?\textsuperscript{144} In the countries where the horrific events took place, this becomes an even more fragile subject, and many of the museums - specifically those at former concentration camps - make little effort to involve young children in the education of the Holocaust.

For example, the Ravensbruck Women’s Concentration Camp Memorial Museum and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum only go so far as to provide workshops and

\textsuperscript{142} Yad Vashem-Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Memorial, \url{www.yadvashem.org}, (accessed 28 November 2011).

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{144} Berenbaum and Mais, \textit{Memory and Legacy}, 233.

seminars for teachers and occasionally for youth. These workshops and seminars for teachers are meant to provide participants with ideas of ways to approach the history of the Holocaust in their classrooms. The programs for youth focus on specific topics of the Holocaust, rather than an all-around look at its history. The Ravensbruck Museum, as well as the Jewish Museum Berlin, hosts summer programs and camps. The Berlin museum’s programs take a broad look at Jewish culture, not at the Holocaust particularly. The Ravensbruck provides a “summer work camp” - a title slightly scary given the history of the camp - which combines historical learning with practical work on the historical site.

Many of the museums provide guided tours for school groups. The Jewish Museum Berlin provides “on.tour - The JMB Tour Schools,” which is a mobile exhibition and tour bus that travels throughout the states of Germany to schools which may not be able to visit JMB in person. Each museum that provided school tours had its own way of providing them, deciding which items to point out and which items to pass by based on the age of the group. To accompany these school tours, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum also performed observances for sociological research of the children and teachers after they toured the museum.

Beit Theresienstadt, in Israel, has two exhibitions related to children, though only one goes so far as to provide helpful ways for youth to learn. The first, “They Called It ‘Friend’,” is about a children’s newspaper in the Terezin ghetto. These children would write articles about hunger, death, disease, filth and overcrowding and have their work put in this newspaper, the

---

146 JMB, [www.jmberlin.de](http://www.jmberlin.de), (accessed 15 November 2011).
title of which transfers to ‘Friend’. Although it displays comics and newsletters drawn and written by the boys, it does not refrain from telling of the horrible ends these boys encountered at Auschwitz camp. Therefore, the museum does not try to make this exhibition proper for the youth audience, something that would be a good idea given that it is about children and their first-hand experience living in the ghetto. The second exhibition is “Sport and Youth in Theresienstadt” and has a specific section, “The Game Was Our Life,” for youth. It shows the educational and value-related meaning of sports and allows the visitors to encounter the personalities and the world view of the players and the organizers of sport activities in the ghetto.¹⁵⁰

The best children’s exhibition can be found at the Ghetto Fighters’ House - Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum in Israel. This museum has a special children’s museum on site called Yad LaYeled. This children’s museum was created to commemorate the memory of Jewish children who were victims to the Holocaust. It is also meant to “acquaint young visitors, ages ten and older, with the world of the children who lived during the Holocaust.”¹⁵¹ Opened in 1995, the museum’s permanent exhibition is entitled “The Jewish Child During the Holocaust,” and it provides audio listening stations at which children can listen to actual testimonies of Holocaust survivors who were children during the time. With three-dimensional style, the child feels as though they are walking through a dark street, peering into houses; then they turn onto a street with suitcases and bags along the sides, with a large picture of Jews being marched away with Nazis by their side. The museum also provides workshops, such as the workshop of creativity in which children are invited to express their feelings through different forms of art, such as drawing, painting, photography, film and sculpture.

III. The Characteristics of the Exhibitions in the Researched Countries

Nearly all of the museums share similarities in how they have designed their permanent exhibitions. All but two in the United States\(^\text{152}\) and approximately half of those in the other countries\(^\text{153}\) discussed in this thesis have made their permanent exhibitions into a comprehensive overview of the Holocaust. They start with what life was like for European Jews a decade or two before the Nazis gained power. They continue with how Jews were treated from 1933 to 1939, as antisemitism grew stronger. Then they look at the start of World War Two and the relocation of Jews to ghettos, followed by the Final Solution and their deportation to concentration camps. The exhibitions end with the liberation of the camps and how survivors started new lives throughout the world. The main difference that can be seen in these museums is that the American museums devote a significantly larger amount of time towards the liberation of the concentration camps, particularly those liberated by American soldiers, most likely to remind visitors that the United States helped to end the tragedy overseas. Other museums, those which are located at the historical sites, have designed their permanent exhibitions to focus on that particular location, telling the story of the Holocaust through that camp.

The temporary exhibitions in the museums vary in many ways. With research into the museums’ websites, it can be seen that the American Holocaust museums leave much more opportunity to host temporary exhibitions, while many of the other countries’ museums do not reserve the space or time to do this, especially those at historic sites. However, in every museum that does have temporary exhibitions, the subjects of these exhibitions are broad, ranging from a


\(^{153}\) Memorial de la Shoah, Jewish Museum Berlin, Ghetto Fighters’ House, Yad Vashem
specific event that happened to specific victims or survivors, to a larger topic, such as medical practices of the Nazi regime or art created during and after the Holocaust by survivors. The most surprising difference that can be seen between the subjects of exhibitions is that of genocides other than the Holocaust. Nearly every American Holocaust museum has hosted at least one temporary exhibition on genocides in other places such as Rwanda or Darfur, with the intention to show visitors that genocide is still happening today, and that it must be stopped. Only one museum in the four other countries hosted an exhibition on other genocides, the JMB, with a photography exhibition about Darfur. It would seem to this author that museums in France, Germany and Poland - countries in which the Holocaust took place - should want to show visitors of the tragedies that are continuing today.

Finally, the topic of children’s exhibitions is very distinctive among the United States and the other four countries. Four of the sites in the United States offer opportunities for children as young as eight to begin to learn the history of the Holocaust. Whether they are actual exhibitions, like “Daniel’s Story” at the USHMM, or special programs, there was a way for children to learn; the museum made sure to include children in their audience when designing exhibitions. Museums in the other countries did not do this; most only offered guided tours for children or summer camps. The Ghetto Fighters’ House in Israel was the only museum out of a dozen to have an exhibition specifically for children; in fact, it had an entire museum for youth.
Conclusion

We are all different; because of that, each of us has something different and special to offer and each and every one of us can make a difference by not being indifferent.

-Henry Friedman, Chairman of the Holocaust Education Center, Washington

Henry Friedman is correct in this statement. With Holocaust museums throughout the world, on six continents and many countries, it is certain that there will be numerous diversities in all of these museums, including their creation, funding, architecture and exhibitions. In examining a variety of museums in the United States, Germany, France, Poland and Israel, this study was able to provide an overview of these basic diversities.

This study found that only Holocaust museums found in Europe and Israel were created within the first two decades following the liberation of concentration camps. However, the majority of Holocaust museums, and all museums in the United States examined in this study, were created during or after the 1980s or 1990s. Funding in these countries’ museums was also very different. Only one of the dozen American museums examined received government funding: the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. The other eleven museums received their funding through different foundations, many being Jewish; private and public donations, and Holocaust survivors. However, the majority of the dozen museums examined in Europe and Israel were funded by the government. The missions of a majority of the American museums was to teach about the Holocaust, show visitors how to help prevent genocides from continuing to happen and to provide a place of mourning. Surprisingly, many European museums did not include mourning in their museums, but focused more on the providing the history of specific parts of the Holocaust, such as concentration camps or ghettos.

Finally, controversies during creation of the museums was much more common in European museums than in the United States. Most likely, this is because the topic is more fresh in peoples’ minds because it happened in these countries.

The architecture of Holocaust museums throughout these countries share many characteristics. Of the traditional museums, most provide a very modern architectural design, letting the visitor feel the pains of the Holocaust through building materials and designs that insinuate similarities to concentration camps. The non-traditional museums, seen throughout Europe in the locations of concentration camps or other buildings related to the Holocaust work with the architecture already in place, use buildings as primary sources. Finally, the real difference seen between architecture is in monuments and memorials. Those in the United States lean towards teaching the public about the Holocaust, while those in Europe provide a place for mourning. While many of the architectural designs are disturbing, they can also be considered aesthetic. With an aesthetics more sublime than beautiful, the architects and artists who designed these museums and monuments have provided the world with their talent, expressing their feelings towards the Holocaust and what it truly was.

The largest diversity in these museums could be found in their exhibitions. While all museums’ exhibitions are diverse no matter what country they are in, there are four main differences between those in the United States and those in Europe and Israel: liberation, democracy, other genocides, and exhibitions for children and young adults. American museums place a lot more importance on the liberation of concentration camps, while most European museums barely touch on the subject. For example, the USHMM begins its exhibition with footage of American soldiers entering the camps and finding piles of dead bodies and people
barely alive.\textsuperscript{155} Most European museums focus on the camps, and the day-to-day experience of victims. The American museums usually only include information on American liberation, excluding British and Soviet liberations. In taking this view of liberation, the museums are able to point out this country’s democracy and freedom, which could be seen through the actions of the American soldiers. However, leaving out information about the liberations by British and Soviet soldiers leaves out a significant amount of Holocaust history, something that is unfortunate. Aside from the occasional temporary exhibitions in European and Israeli museums, American museums also provide information about other genocides of the twentieth century, such as those in Armenia, Rwanda and Darfur. Finally, in relation to exhibitions for children and young adults, most museums in all countries avoid the subject; however, of the four that do provide exhibitions for children, three are in the United States, while the other is in Israel. The reason for this lack of coverage is that the Holocaust is such a sensitive subject, and curators often struggle to find a successful way in which to present it to younger people, without confusing or overwhelming them.

The differences between these museums, whether in funding, mission, architecture or exhibitions, affects the overall success of Holocaust museums. Each museum has a different source of funding, which most surely has a say in how the museum approaches the Holocaust. Related to this, some parts of history may be brushed aside while some receive more focus than may be necessary. For example, the American museums pay much more attention to the country’s democracy and freedom, attempting to make this a much more important topic in the history of the Holocaust.

\textsuperscript{155} United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, \url{www.ushmm.org} (accessed 25 November 2012).
Now that it can be seen that there are significant differences between the museums of these countries and many of the reasons this is so, it is still hard to conclude how beneficial each of these museum’s missions are, and if some are more beneficial than others based on certain ways they approach their exhibitions. More studies need to be made to find out what the most ideal and successful Holocaust museum would be like. This study looks at two dozen Holocaust museums in five different countries, but there are an uncountable number of these museums in many countries throughout the world. To get a better idea of how all Holocaust museums are created and how they interpret the topic, museums in these other countries should be studied as well. For as Elie Wiesel said, the world “must bear witness” to what has happened, and the most successful way to go about doing this must be found.
Appendix A: Museum Mission Statements

HOLOCAUST RESEARCH CENTER (Buffalo, New York)

It is the mission of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo to:
• Teach the lessons of the Holocaust
• Remember the victims of the Holocaust
• Honor the Survivors of the Holocaust
with a special eye towards serving the community of Buffalo and the Western New York area.156

ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER (Chicago, Illinois)

The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Holocaust by honoring the memories of those who were lost and by teaching universal lessons that combat hatred, prejudice and indifference. The museum fulfills its mission through the exhibition, preservation and interpretation of its collections and through education programs and initiatives that foster the promotion of human rights and elimination of genocide.157

DALLAS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM (Dallas, Texas)

The Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance is dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, and to teaching the moral and ethical response to prejudice, hatred and indifference, for the benefit of all humanity.158

EL PASO HOLOCAUST MUSEUM (El Paso, Texas)

The mission of the El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center is:
• to educate the public, particularly young people, about the Nazi Holocaust as a way of ensuring that similar acts will not be repeated
• to honor those who perished in the Holocaust and those who survived;
• to oppose prejudice and bigotry by reminding the world of the importance of acceptance, the value and dignity of human life, and of the consequences of negating these principles.159

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM HOUSTON (Houston, Texas)

Holocaust Museum Houston is dedicated to educating people about the Holocaust, remembering the 6 million Jews and other innocent victims and honoring the survivors’ legacy. Using the

---

lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides, we teach the dangers of hatred, prejudice and apathy.  

HOLOCAUST MONUMENT (Los Angeles, California)

No mission statement available.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTER (Maitland, Florida)

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida is an organization dedicated to combating anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice with the ultimate goal of developing a moral and just community through its extensive outreach of educational and cultural programs. Using the lessons of the Holocaust as a tool, the Center teaches the principles of good citizenship to thousands of people of all ages, religions and backgrounds each year.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL (Miami Beach, Florida)

No mission statement available.

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE (New York City, New York)

The mission of the Museum is to educate people of all ages and backgrounds about the broad tapestry of Jewish life in the 20th and 21st centuries - before, during, and after the Holocaust.  

FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM (St. Petersburg, Florida)

The Florida Holocaust Museum honors the memory of millions of innocent men, women and children who suffered or died in the Holocaust. The Museum is dedicated to teaching the members of all races and cultures the inherent worth and dignity of human life in order to prevent future genocides.

CANDLES HOLOCAUST MUSEUM AND EDUCATION CENTER (Terre Haute, Indiana)

CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center is dedicated to the Mengele twins who survived the horrible experiments of Dr. Mengele.

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM (Washington, D.C.)

---

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust. ...

The Museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and located adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs: exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art and artifacts related to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as Days of Remembrance; distribution of education materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.¹⁶⁴

MEMORIAL MUSEUM FOR CHILDREN OF IZIEU (Izieu, France)

As a place of history and remembrance, the Maison d’Izieu manages and maintains the Memorial site and develops its activities along several lines.

To perpetuate the memory of the 44 Jewish children, the home director and the helpers who were deported on 6th April 1944, in addition to all children who, with the active complicity of the French State, fell victim to Nazi barbarity, and to pay homage to all those who came to their aid, especially Resistance fighters.

To inform and educate all public categories, especially the young, in relation to crimes against humanity, and the circumstances leading to them.

To initiate thinking on remembrance and its issues, and to link history, memory and transmission of historical awareness.

To foster links of cooperation and exchange with comparable establishments, in France and abroad.¹⁶⁵

MEMORIAL DE LA SHOAH (Paris, France)

The Memorial is a resource center, the first and foremost collection of archives on the Shoah in Europe, but it is also a “museum of vigilance”, designed to learn, understand and experience, because now and forever it will always be necessary to construct “a rampart against oblivion,

against a rekindling of hatred and contempt for man”, to quote Eric de Rothschild, President of the Memorial.  

BAD AROLSEN HOLOCAUST ARCHIVES (Bad Arolsen, Germany)

In its mission statement, the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen declares its commitment to serve the victims of Nazi persecution and their families by documenting the fate of the victims and keeping their memory alive.

JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN (Berlin, Germany)

The Jewish Museum Berlin has...established itself as a special institution on the German museum landscape.  It is a lively center for German-Jewish history and culture and sees itself as a forum for research, discussion, and exchange of ideas, in a short a museum for everyone - young and old, German and non-German, Jewish and non-Jewish.

BUCHENWALD MEMORIAL (Buchenwald, Germany)

The foundation’s [Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation] purpose is to preserve the sites of the crimes as sites of mourning and commemoration, to provide these sites with a scientifically founded form and outward appearance and to make them accessible to the public in an appropriate manner, as well as to promote the research of the respective historical occurrences and their conveyance to the public.  At the Buchenwald Memorial, the history of the Nazi concentration camp is to receive priority within this context.  The history of the Soviet internment camp is to be integrated into the scientific and museum work to an appropriate degree.  ...The history of the two memorials’ political instrumentalisation during the era of the German Democratic Republic is also to be represented.

RAVENSBRUCK WOMEN’S CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMORIAL MUSEUM (Furstenberg, Germany)

No mission statement available.

BERGEN-BElsen MEMORIAL (Lohheide, Germany)

Today the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is a place of remembrance, a place where historical research is carried out and historical knowledge is collected and preserved, and it is a place of learning and reflection.

---

GHETTO FIGHTERS’ HOUSE - HOLOCAUST AND JEWISH RESISTANCE HERITAGE MUSEUM (Israel)

To be a house of testimony for the founders in all stages of their lives and a realm of memory for the Jewish endurance during the Holocaust, to be a declaration of the survivors’ spirit, the museum’s founders, and the renewal of Jewish life in the State of Israel.

To be a Museum as well as education and research center that is dedicated to commemorating the memory of the Holocaust, the youth movements, the resistance and “life after the Holocaust”. To be a museum that works with, lives with and converses with a variety of populations in the Israeli society.¹⁷¹

YAD VASHEM - HOLOCAUST MARTYRS’ AND HEROES REMEMBRANCE MEMORIAL (Jerusalem, Israel)

As the Jewish people’s living memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meaning for future generations. Established in 1953, as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem is today a dynamic and vital place of intergenerational and international encounter.

For over half a century, Yad Vashem has been committed to four pillars of remembrance:
• Commemoration
• Documentation
• Research
• Education¹⁷²

BEIT THERESIENSTADT (Kibbutz Givat Chaim, Israel)

It acts as a bridge connecting the victims, survivors and future generations and houses a unique collection of art work created in the ghetto, where cultural activity was the key to keeping one’s dignity in spite of the inhuman conditions.

Through a wide range of education activities, Beit Theresienstadt reaches pupils, students, researchers and teachers from Israel and around the world in an attempt to perpetuate the memory of the Martyrs, while deepening an understanding of the Holocaust.

The major objective is to preserve and document the history of the survivors and above all to teach and deliver the message of the unique story of Ghetto Theresienstadt. This is achieved through using educational and cultural activities at Beit Theresienstadt, seminars and publication of books, art catalogs and development of educational curricula.¹⁷³

AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTER FOUNDATION (Oświęcim, Poland)

Commemorates the lives of Jewish residents of Oświęcim.¹⁷⁴

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM (Oświęcim, Poland)

The Center does educational work aimed at both Poles and those in other nations. Work is done in close cooperation with home and international organizations to educate and memorialize the Nazi perpetrated mass murder. This, in the context of Auschwitz, helps people better understand the challenges of the modern world. The center educates about all facets of the tragedy of the Jewish Holocaust, Polish victims and Nazi terror during the occupation, the destruction of victims in the concentration camp system, the persecution and mass murder of the Roma, and about the systematic exclusion of entire national groups from society.¹⁷⁵

Appendix B: Photographs

Holocaust Museum, Houston
3 August 2012
Figure 1
Holocaust Museum, Houston
http://www.hmh.org/au_architecture.shtml
23 September 2012
Figure 2
Illinois Holocaust Museum, Chicago
https://tickets.ilholocaustmuseum.org/public/
3 August 2012
Figure 3
USHMM, Washington D.C.
http://www.schaefshouse.com/Belfer%20Next%20Step%20Atlanta.htm
3 August 2012
Figure 4
USHMM, Washington, D.C.
http://www.scrapbookpages.com/USHMM/Interior.html
3 August 2012
Figure 5
USHMM, Washington, D.C.
http://www.ushmm.org/museum/a_and_a/inside2/
3 August 2012
Figure 6
Liberation, Jersey City, New Jersey
23 September 2012
Figure 7
Los Angeles Holocaust Monument, Los Angeles, CA
3 August 2012
Figure 8
Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial, Miami, FL
http://cutcaster.com/photo/100292119-Holocaust-memorial-Miami-Beach/
3 August 2012
Figure 9
Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial, Miami, FL
http://www.chhs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/miami/
3 August 2012
Figure 10
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem
4 August 2012
Figure 11
JMB, Berlin
4 August 2012
Figure 12
JMB, Berlin
http://www.wayfaring.info/2007/05/07/the-jewish-museum-berlin/
4 August 2012
Figure 13
JMB, Berlin
http://www.sacred-destinations.com/germany/berlin-jewish-museum
4 August 2012
Figure 14
JMB, Berlin
http://www.culturevulture.net/ArtandArch/JewishMuseumBerlin.htm
4 August 2012
Figure 15
Bergen Belsen
http://www.scrapbookpages.com/bergenbelsen/MemorialSiteTour01.html
4 August 2012
Figure 16
Memorial Museum of Izieu, France
4 August 2012
Figure 17
USHMM, Washington D.C.
http://www.soulofamerica.com/cgi-bin/slideviewer.cgi?list=dc-museum&dir=&config=&slide=33&refresh=&cycle=off&scale=0&design=soadesign&total=47
17 August 2012
Figure 18
Holocaust Museum Houston, Houston
17 August 2012
Figure 19
Fay Grajower, *The Light for Life*, at Florida Holocaust Museum

[www.jewishpresstampa.com](http://www.jewishpresstampa.com)

5 November 2012

Figure 20
Etudes de Cas: The Drancy Camp, by Shelomo Selinger at the Memorial de la Shoah
http://www.massviolence.org/fr/The-Drancy-Camp?cs=print
3 November 2012
Figure 21
Bibliography


*Forgiving Dr. Mengele*, prod. and dir. Bob Hercules and Cheri Pugh, 79 min., First Run Features, 2006, DVD.


Israel Science and Technology. “Holocaust Museums”.


Phrase Finder. “Holocaust Quotes.”


