



## Telling Histories

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### The Holocaust in the museum. Changing memory and representation.

Aspects of the history of the Holocaust are told at various locations in the Netherlands and presented in museums and memorial centers. An overview as in many European cities is present, was missing up to now. More than seventy years after the end of World War II Netherlands gets a 'National Shoa Museum'. The new museum - an initiative of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam to be completed in 2019 - has to tell the story about exclusion, deportation and murder of more than three quarters of the Jews from the Netherlands.

In the post-war approach to the years of the Second World War, the representation of the war in museums played a meaningful role in the culture of memory from the outset. However, the attention to



the memory of the Holocaust in museums and memorial sites has been given late shape in the Netherlands and abroad. Only in the eighties, the former Jewish transit camp Westerbork in the Netherlands was designed as a memorial site with a museum presentation. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington has been founded in 1993. Museums as memorial place Camp Westerbork have interpreted their tasks

and roles over the years in a changing society, and the 'museumized' account of the war and the holocaust has changed over time. Influential factors in this have been the changing image of the war and the holocaust, the appropriation of the past, the meaning it has been given by different commemorative groups and the influence of traditional and new actors.

Almost seventy years after its conclusion, there continues to be strong interest in the Holocaust and its presentation in museums and on memorial places. The expectation is that for the time being the story of the holocaust will continue to speak powerfully to the imagination. One significant element herein is the present day meaning attached to this period of the past. In a fluid and multiform culture of memory, this historical episode has remained, above all, a moral reference point: this history gives meanings to the here and now, and - indirectly - to the future. But the musalization of the Holocaust faces a turning point: the memorial places and museums have to familiarize themselves with new approaches. As the generation that lived through the war passes away, on the memories of the 1940-45 period and the holocaust will be transferred in another, more indirect way. The bond with the public is no longer as self-evident as it was. New target groups have no 'direct' relationship with memories of the war. For them, this period is truly past. Not the 'individual memory' but the 'social memory' is leading. New presentations will be based on new concepts, in which authenticity, emotion, reconstruction, experience, visualization, staging and representation will be vitally important. In short, museums will have to reinvent themselves, in terms of both content and design.



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