



Telling Histories

images, memories, narrations

The muzealisation of the Holocaust: “From the survivors’ perspective”



The relation between museums and historical memory has occupied museum studies extensively in recent years. Exhibition spaces are now placed within a broader framework of discussion about the formation of collective identities, the “construction” of the past, the social responsibility of the museum narrator, and the scholarly, political, and social role exhibition representations of traumatic events and experiences can play in ongoing social processes.

This study presents part of an ongoing discussion in both the academic world as well as the public sphere concerning museum representations of the Holocaust and the role of oral history in them.

As the generation of survivors is being lost—those whose role was decisive in erecting monuments and founding museums—historians and museum curators are now tending to redesign exhibition spaces including survivors’ testimony and emphasizing historical recording, commemoration, and dissemination of specific social and educational messages as well as the reception of these by different publics.

What is the role of oral history narratives in the museum environment? What are the cultural processes motivating them, and how do these evolve in parallel with the variations we encounter in museum representations of the Holocaust, depending on the organization that created and manages them?

During the presentation, I shall attempt to answer the above questions, focusing on the new permanent exhibition at the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum and discussing the “survivors’ perspective” within current mnemonic approaches to cultural heritage.

Esther Solomon studied archaeology, museology and social anthropology at the University of Ioannina, the Università Internazionale dell’Arte in Florence, the University of Sheffield and the University College London. She has worked as curator in several museums in Greece and abroad and has published extensively in Greek and foreign journals and edited volumes. Her research interests focus on museum representations, the social and political uses of the past, material culture and social identity as well as on cultural memory and tourism. In 2009 she was elected Lecturer in Museum Studies and in 2015 Assistant Professor in the same field at the Department of Fine Arts and Sciences of Art, University of Ioannina. Her book *Contested Antiquity* is due out in 2017.