



MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS IN THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS: FROM BEŁŻEC TO SOBIBÓR

International Conference
on the 20th Anniversary
of the Museum and
Memorial in Bełżec

Bełżec
4–5 June
2024



Museum narratives in the former concentration camps and extermination centres pursue two essential goals: commemorating the victims and documenting the history of the camps. Across the source literature it is often emphasised that the power of such sites lies in their aura and the tangibility of the preserved historical traces. Less frequently, however, is the attention paid to the features of the museum exhibitions: the manner of constructing their narrative or the educational potential that lies in their core.

Yet another matter concerns the “recognisability” of the memorial museums as genuine and symbolical forms of representing the past. Many questions arise in this context: How are they perceived by their visitors, the general public, media, or the museum community both in Poland and internationally? What role, therefore, do the memorials have in promoting education about the Holocaust history as well as in shaping the regional and global culture

of memory? What is their actual importance for organisations that deal with researching, documenting, and commemorating the annihilation of Jews, including the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)?

The primary aim of the jubilee conference organized at the Museum and Memorial in Belżec is to inspire reflection on the perception of museums established in the Holocaust-related sites in terms of their exhibitions. The debates will focus on the issues of the exhibition creation aspects (narrative form and content; interinfluence of the exhibitions, post-camp landscapes, and monuments). Additionally, we will concentrate on the reception of their implementation in the social domain (public history, remembrance, education). We wish to analyse these topics through the scope of the last two decades, over the course of which museum and their expositions underwent significant transformations. The impulse for this has been sparked by the 20th inauguration anniversary

of the Museum and Memorial in Belżec and its de facto the first narrative exhibition in Poland, as well as by the recent opening of the new Museum and Memorial in Sobibór nearly twenty years later where an exhibition of a documentary character is presented.

Both these memorials and simultaneously branches of the State Museum at Majdanek shall serve as case study samples. The conference, however, is dedicated to a broader context of influence and perception of exhibitions in the museums established on the former camp grounds. That is why we extend our invitation to reflect on the exhibitions documenting the persecution and extermination of Jews during World War II not only to museum experts, but also to the representatives of various institutions and societies that are engaged in commemorating the victims and promoting the knowledge about the Holocaust – both in Poland and abroad.



4 JUNE TUESDAY

- 2:00–3:00 P.M. CONFERENCE OPENING & WELCOMING REMARKS**
Tomasz Kranz, State Museum at Majdanek;
Sara Bloomfield, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum;
Eric Pickles, Chairman of the British delegation to IHRA;
Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland
- 3:00–3:30 P.M. BEŁŻEC 20 YEARS AGO. ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL**
Andrew Baker, American Jewish Committee
- 3:30–4:30 P.M. KEY LECTURE: HOLOCAUST EXHIBITIONS: AN OVERVIEW ATTEMPT**
Zofia Wóycicka, University of Warsaw
- 4:30–5:00 P.M. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**
- 5:00–5:30 P.M. BREAK**
- 5:30–7:00 P.M. PANEL DISCUSSION: EXHIBITIONS AT MEMORIAL SITES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE HOLOCAUST MEMORY AND EDUCATION – AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**
Speakers: Christian Dürr, Mauthausen Memorial; Jacek Nowakowski, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Adelina Hetnar, State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau; James Bulgin, Imperial War Museum; chair: Łukasz Mroziak, State Museum at Majdanek

The schedule is set for the CET (Warsaw) time zone.

 **Państwowe Muzeum
na Majdanku**

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Republic of Poland

Patronage:

 **National
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5 JUNE WEDNESDAY

- 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. **PAYING HOMAGE TO THE VICTIMS, GUIDED TOUR AT THE MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL IN BEŁŻEC**
Ewa Koper, Tomasz Hanejko, Museum and Memorial in Bełżec
- 12:00–12:40 P.M. **THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS FROM THE DUTCH PERSPECTIVE**
Annemiek Gringold, Jewish Culture Quarter in Amsterdam
- 12:40–1:20 P.M. **BEŁŻEC AND SOBIBÓR MUSEUMS AND MEMORIAL SITES IN THE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION**
Piotr Trojański, Pedagogical University of Kraków
- 1:20–1:40 P.M. **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**
- 1:40–3:00 P.M. **BREAK**
- 3:00–3:40 P.M. **THE SOBIBÓR PERMANENT EXHIBITION AND THE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION**
Jolanta Laskowska, Paulina Pętał, State Museum at Majdanek
- 3:40–4:20 P.M. **THE BEŁŻEC AND SOBIBÓR MONUMENTS AS SPACES OF THE HOLOCAUST MEMORY**
Aleksandra Skrabek, State Museum at Majdanek
- 4:20–4:40 P.M. **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**
- 4:40–5:00 P.M. **CONFERENCE CONCLUSION**

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The event takes place at the Education and Research Facility of the Museum and Memorial in Bełżec, Ofiar Obozu Zagłady 4 St., 22-670 Bełżec.

The conference is held in English. All lectures and discussions are going to take place in a hybrid form (on location and online).

CONFERENCE SECRETARY: Tomasz Hanejko, muzeum@belzec.eu

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