

SURVIVORS Faces of Life after the Holocaust



75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller

"It is so important to undertake commemorative projects like this one. Whoever is still capable of telling their story should continue to do so. It is our obligation, in the name of the men, women and children who were murdered, to keep telling our stories."

Naftali Furst, survivor

On January 21, 2020, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Prime Minister of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia Armin Laschet are inaugurating the exhibition "SURVIVORS. Faces of Life after the Holocaust", being staged in the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Essen, a UNESCO world heritage site. Marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, the exhibition is showcasing 75 haunting portraits of Holocaust survivors, photographed by Martin Schoeller. For this commemorative project, the internationally-acclaimed artist is collaborating with the World Holocaust Remembrance Center Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, its German Society of Friends, and with the Bonn-domiciled Foundation for Art and Culture. The portraits are being premiered in the Zollverein from January 22, 2020. Further touring venues are also being planned.

Preserving humanity and dignity under inhumane conditions: This is the experience informing the larger-than-life, close-up portraits of the 75 survivors, which were taken in the Yad Vashem Memorial Center in Jerusalem, where Schoeller spent much time with his subjects in preparing the portraits. "I was raised in Germany", explains **Martin Schoeller**, who has lived in New York for many years. "I grew up with this incredible sense of guilt and shock, which lead me to question my own identity. How could people from my country commit these horrendous crimes? It is very scary to see what is happening in Europe right now, that anti-Semitism has come back so strongly. Now more than ever, I feel a great responsibility to fight anti-Semitism whenever I see it and to do whatever I can to make sure that something like the Holocaust can never happen again. I do think that people have a responsibility for their history. If everybody looked at their own history and tried to learn from it and then went on to use that knowledge to better themselves and to better society, ultimately, I think that is what will bring us all forward as human beings".

It is of profound importance both today and for future generations to gaze into these lined and weathered faces: For the portrayed subjects are among the few surviving contemporary eye-witnesses. Stripped of artifice, Schoeller's photographs serve as an enduring testament of the personal and collective history and convey the horrors of the Holocaust, as no words can.



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"The legacy of the Shoah that these survivors nurtured with such fortitude and commitment is now bequeathed to us, and their hopes for a better future are now ours to treasure and to realize.", explains the Chairman of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev. "At Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, we fervently believe that ensuring that their messages and values are honoured and implemented is a sacred mission for the entire world. As we go forward in the twenty-first century, we recommit to maintaining accurate Holocaust memory and to building more humane, tolerant and democratic societies for the sake of the generations to come."

Kai Diekmann, Chairman of the Society of Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany, underscores the significance of the photographs in highlighting the personal histories of these survivors: "Each photograph conveys more than words ever could. Every feature, presented close-up and larger-than-life, provides us with a piece of personal and collective history. Their faces observe us. Their gazes captivate us. The lines they bear are marks of the horrors they endured, as well as of the triumph of having rebuilt their lives anew. Each photograph speaks directly to our hearts – offering a portal to the vast legacy of the victims and the survivors."

Walter Smerling, Chairman of the Bonn-domiciled Foundation for Art and Culture, is hoping that many young people will visit the exhibition. "There is a common belief that nothing more need be said on this subject. However, that is not the case - as the daily news reports sadly illustrate. Nurturing a commemorative culture is among the most important tasks of our time, and this exhibition seeks to render a contribution towards this objective. The survivors have taught us never to give up and to remain vigilant."

Bernd Tönjes, Chairman of the RAG-Stiftung: "Die RAG-Stiftung is committed to fully honouring this important day of remembrance, January 27, in order to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, here in the Ruhr region too. As sponsors of educational projects, we are supporting this project with the utmost conviction. Particularly young people must continually be made aware of this issue. And more than ever before, we must now take a public stand: Against the resurgence of anti-Semitism and the growing far-right radicalisation in our society."

"SURVIVORS" is a project organised by the Bonn-domiciled Foundation for Art and Culture and the World Holocaust Remembrance Center Yad Vashem in cooperation with the Zollverein Foundation and the Ruhr Museum. Curators are Anke Degenhard and Vivian Uria. The project was initiated by the German Society of Friends of Yad Vashem under Kai Diekmann, and is supported and financed by the RAG-Stiftung.

Accompanying the exhibition is a photobook published by Steidl Verlag, featuring the 75 portraits and their related biographies, together with a foreword by the former Federal German President Joachim Gauck.

About Martin Schoeller

Martin Schoeller, born in Munich in 1968, is one of the most prominent contemporary portrait photographers and is renowned for his close-up portraits. After studying photography at the Lette-Verein in Berlin and Hamburg, he worked as Annie Leibovitz's assistant from 1993 to 1996. Schoeller frequently collaborates with prestigious magazines, such as Rolling Stone, National Geographic, Time, GQ, Esquire, Entertainment Weekly, and New York Times Magazine. Like Richard Avedon before him, he also served as the New Yorker's editorial photographer. Schoeller's work can be seen around the world and is included in major collections.

Schoeller is famous for his 'big head' portrait photos: full-frontal, hyper-realistic close-ups of faces. He photographs all his subjects – whether public figures or anonymous individuals – in the same serial way, using special lighting and photographing in extreme close-up.

www.martinschoeller.com

@martinschoeller

About Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, located in Jerusalem, Israel, stands at the forefront of Holocaust education, remembrance, documentation and research and imparts the human perspective with an emphasis on the experiences of the individual Jewish victims of the Shoah: some six million Jewish men, women and children. This joint project, Survivors: Faces of Life after the Holocaust, embodies the essence of Yad Vashem's mission and highlights the personal stories of Holocaust survivors.

www.yadvashem.org

@yadvashem

About the Foundation for Art and Culture, Bonn

The Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur Bonn (Foundation for Art and Culture, Bonn) is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1986 as a private initiative designed to foster the arts and culture as an essential, stimulating and integral part of our civic society. The Foundation aims to "help shape society", as the great Joseph Beuys once said. The Foundation is headed by Chairman Walter Smerling, who is responsible for numerous art and cultural projects, including the establishment of MKM Museum Küppersmühle for Modern Art in Duisburg.

The Foundation focuses on the conception and realisation of exhibitions, the supervision of the MKM Museum Küppersmühle, the organisation of discussions at the interface of culture, politics and economics and the presentation of art in public spaces. Since its inception, around 300 exhibitions and other cultural projects have been realised at different national and international sites.

"SURVIVORS. Faces of Life after the Holocaust" is the second joint project undertaken by the Foundation for Art and Culture and Yad Vashem.

www.stiftungkunst.de

@stiftungkunstbonn

About the Zollverein Foundation

The Zollverein Foundation is the owner of the buildings and above-ground facilities and operates the Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site in Essen. In 2001 the "most beautiful coal mine in the world" was inscribed in the World Heritage List. Since then the coal mine and coking plant of Zollverein have been retained as an identity-establishing monument, simultaneously offering cultural highlights such as museums, concerts and events. With more than 1.5 million visitors per year Zollverein is the biggest tourist attraction in the Ruhr area and a growing economic hub with about 150 businesses from the creative and cultural industry.

www.zollverein.de
@zeche_zollverein

About the Ruhr Museum

The Ruhr Museum is the regional museum of the Ruhr area. Its permanent exhibition presents the fascinating history of one of the largest industrial regions of the world. The exhibition shows the entire history of the Ruhr area to the current structural change towards the Ruhr Metropolis. In addition to its permanent exhibition, the Ruhr Museum regularly stages major special exhibitions, focusing particularly on the history of the Ruhr area, but also on national issues. The regional museum is a dependent foundation within the Zollverein Foundation and has been sponsored by the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Rhineland Regional Association and the City of Essen.
www.ruhrmuseum.de

About the RAG-Stiftung

The RAG-Stiftung is a private foundation that was established in 2007. At the beginning of 2019, the RAG-Stiftung took over the responsibility for financing the perpetual obligations of the German hard coal mining industry in the Ruhr and Saar regions and in Ibbenbüren. In addition, the RAG-Stiftung supports numerous projects in the areas of education, science and culture in order to promote progress in the former mining regions.

www.rag-stiftung.de
@ragstiftung

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Visitor Information:

Opening hours:

22.01. – 26.04.2020
Open daily from 11 am - 5 pm

Exhibition venue:

UNESCO-Welterbe Zollverein
Areal C (Kokerei), Mischanlage
Arendahls Wiese
45309 Essen

Admission price:

At the visitor's own discretion

Information / Contact:

www.zollverein.de
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Tel.: 0201 24681-444
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Photobook:

Steidl-Verlag, ISBN 978-3-95829-621-3
Museum price: 28 euro

Programme of events accompanying the exhibition:

Advanced booking required / includes a guided tour of the exhibition

Wed, 26.2.2020 | 6 pm

Artist talk with Martin Schoeller (Moderator: Kai Diekmann, Chairman of the Society of Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany)

Tue, 31.03.2020 | 6 pm

Herbert Rubinstein: "The good will prevail. A contemporary eye-witness remembers."

Conversation with contemporary eye-witnesses for school students, aged 15 and above.

During the course of the exhibition, the Holocaust survivor Herbert Rubinstein will be present to engage in discussions with students at 10 am on every Tuesday (11.02., 18.02., 24.03. and 31.03.2020). Together with his mother, the then 10-year-old Herbert Rubinstein managed to escape deportation to a concentration camp and flee. For the past 60 years he has lived in Düsseldorf, where he has remained an active and influential figure within the Jewish community.