PROLONGED UNTIL JULY 26, 2020

SURVIVORS Faces of Life after the Holocaust

75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller



Bonn

Stiftung für Kunst

und Kultur e.V.

"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 were 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 premièred in the Zollverein. 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

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photographs serve as an enduring testament of the personal and collective history and convey the horrors of the Holocaust, as no words can.

"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 and was initiated by the German Society of Friends of Yad Vashem. Cooperation partners are the Zollverein Foundation and the Ruhr Museum. Curators are Anke Degenhard and Vivian Uria.

The project 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

Duration

Prolonged until July 26, 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 Besucherdienst Zollverein T +49 (0) 0201 24681-444 besucherdienst@zollverein.de

Photobook

Steidl Verlag, ISBN 978-3-95829-621-3

Museum price: 28 euro

PRESS IMAGES:

www.stiftungkunst.de/kultur/presse

PRESS CONTACT

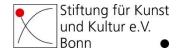
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75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller





Growing up and being educated in 1980s Germany meant being dominated by the fact of the Third Reich.

The children of my generation were raised with a monumental sense of guilt and disbelief – how could my grandparents' generation commit such abhorrent crimes on such an unprecedented, inhumane scale? If the estimates were correct (three hundred thousand Germans and Austrians, forty thousand of them as guards in the camps alone, participated actively in the commission of mass murder), then no family was absolved of verifiable guilt and a role in this unfathomable horror, even if relatively few of those participants were ultimately punished.

My parents' generation was too consumed with rebuilding to engage in a careful consideration of how this could have happened. They lacked the separation and perspective to face the crushing facts. So my peers and I were arguably the first to feel the full impact of what our countrymen had done. And that meant recognizing that we were growing up in a country of perpetrators, with few identifiable heroes. (This is why the Scholl siblings, Bonhoeffer and von Stauffenberg were so vital to us.) It also meant a perpetual confrontation with the dubious thought experiment of wondering whether we would have responded differently than our grandparents — would we have grasped and stood up to the sinister forces driving our country towards this catastrophe?

It is of course an impossible, perhaps unproductive question to jump back in history and time in this way. But it still feels like the responsible consideration, particularly during a moment in which antisemitism, Holocaust distortion and denial appears, despite all sense of rightness and decency, to be reinvigorated in many countries. And so I feel that my own professional and personal responsibility to not only continue reflecting on and learning from the past, but to contribute in whatever way I can to memorializing it.

That is why I was so ready to accept Kai Diekmann's invitation to embark on the remembrance project that animates SURVIVORS, in which 75 portraits of Cooperation partner







Holocaust survivors marks the 75th year since the liberation of Auschwitz. Yad Vashem, the world Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, was the inevitable setting for this work. In the course of meeting and sitting with these women and men, hearing stories that I'd previously encountered only in childhood history books, I was moved and altered. This was undoubtedly the most emotionally demanding and enriching experience of my career. To hear these stories of improbable endurance and the ways in which these survivors preach tolerance and understanding is to feel human kindness reaffirmed. I hope to share these necessary lessons with this book.

Martin Schoeller

75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller





Short biographies (according to press-images):

Hannah Goslar-Pick was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1928. Hannah and her family moved to Amsterdam. They were taken to the Westerbork transit camp and then deported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

"All people are created in the image of God. We are all the same. Regardless of color or religion, we should try to live in peace together. It is very hard, I know, but we should try harder to get along."

Marta Wise was born in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (today Slovakia), in 1934. Marta lived under an assumed Aryan identity. She was deported to the Sered labor camp and then to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp.

"We Jews must be vigilant and always be proud of who we are, because we are the people who survived and they (the Nazis) are the monsters who did not value human life and murdered millions."

Moshe Ha-Elion was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1925. Moshe and his family were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp. He was sent to the Melk and Ebensee concentration camps. Moshe survived a death march to the Mauthausen concentration camp.

"If someone says that they want to murder you – believe them. Do not trust that hate-incited events like the Holocaust are a thing of the past. Be ever on your guard. Be alert and be vigilant. Take care that history does not repeat itself."

Naftali Furst was born in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (today Slovakia), in 1932. Naftali and his family were sent to the Sered' concentration camp. Naftali was deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp and then sent on a death march to the Buchenwald concentration camp. "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."

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75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller

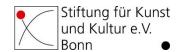
We will soon find ourselves living in a world without Holocaust survivors. This inevitable reality confronts us with challenging questions. What will the face of Holocaust commemoration look like when the survivors are no longer with us? How will we be able to convey the impact and relevance of Holocaust memory to future generations without the eyewitnesses themselves?

As the number of survivors dwindles, and Holocaust distortion and denial continue to rise, we must prepare for a future without them. To the multitude of visitors who come from around the world to visit Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the survivors lift their heads and declare, "I was there. I remember" over and over again — always willing, despite the pain of recollection, to recount their stories of loss and destruction, and of tenacity and hope. We have come to rely on the survivors to connect us to the events of the Shoah in a powerful way that cuts to the core of our hearts and souls.

Indeed, the vast body of Holocaust-era documentation and comprehensive research initiatives form the foundation of examining and analyzing the history of the Holocaust. Yet, we have come to realize that perhaps the story of the Holocaust can best be grasped by internalizing the personal stories of the human beings who endured it. Six million is too vast a number to truly comprehend. The devastation inflicted by the Holocaust upon its victims was so massive, so all-encompassing, that it defies rational understanding. To attempt nevertheless to nurture such understanding, we must connect with the individual accounts of both the victims and the survivors, which together comprise this bleakest chapter in Jewish and human history. Thus, we will hopefully learn how many of them confronted, endured and eventually coped with persecution and loss, and how they grappled with heartrending decisions in a world of "choiceless choices."

In the aftermath of the horrors of the Holocaust, the ragged remnants of European and North African Jewry emerged. They came forth from the darkness into the harsh light of liberation. They were starved, brutalized and orphaned; having lost their families, friends and communities. Without homes to return to, without a trace of the lives they once knew, they were thrust into a cold, lonely reality to begin anew.

Could such scarred persons still be capable of rekindling the spark of life? Remarkably, most of these people, who had been dragged through unspeakable horrors and endured tremendous losses, did not descend into grief and despair, nor did they succumb to bitterness and vengeance. Rather,





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in the spirit of Jewish tradition and ethics, they "chose life." They opted to rebuild themselves and their families, to fight for the establishment of a secure and democratic State of Israel, and to contribute genuinely to the social, cultural and economic fabric of all the countries in which they settled. Many assumed positions of leadership in a wide range of constructive pursuits. By nurturing their faith in the possibility of a better world, their tenacity and creativity empowered them to evolve a message of meaning and renewed purpose for the Jewish people and for all the nations of the world – a message of human decency and dignity.

The compelling portraits in this book capture the weathered faces of the people who survived the atrocities of the Holocaust. Martin Schoeller's remarkable photographs allow us to peer into their eyes for traces of the experiences they endured and be inspired by their resilience and strength.

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. At Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, we fervently believe that ensuring that their messages and values are honored and implemented is a sacred mission for the entire world.

Historical memory is not static. Each generation revisits the past, with its own unique questions, and searches for its own meanings. Often, new narratives emerge. The impending post-survivor era is indeed daunting, but at the same time, it contains the promising potential of new horizons and discourse, in ways and about topics that might have been unapproachable for the survivors themselves. 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.

Avner Shalev

75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller





Portrayals of Humanity

Photos – I wonder just how many I must have seen in my lifetime. People – photographed in all stages of life. Being born, learning, working, loving, suffering, dying – all seen from a sheer endless range of perspectives. Yet each one of us has just a limited number of images in our mind's eye that are so engraved on our soul that we can remember them. Our stockpile of people images. It has impacted how we each see humanity. I am not talking about the personal photo albums that capture moments of our lives past. I mean the faces and figures that have remained in our consciousness through reportage, a biography, an artist's portrait.

If I open my own private photography museum for a moment, images appear in my mind's eye that warm my heart, and then there are others I don't wish to see. There is no ignoring the great criminals of history: Hitler, Stalin, Mao, with all their willing helpers. Then there are the politicians who earned respect, the Adenauers and Brandts, those who flourished and some who floundered. The artists, poets, musi- cians, painters who have enriched my life, the prophets and philosophers who taught me to hope and to love. Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Johannes Paul II.

My brief look around my photography museum only touched on those whose photos were taken during my lifetime. In another wing of the museum, there is a collection of images with special significance: Of those who fell victim to dictatorship and contempt for humanity. Elevated pictures that look down at me as if they were looking at us from another sphere altogether: Anne Frank... Dietrich Bonhoeffer.... Janusz Korczak.... Sophie Scholl.... The number of people who have wished they had been able to set eyes on their elderly faces, creased and creviced by the traces of a life lived. I don't wish to dwell here any longer in these thoughts, otherwise the never-ending gallery of victims appears before you — all those we have lost, especially our martyrs. And they would have been forgotten to history if it weren't for the remembrance we hold them in, as one of our own.

And other images, in the here and now. New to me, and to the vast majority of viewers. Photographs of people whose right to live was once denied them. Germans from another Germany. Deemed by misanthropic tyrants as not worthy of life, placed on a list with Teutonic exactitude, damned to be killed in a plan hatched with Teutonic precision, to obliterate them from the earth.

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Due to the fact, though, that even the most brutal murderers did not manage to realize all their plans, or the fact that some people instinctively fled early on and were able to escape, or the fact that compassionate people sometimes came along who were willing to help while others looked away, and because life has a way of bringing fateful encounters and fortunate coincidences with it — every so often, a child, a woman, a man, a family did manage to survive. We know, from many of the survivors, that their happiness at surviving was countered again and again by an irrational sense of guilt: "I was allowed to live while my mother, my brother, my beloved was not...". Anyone with any empathy will respond in a situation like this by saying: "You can't let yourself think like that. You are entitled to your life and your happiness..." — and yet some survivors remained broken for their whole life.

We now find ourselves looking – all these years on from this heinous crime – at the faces of people who were not consumed by the murderous apparatus of that time. We look into the eyes of people whose glance talks of pain or of the joy of surviving. We see faces etched out by life, compare them to the faces of elderly relatives in our own families. We have little clue which experiences now manifest themselves in which lines and furrows. And we find joy at the thought of all the many years these faces got to see. Oh, how we would have loved to have witnessed the elderly face of Anne Frank, the aged countenance of Edith Stein!

Such thoughts and feelings mark a moment of encounter. We do not know these people and yet we owe a debt of gratitude to the artist who took their portrait. He recognized a special quality in them, and brought them before our eyes in such a way that we can begin a dialogue – with them and with ourselves.

In this silent conversation, something can happen inside us. We become aware – in ways clearer than is possible in our day-to-day lives – of just how threatened our human existence is, our dignity, our life, our liberty. And realize that we always have a choice: To be one of those posing the threat, one of those who lives with indifference, or one of those committed to compassion and preservation.

Joachim Gauck

75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller





"On March 11, 1943 my entire family, along with all the Jews of Štip [Yugoslavia], was taken to the Monopol camp. After three weeks, they told my sister Bella she was being released. My mother pushed me over to her and said, 'Take the little one with you.' We got only a few steps away when they started leading everyone out of the building. My sister said, 'They're taking them away.' I found out later it was to Treblinka. There is nothing left of the Jews of Štip. I am the only one left."

Shela Altaraz was only nine years old when she was abruptly severed from family and friends just moments before they were sent to their impending deaths. She alone lives to tell the world the gruesome truth of what happened to those she was forced to leave behind. Now in the twilight of her life, Shela's memories of the past linger. Like the other survivors of the Holocaust still with

us today, Shela continues to bear the onus of memory.

Shela is one of the resilient and remarkable men and women featured in this book of haunting images of 75 Holocaust survivors from Israel captured by renowned portrait photographer Martin Schoeller. The portraits have been published in cooperation with Yad Vashem to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on 27 January 1945.

Survivors in strength and in spirit, these individuals hail from small towns and cities across Europe and North Africa. Victims of baseless anguish and suffering simply because they were Jewish, their lives were forever altered during the dark years of the Holocaust. 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. These heartrending portraits serve as a warning to us to remain ever vigilant and watchful, and act as both a monument and as a reminder to learn from history.

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Yad Vashem – the name alone is a call to action, based on the biblical verse in Isiah, "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls 'Yad Vashem' – a memorial and a name... that shall not be cut off." Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, serves as a call for all humanity to remember. The mission of the German Friends of Yad Vashem is to ensure that the identity and memory of each and every Holocaust victim will never be eradicated, propelling the German nation of perpetrators to initiate, support and encourage endeavors towards Holocaust commemoration and education.

Kai Diekmann

75 Portraits of Survivors Photographed by Martin Schoeller





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Press pictures

Press pictures are available for download after registration at:

http://www.stiftungkunst.de/kultur/presse/

Free of charge publication is only permitted in connection with reporting on the exhibition. Please note the credit information. The thumbnails are not color-binding.





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Martin Schoeller und der Yad Vashem-Vorsitzende Avner Shalev in Yad Vashem



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Martin Schoeller und Miki Goldmann-Gilead "Survivors", Behind the Scenes

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