

Brienner 45

An art project by
Benjamin und Emanuel
Heisenberg and
Elisophie Eulenburg

en

VERHÄLTNISSE

HERRSCHENDEN

DER

ERKUNDUNG

NS-Dokumentationszentrum
München

Munich Documentation Centre
for the History of National Socialism



Briener 45 – An art project at the NS-Dokumentationszentrum Munich by Benjamin and Emanuel Heisenberg and Elisophie Eulenburg

Countless reports have etched the images and narratives of the Nazi regime into our collective memory. They accompany us and are yet disconnected from our life today. How can we translate the historical past into our present? What do people who lived in extreme situations actually have in common with us? We may speak the same language, but how do we use the concepts from this time and what kind of images do they evoke in us?

These are the questions the work “Briener 45” asks of the viewer. Through the medium of film the distance between the present and history is nullified and the timespan between today and back then ruptured. In how they juxtapose and sequence images and concepts, the films generate a kind of “stream of consciousness” across time. This method has an emotional impact and enables past experiences and thoughts to be connected directly with the viewer’s here and now. One of the concerns of this work is to establish a relationship – based on critical reflection – between our experiences today and the accounts drawn from everyday life and the ideological tracts and depiction of crimes committed

in the “Third Reich”. The films are based on ten key texts from the National Socialist era. From both perpetrators and victims, the original documents relate perspectives from known and unknown protagonists of the Nazi period. The monitor installation counters the geometric structure of the building with a more random, irregular form, inviting critical reflection and discussion. The looming-out-of-the-ground of the work alludes to the earlier, “underlying” use by the National Socialists and the significance of the location (formerly the “Brown House”, the Nazi Party headquarters, Briener Strasse 45).

Benjamin and Emanuel Heisenberg

1 Excerpt from the “Jäger-Report” on mass executions in Lithuania, written on 1 December 1941 by Karl Jäger, Commander of ‘Einsatzkommando (Mobile Killing Squad) 3’

2 Chaim, the 14-year-old son of Jewish farmers, inserted his last letter in the barbed wire of the Pustków concentration camp in Galicia

3 Officer Heinz Rahe writes to his wife on 7 November 1941 from Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine) about the Jewish cleaning lady assigned to his quarters

4 Hitler speech delivered on 27 February 1925 at a National Socialist Party assembly in Munich

5 Statement given by Georg Elser during Gestapo interrogation following the assassination attempt on Hitler on 8 November 1939

6 Radio Message to “German Listeners” by Thomas Mann from July 1942

7 Zlatka Wishniatzky on events in the town of Byten (Belarus region) 1942

8 Excerpts from Goebbels’s diaries, entries on 5 and 6 November 1936

9 Together with other members of the Wehrmacht, marine soldier Karl-Heinz L. observes a mass execution of Jews in Liepāja/Latvia, diary entry from 15 July 1941

10 Letter by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to friends at Christmas/New Year, 1942/43 (“After Ten Years”)

1

Excerpt from the “Jäger-Report” on mass executions in Lithuania, written on 1 December 1941 by Karl Jäger, Commander of ‘Einsatzkommando (Mobile Killing Squad) 3’

Source: “The Good Old Days”. The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders. E. Klee, W. Dressen, V. Riess (eds.), Translated by D. Burnstone, New York 1991, p. 54–55

Today I can confirm that our objective, to solve the Jewish problem for Lithuania, has been achieved by EK 3. In Lithuania there are no more Jews, apart from Jewish workers and their families. These total: In Schaulen c. 4,500; In Kauen c. 15,000; In Wilna c. 15,000.

I also intended to kill these Jewish workers plus their families but came against strong protests on the part of the civil administration (the Reichskommissar) and the Wehrmacht and

instructions were issued that these Jews and their families were not to be executed.

It was only possible to achieve our objective of making Lithuania free of Jews by forming a raiding squad consisting of specially selected men led by SS-Obersturmführer Hamann, who grasped my aims completely and understood the importance of ensuring cooperation with the Lithuanian partisans and the relevant civilian authorities. The execution of such actions is first and foremost a matter of organization. The decision to clear each district of Jews systematically required a thorough preparation of each individual action and a reconnaissance of the prevailing conditions in the district concerned. The Jews had to be assembled at one or several places. Depending on the number of Jews a place for graves had to be found and then the graves dug. The distance from the assembly point to the graves was on average 4 to 5 km. The Jews were transported in detachments of 500 to the execution area, with a distance of at least 2 km between them.

2

Chaim, the 14-year-old son of Jewish farmers, inserted his last letter in the barbed wire of the Pustków concentration camp in Galicia

Source: Z. Bacharach/T. Weissmann (eds.), *Last Letters from the Shoah*, Jerusalem 2004, p. 159

My Dear Parents!

[...]

The camp is situated in a forest clearing. Already early in the morning they take us out to work in the forest. The soles of my feet are bleeding, because they took my shoes from me. We work all day, with hardly any food, and at night we sleep on the ground (they also took our coats from us). Every night drunken soldiers come and beat us with wooden sticks, and my body is already black from bloodstains under the skin and it looks like a piece of charred wood. Sometimes they toss us some uncooked carrots, or beets, and this is shameful and disgraceful: here fists fly in order to grab a little piece or a small leaf. The day before yesterday two boys escaped, so they lined us up in a row, and every fifth one in the line was shot to death. I was not the fifth but I know that I will not leave here alive. I part from you, dear Mother, dear Father, dear brothers, and I cry...

Chaim

3

Officer Heinz Rahe writes to his wife on 7 November 1941 from Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine) about the Jewish cleaning lady assigned to his quarters

Source: (in German): S. Heim, U. Herbert, H.-D. Kreikamp et al. (eds.), *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, Vol. VII, Munich 2011, p. 284–285

My dear Ursula! [...]

We've been 2½ weeks in our city now and will probably have to stay here another 8 – 14 days. What could happen? We rarely

travel to the corps, apart from that we eat, insofar as our stomachs permit, and sleep in our field kit.

The biggest sensation over the last few days was that we got a Jewish cleaning lady. This is how it came about: our place needed another clean. So I told our orderly to get another prisoner. The last one did the job with genuine zeal and at the end washed his hands very thoroughly in the basin. But this time it was [...] a Jewess who had been pressed into work somewhere. [...] Our Sarah, as I call her, was glad to be permitted to do housework. She gets something to eat at midday, for which she's very grateful. Like all the Jews of the east she speaks broken German. When she talks with her younger racial companion, who works upstairs in the house, one can't understand a single word. Yiddish is nothing but a completely perverted German. No matter how often I call her "Sarah", she always answers "Sophie". As I said, she's got one of those typical Jew faces and I therefore find her rather disgusting.

4

Hitler speech delivered on 27 February 1925 at a National Socialist Party assembly in Munich

Source: R. L. Bytwerk (ed.), *Landmark Speeches of National Socialism*, College Station 2008, p. 24–25

In the midst of this confusion of goals, I ask you only to think of Berlin, to look at Friedrichstraße. There you will see one Jewish lad after another with his arm around a German girl. Then

remember that every night, thousands and thousands of people of our blood are destroyed forever in a single moment, their children and grandchildren lost to us. And remember this: one can break peace treaties. Reparation agreements can be cancelled or rejected. Political parties can be dealt with. But blood that has once been poisoned cannot be changed. It remains, it spreads, and harms us more and more each year. If you wonder about the current fragmentation of our people, remember this: the inner discord of the German people is the result only of mixed blood. That is the greatest danger. If this poisoning continues, we will be weaker in ten, twenty or thirty years than we are today, weaker in a hundred years than we will be in thirty, weaker in two hundred years than we will be in one hundred, and the time will come when our people loses its high cultural standing, and we will perish from blood poisoning. Everything beautiful that we see around us is the result of the Aryan, of his spirit and industry. Only the bad is the gift of the Hebrews.

5

Statement given by Georg Elser during Gestapo interrogation following the assassination attempt on Hitler on 8 November 1939

Source: (in German): J. G. Elser, Das Protokoll. Die Autobiographie des Georg Elser zitiert nach dem Gestapo-Protokoll, Königsbrunn 2006, p. 109.

Question: What did you think on the night of 7 to 8 November as you took a last look at your work and the doors had been closed?

Answer: I can't remember.

Question: Did you envisage at that time the impact the assassination attempt would have?

Answer: I'd thought about it a few times.

Question: Did you think about how a number of persons could be killed?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Is that what you wanted to achieve? And who were your targets?

Answer: Yes. I wanted to strike the leadership.

Question: Did this intention remain constant during the execution of and preparations for the plan, or did you sometimes doubt your actions?

Answer: (After long deliberation) I can't remember for sure if I had any doubts. But I don't think so.

6

Radio Message to „German Listeners“ by Thomas Mann from July 1942

Source: T. Mann: Listen, Germany! Twenty-five Radio Messages to the German People over BBC, New York 1943, p. 105–106

The end is near, Germans, believe me, and be of good cheer! Just at this moment I tell it to you when once again it looks like success and victory and conquest for you. The end is near – not yours, not Germany's. The so-called destruction of Germany is as empty a word, as non-existent a thing, as the victory of Hitler. But the end is approaching; in fact, it will come soon – the end

of the repulsive system, the robber, murder, and liar state of National Socialism. An end will be put to its trashy and disgraceful philosophy and all the acts of trash and disgrace which have sprung from it. Accounts will be settled, disastrously settled, with its bigwigs, its leaders and helpers, servants and beneficiaries, its generals, diplomats, and Gestapo hyenas. Accounts will also be settled with its intellectual trail-blazers and shield-bearers, the journalists and pseudo-philosophers who licked its boots, the geopoliticians, war geographers, teachers of "Wehrwissenschaft" and race professors. Germany will be cleansed of all that ever had anything to do with the filth of Hitlerism and all that made it possible. And a freedom will be established in Germany and in the world which believes in itself, respects itself, knows how to defend itself, and which takes not only the deed but, before that, the thoughts into the control of those ideas which connect man with God.

July 1942

Zlatka Wishniatzky on events in the town of Byten
(Belarus region) 1942

Source: Z. Bacharach/T. Weissmann (eds.), *Last Letters from the Shoah*,
Jerusalem 2004, p. 106

My dear Moishkele and all my dear ones,

We are now after a horrible slaughter. On July 25, 1942, mass slaughters took place here, like in all other cities. 350 people survived, 850 were killed and died a dreadful death at the hands of the murderers. They threw them like dogs into latrines. Live children were thrown into pits. I will not write a lot. I think that there is yet to be a person that can tell about our suffering and the blood-bath. We have so far succeeded in being saved, but for how long? Every day we await death and meanwhile we mourn our close and dear ones. Your family, Moishkele, is no longer, there is no trace of them. But I envy them. I will end. It is impossible to write and cry out about our agonies. Be well and the only thing you can do is to take revenge against our murderers. A drop of revenge. I kiss you strongly, strongly. I part from all of you before we all die.

Zlotka

Excerpts from Goebbels's diaries, entries on
5 and 6 November 1936

Source: (in German) E. Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*,
Vol. 3/II, March 1936 – February 1937, revised by J. Richter, Munich 2001, p. 239–240.

Ziegler's reported to me about tendencies towards atonal music in the Hitler Youth, something I've already noticed. The whole youth music thing is far too monotone for my liking, too ascetic, in a word too unerotic, not at all animated by the sensual. But art springs from sensuality. In due time something has to be done to counter this. And I will do so. [...]

Heinz Rühmann tells me of his matrimonial woes with a Jewess. I'll help him. He deserves it, he's a great actor. [...]

Miss Riefenstahl is treating me to a performance of her histrionics. There's no way I can work with lunatic women like her. Now she wants half a million more for her film to make a second one out of it. She's up to something, it smells. I remained as cold as ice towards her. She started sobbing. Women's preferred weapon of persuasion, but it doesn't work with me anymore. She needs to start doing real work and put her affairs in order.

Together with other members of the Wehrmacht, marine soldier Karl-Heinz L. observes a mass execution of Jews in Liepāja/Latvia, diary entry from 15 July 1941

Source: (in German) S. Heim, U. Herbert, H.-D. Kreikamp et al. (eds.), Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945, Vol. VII, Munich 2011, p. 171–172

An oppressive summer's day draws to a close. [...] We stroll back slowly and come across a crowd not far from the beach,

it looks almost like things are being given away here. [...] At first glance one thinks that some kind of sporting event is taking place here. That turns out to be right, a sporting event, but one of a different kind. [...]

Soldiers are standing around, I guess around 600 to 800 men are here to satisfy their gruesome curiosity. [...] Smoking cigarettes and chatting, all the spectators for this "circus performance" are gathered as the first vehicle arrives. [...]

The vehicle stops. "Out, out" shouts an SS man, and suddenly we see 5 male heads bob up. An insane fear distorts their face. "Go, out, get a move on!" Whoever's not quick enough is helped along with the truncheon. [...]

"Move on, run" is the order and the five men are chased into their open grave. The last one, an old, pretty buckled Jew is given a kick in the behind and lands in the trench with a flourish. Here and there a crude laughter rings out. Here and there →

necks are craned so as to not miss any of the spectacle. The five delinquents are now standing with head facing the trench wall.

What are the condemned thinking in this moment?

Meanwhile the executive commando has lined up at the edge of the trench. There are ten men, two for every one. An SS sergeant gives the order. "Ready!" Ten guns aim at the necks of the condemned. "Fire". The shots ring out like the crack of a whip.

The squad steps back. One sees how some of the men turn away immediately, a few others peer into the trench, in which the delinquents are slumped. Now the sergeant steps up, a pistol in his hand. He looks carefully at the dead.

The squad has apparently shot admirably, he moves from one to another. At the last man he finally raises his pistol, hesitates a moment, now, a short sharp bang, and the execution is over. [...]

The squad has closed ranks, talking and smoking. I study the

faces of those mingling around. Lethargy, indifferent or satisfaction is written on them.

A 17–18 year-old youngling standing next to me volunteers his opinion, "these bandits should be stabbed to death, stick them like pigs." In response to my question if he's willing to take on the role of the hangman he replies with a naïve smile: "Yes." [...] Behind me someone asks if a new load is arriving soon!

Around so many minutes have passed when the vehicle returns. And so it starts all over again. Jump from the vehicle, run to the trenches at the double, and a short sharp bang. And five more lives are wiped out.

The new victims have to stand on the corpses of those just shot, a short sharp bang and yet another five lives are over. The home guard men again toss sand into the trench and two layers of corpses now lie there. But another five corpses are still to come, so that three men lie one on top of another. Mass grave!

Letter by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to friends at Christmas/New Year,
1942/43 ("After Ten Years")

Source: D. Bonhoeffer, "After Ten Years", in: Letters and Papers from Prison.
Enlarged Edition, E. Bethge (ed.), New York 1971, p. 16–17

We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds; we have been drenched by many storms; we have learnt the arts of equivocation and pretence; experience has made us suspicious of others and kept us from being truthful and open; intolerable conflicts have worn us down and even made us cynical. Are we still of any use? What we shall need is not geniuses, or cynics, or misanthropes, or clever tacticians, but plain, honest, straightforward men. Will our inward power of resistance be strong enough, and our honesty with ourselves remorseless enough, for us to find our way back to simplicity and straightforwardness?

Art Competition

In 2012 the Department of Arts and Culture of the City of Munich invited ten artists to take part in an international art competition, asking them to critically reflect on the NS-Dokumentationszentrum München and develop a concept for an art project attached to the new building on the Briener Straße.

The art competition was entitled “Causes for the Rise of National Socialism in Munich – Consequences for the Present and Future”. Arnold Dreyblatt, Peter Götz and Elisabeth Lukas-Götz, Benjamin and Emanuel Heisenberg, Wolfram P. Kastner, Deimantas Narkevičius Sigrid Sigurdsson, Taryn Simon, Georg Soanca-Pollack and Timm Ulrichs submitted proposals. The artistic spectrum of the contributions comprised installations and sculptural designs, and included works with a strong conceptual and process-oriented character. Over the course of the competition, a colloquium with the artists and two workshops with Munich teenagers were held. During the workshop the participating artists had the opportunity to discuss with the adolescents how to approach National Socialism artistically.

The jury selected the contribution by the brothers Benjamin and Emanuel Heisenberg as the winning design. The design by Peter Götz and Elisabeth Lukas-Götz was commended. In its explanatory statement, the jury underlined that the innovative narrative form of word-image-collage was convincing, for it combined “a high intellectual aspiration with a strong emotional impact”.

As the jury saw it, “the artists succeed in ‘disrupting’ the perception and awareness of the viewer in a positive sense. In its artistic configuration of historical material, the project seeks to intentionally break open long-established levels of meaning. This productive irritation of conventional ways of thinking and seeing forces the viewer to take a new approach to the topic.”

The Cultural Affairs Committee of the Munich City Council followed the recommendation and unanimously voted to realise the multimedia installation by the Heisenberg brothers on the premises of the NS-Dokumentationszentrum München.

Vitae

The director, author and artist Benjamin Heisenberg (b. 1974 in Tübingen) studied at the Akademie der bildenden Künste and the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in Munich. Film and video is the focal point of his artistic work, and he has received numerous awards, amongst them the Max Ophüls Preis in 2006, the Bayerischer Filmpreis in 2010 and the Österreichischer Filmpreis in 2011.

Emanuel Heisenberg (b. 1977 in Würzburg), an economic historian who studied in Munich and Cambridge, has researched on National Socialism.

Elisophie Eulenberg (b. 1983 in Bonn) studied art at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London and Cooper Union College in New York. With her photographs, videos and sculptures she has taken part in numerous international exhibitions.

Imprint

Overall artistic concept

Benjamin und Emanuel Heisenberg

Selection of photos and editing

Elisophie Eulenburg, Benjamin und Emanuel Heisenberg

Casing for the monitors and technical realisation

Zyklus Metallwerkstatt GmbH

Architect

Nicolas Hein

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