Designing TRUTH
Visual Stories of Genocide and the Museum’s Role
“The Rescuers” belongs to a category of exhibitions that contain ‘difficult knowledge’. Pitt and Britzman (2003) define difficult knowledge as being that which signifies both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individuals’ encounter with them in pedagogy.

PITT & BRITZMAN USE THESE PSYCHOANALYTIC TERMS

- Deferred action;
- Transference; and
- Symbolisation.
Difficult Knowledge in the museum context

‘Difficult Knowledge’ within the museum (and also broader exhibiting) context acts as a reflection of society’s changing views of itself, from the triumphant, heroic narratives that dominated much of past exhibiting culture, to include the darker, more troubling moments of history both ancient and living.

(Bonnell & Simon 2007)
Viewing these exhibits is not enough:

they must be displayed in a way that encourages thought and affect to come together.

(Simon 2011)
Silas Ntamari nagirishyari

"...nam nije bilo jasno kako su ovi nevini ljudi mogli biti ubijeni bez ikakvog vahljivog razloga."

"...we did not quite understand how these innocent people could be killed for no apparent reason."
Genocide...

"...means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Enoch Rw

Before the genocide, life in the riverbed was peaceful. The Rwandans were proud of their homeland and worked hard for it. The government provided support and people shared the same values and goals.

From the top, we held them up and prayed for the safety of our family.
The Rescuers exhibition is quite a unique project, in that it provides visitors with both a local and global context when learning about genocide and rescuer behaviour.

In post-conflict regions, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cambodia, this can help expand the dialogue about genocide, and highlights rescuer behaviour as a universal trait found across the globe.

Within the design process, however, this can complicate the interpretive process, because we are effectively representing multiple cultural contexts of conflict.
The number of difficult exhibitions displayed each year is on the rise.
We need to find engaging & dynamic ways to present difficult knowledge to visitors.
We need to uphold the dignity & ‘truth’ of the stories that have been entrusted to us.
Modality

a “social semiotic approach to the question of truth”

van Leeuwen (2005: 160)
MEMORANDUM

TO: All Staff

9 JULY 2015

This year’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in the Park Hyatt, Regent Square, on the 11 December 2015.

All staff, heads of department and management are required to attend.

More detailed information will be sent to you next month.

Sincerely,

Catherine Tattersall
Director
Human Resources
"It is true cowardice to not do anything for someone dying right in your sight"
I could not understand why [the Germans] would go after children. I was living in a boarding school, a very well regarded and expensive boarding school, here in Brussels. The principal of the school had accepted to harbor 12 Jewish children, they all lived with us, among the other children. One night, because they were tipped off to our doings, the Gestapo came and took those children, who never came back. I was talking to the German, since I could speak the language very well, I was translating the situation to the principal. At one point I was so mad, I told the Gestapo soldiers: 'Aren’t you ashamed to be at war against children? They were the adults afterall!' He answered back: 'If you did not want to be taken over by roaches when they reach adulthood, you need to crush them while they are still small'. I’ll never forget that.

We were divided in 3 groups: one group’s job was to find boarding places, another group, that I was part of, went to visit the families, and then there was an office that kept the records. Why? Because when we got the children, we had to save the real family names, give them a fake ID, know the "parents’ or grand-parents’ addresses. Everything had to be recorded in notebooks.

The most astonishing thing from what I remember was that the children never cried. The parents cried when I came to get the children, the mothers, cried. I picked up 2 weeks old babies, and the mothers cried, but the children never cried. I would tell them we were going on vacation, we’re going to the countryside, you’ll eat omelets with bacon, and that would make the parents happy. A good omelet, with kosher bacon.

I was never scared for myself. The only time I’d be afraid was when I had the children with me. Throughout the whole trip, when we had to take the train, because the hiding places were not close to Brussels, so we’d take the train for days, I feared for the children, not for myself. When you are in your twenties, you’re not afraid. I was 21 and I was not afraid.

“The most astonishing thing from what I remember was that the children never cried. The parents cried when I came to get the children, the mothers, cried. I picked up 2 weeks old babies, and the mothers cried, but the children never cried.”

I saw that huge group of JNA soldiers and officers were arrested from their headquarters. I just came in to see who was arrested because I knew a huge number of people from those headquarters. In a group of arrested soldiers I noticed one soldier who was in the same headquarters as I. He was a driver who was drafted while I was working as a civilian professional. When something was a catastrophe for me, for example, we needed to go to some places where I didn’t go, as in that time we would instead of me, it was very hard for me, I didn’t know how to help him. And the German officer came to me and asked, ‘Would you like to go with Hasan?’ I answered, ‘Yes.’ He stood up, I realized that he was quite happy. He had a huge trust in me.

When we went out from that Sports Hall, I went across the street and I knocked on the door of one private building. I asked the lady who opened the door, ‘Can you please give me some clothes? Anything?’ [She gave us] some t-shirts and pants, because he had on a military uniform that was very specific for the special units. Then I said to him, ‘From now on your name is Mir sad. And you are my cousin.’
AUGUSTINE

“It is true cowardice to not do anything for someone dying right in your sight.”

“I saw a bunch of people fleeing and looking for refuge in my house. Afterwards I helped them to flee to the Congo.

A woman came to my home and asked to be let in. I asked her where she had been since the beginning of the assaults and she said she was hiding in a Hutu neighbor’s house.

I asked her why she left and she said to me, ‘After my brother, my Mum and I were wounded by machete cuts, a woman helped us and sheltered us in her house. When we were healed she asked me to work in her sweet potato field. Then one day while I was working, I noticed that my brother was taken to the Kivu Lake to be drowned. I felt scared and ran away.’

I hid her and others in small forest of bee trees that killers wouldn’t dare enter. So they would hide in the forest and spend the night among bees.”

LEONARD rurangirwa

“I took the Inkotanyi’s side by my own decision. Neither Inkotanyi nor someone else chose for me what to do. At the beginning, Tutsi hiding in the forest took refuge at my home but were afraid because they thought that I was a killer too. But when they reached my home and found other Tutsis there, they felt secure and decided stay with me.

Then there ended up being a big crowd at my home. It was difficult to protect them. Partly because there was an Interahamwe called Emmy, who assaulted people several times. So we decide to dispatch the group of Tutsi to different groups and give each group to a family. We did our best to ensure that they got food at home. We talked to them only in the night time because during the day we were waiting for assaults from different parts of the region. When killers came, we organized ourselves to hide. Then they came in big numbers and killed seven of our people.

To help the refugees I used to move them from one place to another, hiding them in abandoned houses and banana trees. It was a big problem to find enough food to feed them because there were so many. They ate once in the night. A group of seven ate at home, another three at my mom’s house, and so on. Some people had shops so they sometimes gave us rice.”

“I was only 18 years old.”
Ruanda
4. April – sredina jula, 1994
» 800 000 osoba, većinom etničkih Tutsija i umjerenih Hutua ubijeno je prije svega mačetama u stotinu dana;
» 2 miliona Hutua je iz zemlje zbog straha od odmazde i većina je nastavila živjeti u Burundiu, Tanzaniji, Ugandi, Kongu;
» 57 000 izbjeglica iz Ruande još uvijek žive u raznim afričkim državama.

Bosna i Hercegovina
» Više od 2 miliona izbjeglica i raseljenih osoba, uglavnom bosanskih Muslimana (Bošnjaka);
» 200 000 poginulih;
» 20 000 silovanih žena i djevojčica.

Kambodža
» Tokom genocida u Kambodži, režim Pol Pota ubio je oko 1.7 miliona osoba (21% ukupne populacije zemlje);
» Crveni Kmeri Pol Potovog režima vodili su 158 zatvora;
» 309 masovnih grobnica sa, prema procjeni, ukupno 19 000 grobnih jama.

Holokaust
1939.–1945.
» Nacistički režim ubio je:
  » 6 miliona Jevreja;
  » najmanje 200 000 Roma.

picturing moral courage


Paul Lowe je viši predavač fotografije na Univerzitetu za umjetnost u Londonu, i nagrađivan fotograf koji živi i radi na relaciji između Sarajeva i Londona. Njegov rad predstavlja se u okviru agencije Panos Pictures, a pojavljuje se između ostalog i u Time-u, Newsweek-u, Life-u, magazinima The Sunday Times, The Observer, i The Independent. Potpisao je vijesti iz cijelog svijeta, uključujući i pod Britanskog zida, oslobađanje Nelson Mandele, sukob u bivšoj Jugoslaviji i razaranje Groznog.


Sonia Folkmann rođena je u Poljskoj 1975. godine, a sa 13 godina se preselila s obitelji u Düsseldorf, u Njemačkoj. Nakon što je završila jednogodišnji internship u fotografskom studiju, redovno se zaljubila u umjetnose fotografije te je odlučila studirati stručno obrazovanje iz fotografije. Nakon sticanja diplome na umjetničkoj školi kao najbolji student, radila je nekoliko godina s raznim fotografima širom svijeta.


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Andree Gellan
holokaust


Foto: Sonia Fullmann
“IT IS TRUE COWARDICE TO NOT DO ANYTHING FOR SOMEONE DYING RIGHT IN YOUR SIGHT.”

—AUGUSTINE KARNERGE, RWANDA
“I came close to him and asked him, ‘Can I take one soldier from this group? Can he go with me?’

—Hasan Jusović, Bosnia & Herzegovina
THE DESIGN BRIEF IS THE KICK OFF POINT OF ANY PROJECT.

FOR DIFFICULT EXHIBITIONS, THE DESIGN BRIEF CAN BE A DETAILED AND COMPLEX DOCUMENT THAT A DESIGNER CAN USE TO GATHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT.
There are different levels of information you need to provide a designer when working with them on a project, and these should be included within a design brief.

A design brief can come from you or the designer can work with you to produce one. For difficult exhibitions, it works much better if the curator and designer work together on the brief, so that as much information as possible can be gathered BEFORE the interpretive stage of design begins.
A designer might start by asking basic questions like:
What is the budget?
What materials will it be printed on?
Who is printing it?
Who are the main contacts?

More complex information could include:
What is the purpose of the exhibit?
Is there historical background information?
Why it is being produced now?
Who are the stakeholders?
Who is being represented?
What will the content include?
A curator might start by explaining:
Ideas they have for visualising their information;
What their institution is all about;
Who is being represented (and why);
Cultural considerations about the project.

More basic information could include:
The project’s budget, including production costs;
Time line of content creation, design, editing and production/delivery/set up;
People who the designer will be working closely with and reporting to.
Resources


