

## The Visuality of the Holocaust Today

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### ABSTRACT

By invoking the term **Visuality**, I am quite intentionally referring to the optical encounter with Holocaust representation in today's world. This notion is a reaction to the common adage that states, people don't want to read the book, they want to see the movie. Holocaust representation in this visual sense is primarily encountered in museums, the cinema, and the fine arts such as painting and sculpture. This latter category, by its virtuality as a highly subjective presentation, is better left for another discussion. On the other hand, and while acknowledging the primary significance of Holocaust historical literature, there is little argument that in the present times the most frequent encounter by the public in regards to this subject matter occurs most often in a museum or at the cinema. Therefore it behooves us to examine the public's experience and compare it to the historical realities. The purpose of this work is to examine the historical evolution of the current state of affairs, and it is a challenging task. The final goal is to contribute to the preservation of honesty, historical accuracy, and, most of all the integrity of the memory of the Holocaust.

### INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the following essay and to begin a discussion of Holocaust historiography, we must go back some centuries and research the meaning of history to the Jewish people. Beginning in the Talmudic period and lasting for centuries the concept of history was disparaged by Rabbi Akiva and it took centuries before a discipline resembling something like history was ascribed to Jewish people. The reasoning, actually multifold, was that the Jewish people had their own unique manner of remembering.<sup>1</sup> Josef Yerushalmi has, elegantly explained what appears as an audacious remark.<sup>2</sup> The arguments against the concept of history lay in the very traditional and long-lasting concept of *Zachor*, or Jewish remembrance. While difficult today to understand this concept, the fact was that for centuries the early sages alleged that remembrance, the most honorable manner to recall the past, was in conflict with the discipline of history. It has been and still remains the task of others to continue and explain modern developments<sup>3</sup>

While the notion of Judaic Studies, commenced developing during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, both in England<sup>4</sup>, Colonial England-largely through philanthropy<sup>5</sup>-and in Germany<sup>6</sup> a mixed

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<sup>1</sup> Azzan Yadin, "Rabbi Akiva's Youth," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory. 1982," *The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies. Seattle: U of Washington P* (1996).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Mechoulam, "What Is the Meaning of Jewish History?," *Mosaic*2018.

<sup>4</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Record of European Jewry*, vol. 16 (F. Muller, 1950).

<sup>5</sup> Norman Bentwich, "Jewish Life in British South Africa," *Jewish Social Studies* (1942).

<sup>6</sup> David N Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

combination of German History with Jews was intermingled; and within decades segued to film.<sup>7</sup>

However it remained to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to solidify a discipline, and this largely to the credit of one man: Salo Wittmayer Baron<sup>8</sup> whose ascendancy to become the first ever endowed chair of Jewish Studies at Columbia University<sup>9</sup> finally blew the referees whistle at the 50 yard line located at 116<sup>th</sup> Street & Broadway NYC.<sup>10</sup>

Baron presented a unique viewpoint on Jewish History, which, while sanctified in US Academia, would arouse controversy elsewhere, known as the Lachrymose viewpoint of Judaism.<sup>11</sup>

### **Shoa!**

Tragically, within a decade of this pinnacle of the aforementioned academic successes, the Churban struck the Jewish people!<sup>12</sup> It is not for us, perhaps for no one, to write or tell about this horror. But if we must use words, then let Primo Levy speak for us: "Perhaps one cannot, what is more, one must not understand what happened, because to understand [the Holocaust] is almost to justify...no normal human being will ever be able to identify with Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, Eichmann, and endless others. This dismays us, and at the same time gives us a sense of relief, because perhaps it is desirable that their words (and also, unfortunately, their deeds) cannot be comprehensible to us. They are non-human words and deeds, really counter-human..."<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said about the Holocaust: "The experience lies beyond our reach. Ask any survivor, he will tell you: he who has not lived the event will never know it. And he who went through it will not reveal it, not really, not entirely. Between his memory and its reflection, there is a wall and it cannot be pierced."<sup>14</sup>

The junction point where the above enters our conversation regarding Holocaust Historiography is at the point when no such academic discipline existed! Indeed, it was a task for future academicians to begin the research and recording of the tragic events. On the other hand, many presciently foresaw the need for action. As the Holocaust raged on, several individuals in Palestine sought as early as 1942, to establish some memorialization efforts or commemorative venues for the perishing Jews and communities. Notably, Mordechai Shenhavi, as early as July of 1942 brought forth initial plans that were presented to the Jewish Agency, at which time he formulated the term Yad Vashem for this function.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Siegbert Salomon Praver, *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German and Austrian Film, 1910-1933*, vol. 3 (Berghahn Books, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History*, vol. 5 (NYU Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd P Gartner, "Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895-1989)," *Jewish History* 4, no. 1 (1989).

<sup>10</sup> Columbia University is a private Ivy League research university in New York City. Established in 1754, Columbia is the oldest institution of higher education in New York and the fifth-oldest institution of higher learning in the United States.

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<sup>11</sup> David Engel, "Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History," *Jewish History* 20, no. 3-4 (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Tony Bayfield, *Churban: The Murder of the Jews of Europe*, vol. 3 (Michael Goulston Educational Foundation, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> PRIMO Levy, "If This Is a Man/the Truce," (Penguin Modern Classics, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Elie Wiesel and Richard D Heffner, *Conversations with Elie Wiesel* (Schocken, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Mooli Brog, "In Blessed Memory of a Dream: Mordechai Shenhavi and Initial Holocaust Commemoration Ideas in Palestine, 1942-1945," *Yad Vashem Studies* 30 (2002).

Once the new state of Israel was established in 1948, the government sought guidance from the Ministry of Religion for initiating immediate measures for memorialization. From 1948 to 1964 Dr. Rabbi Zanwil Kahana was director-general of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on behalf of the National Religious Party and he capably utilized the *Hatsofeh* (the official daily publication of the party) for spreading ideology as well as news; he was thus seen and regarded as a dynamic leader and public figure.<sup>16</sup> Mount Zion and David's tomb as a relevant site was a direct result of the state's search for commemorative activities. This role would position him to become heavily involved with Holocaust commemoration, and led to functions, which later became part of Martef Hashoah Museum.<sup>17</sup>

During this initial period of dependence after the War of 1948, Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetaot began implementing its own traditions, as well as the collecting of artifacts and documents, in 1949. This facility would go on to become the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum. A kibbutz founded by survivors, many of them survivors hailing from the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the members sought to memorialize the past with an aggressive heroic agenda. Thus the commemorative functions were laced with heroism and archival documents began to accumulate based on this ethos. But they also had an assortment of items-things, which would later on be known as artifacts-in individual possessions. More than likely, it was the first known museal site once they erected a building to house them. Therefore, in a very spontaneous manner, various members brought in memorabilia, ranging from photographs to some objects they were able to hold on to, and these were stored and displayed.<sup>18</sup> Displayed in a shack adjacent to the main commemoration facility this was a "temporary improvised exhibition" The building was somewhat remade and in 1951 it was dedicated as the museum building, though for years it was referred to as "The Shack."<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 1: The Shack: this building became known as "The Shack", was dedicated to the documentation and commemoration enterprise inaugurated at Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetaot, installed at the Holocaust and Uprising Remembrance Day, 1951. Courtesy of author G. Mayer**

These early edifices and collections are a reminder that the notion of "survivors did not want to talk" is a patently false premise. Many academicians have researched these premises and

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<sup>16</sup> Matt Evans, "Exacerbating Social Cleavages: The Media's Role in Israel's Religious-Secular Conflict," *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Nechama Cohn, interview by G. Mayer, 2015, October 13, Cohn apartment Jerusalem.

<sup>18</sup> Maoz & Donner Azaryahu, Batia, *Beit Lohamei Haghetaot, 1949-1999 50th Jubilee* (Israel: Kal Press, 2000). P.107

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P.108

described initial methods of remembrance at a very local level in America<sup>20</sup> and an assortment of similar efforts in Israel, again at local levels through Landsmanschaft,<sup>21</sup> which were widespread countrywide, and in smaller centers of religious kehilah.<sup>22</sup>

The formation of Yad Vashem and all its functions are rooted in the "Law of Yad Vashem"<sup>23</sup> passed in 1953 by the Knesset. Explicitly stated, is the following wording: under Article 2.2 "to collect, examine and publish testimony of the disaster and the heroism it called forth, and to bring home its lesson to the people" Thus, in theory, the collection of all materials pertinent to the Holocaust was a mandate. Yet, it took some time to determine the exact functions and purpose of Yad Vashem, with much scholarly debate involved.<sup>24</sup> While there were some items (artifacts), mostly photographs and documents, which were collected, little conscious effort was made for creating a collection for a proper museum. Primacy was placed in commemoration and research.<sup>25</sup> There was no historical museum built until 1973, and in the words of one author "The historical museum, with its educational goal, was added almost as an afterthought."<sup>26</sup>

What is evident, though only briefly chronicled here, is that the concept of utilizing artifacts and visual displays of history was far from any existing plans as regards to post Holocaust academic research or any public display. On the other hand, the Holocaust, as concept, was tremendously influential as far as public sentiment.

The May 1948 Declaration of The Establishment of the State of Israel speaks to this quite well.<sup>27</sup> It begins by stating that it is the birthplace of the Jewish People and the origin of the eternal Book of Books-lines 1 through 4-and then asserts a historical justification and perspective. It continues in paragraphs 5-7 addressing the Holocaust as significant event for Jews and then continues with a call for a Jewish populations and settlement, all the while recognizing its non-Jewish populations and neighbors. Thus justifying this singular perspective, it may be added that many historians have joined the debate regarding Jewish authorship of history especially as regards events particularly affecting Jews such as the Holocaust and non have answered this better than Professor Dan Michman in his book "Holocaust Historiography A Jewish Perspective."<sup>28</sup>

Again, we may note that in the early 1950's even the study of the Holocaust, what will later develop into Holocaust Historiography, was scantily established and uncertain as to direction.

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<sup>20</sup> Hasia R Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (nyu Press, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Judith Tydor Baumel, "'In Everlasting Memory': Individual and Communal Holocaust Commemoration in Israel," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1995); "'In Perfect Faith': Jewish Religious Commemoration of the Holocaust," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 30, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>22</sup> Esther Farbstein, *Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Halachah and Leadership During the Holocaust*, vol. 1 (Feldheim Publishers, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Knesset, "Martyrs' and Heroes Remembrance (Yad Vashem) Law 5713-1953," ([https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/pdf/YV\\_law.pdf](https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/pdf/YV_law.pdf)).

<sup>24</sup> Benzion Dinur, "Problems Confronting 'yad Vashem' in Its Work of Research," *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (1957).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. (In this, the first volume of Yad Vashem Studies, the chairman of the Directorate at the time, a noted historian and scholar, Benzion Dinur addresses the many challenges faced regarding scholarship and incorporating the correct approach. It took years for consensus to build, and this was before any significant museum building or collecting efforts were under way.

<sup>26</sup> Stephanie Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums* (Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2013), still image.

<sup>27</sup> Jewish People's Council, "the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel," (1948).

<sup>28</sup> Dan Michman, "Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues," (2003).

However, at this point in hindsight, we can commence to note that the development of museums dedicated to recording the Holocaust will become a major academic force.

Detailed discussion will follow, but now we must examine the role of visual displays found on film in the world of cinema and television.

Let us begin by reviewing the formative standards that affect moving images in Holocaust representation. Later on we discuss contemporary considerations and offer a critique of current trends. Finally, I suggest acceptable approaches to representation. Most films addressing the Holocaust, as a genre, purport to represent authentic or historical information. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes authenticity as follows: "The term 'authentic' is used either in the strong sense of being 'of undisputed origin or authorship,' or in a weaker sense of being 'faithful to an original' or a 'reliable, accurate representation.'<sup>29</sup> To say that something is authentic is to say that it is what it professes to be, or what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship."<sup>30</sup> Regarding the concept of agency (also addressed in this paper), it may be useful to make a *prima facie* case that the Holocaust was a singularly Jewish event, founded on Jew hatred and manifested as the "final solution."

The genre of Holocaust films and television shows must take into account a moral obligation to the victims. Let us note, that with the exception of original wartime footage, all film is representational. The genre of Holocaust films and television shows must take into account a moral obligation to the victims, and perhaps to history as well. According to Elie Wiesel, "the question is not what to transmit, but how."<sup>31</sup>

In the foreword to the second edition (1989) of Annette Insdorf's classic textbook, "Indelible Shadows," Elie Wiesel quotes the Rabbi of Kotsk: "There are truths which cannot be communicated by the word; there are deeper truths that can be transmitted only by silence; and another level, are those which cannot be expressed, not even by silence." Wiesel adds: "And yet the story must be communicated."<sup>32</sup> Film and television exist in a world that depends on an audience and on economics that may or may not be subject to political or social pressures. These media are also influenced by culture and scholarship from multiple disciplines. The task of a moral filmmaker is to develop cinematic techniques alongside appropriate narrative strategies most of which are addressed through documentary and montage.

Although individuals are capable of multiple interpretations, the ability of film to alter the meaning as well as the psychology of a series of images, by utilizing montage is unsurpassed. As Elie Wiesel put it, "You see, memory is more than isolated events, more even the sum of those events. Facts pulled out of their context, can be misleading."<sup>33</sup>

There have been fine documentaries about the Holocaust on film and television. Episodes in the British TV series "World at War" address the final solution through combinations of

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<sup>29</sup> Somogy and Guignon Varga, Charles, "Authenticity," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/authenticity/>>. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy@In Collection (Authenticity), 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Elie Wiesel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," *New York Times* 11 (1989).

<sup>32</sup> Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). (Foreword)

<sup>33</sup> Wiesel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," p.123.

authentic imagery that coalesce into a product with integrity and agency.<sup>34</sup> There are many other examples of archival footage, which unfortunately are dominated by images of atrocities, given the nature of the crime. Initial experimentation, using minimal footage, used montage as a narrative technique.

A notable example is Alain Resnais's "Night and Fog."<sup>35</sup> Another example of work that incorporates real footage in order to develop a story is the 1959 movie "Judgment at Nuremberg."<sup>36</sup>

Hebard adds the prescient observation " This distinction between the past and the present has become the primary focuses of work concerning the Holocaust."<sup>37</sup>

### **Irony and Paradox**

Having, hopefully presented, the importance as well the beginnings of the public's visual interaction with the Holocaust, it behooves us to say it: that the Holocaust and the historical memory attached to academic historical discourse<sup>38</sup> is also dependent on a public presence and not limited to fellow academicians.<sup>39</sup> This brings us to the recognition of agency; how the storyline-whether it is film or the artifact in the museum- remains faithful to the victims' sufferings and the moral and religious burden bestowed on architects of design. These "architects" represent the makers of film and the builders of museums.

The storyline of the aforementioned is full of unexpected and unintended consequences, as the public became an intended audience.

Some of the filmed and televised sets appear almost humorous in hindsight.

But this was a complicated affair because agency demanded witnessing and testimony, a set of principles that is difficult and laborious and should be full of dignity

According to Yehuda Bauer, "all testimony is archival information"<sup>40</sup> and serves meritoriously. Works featuring survivors retelling their story, often while revisiting sites of past trauma and events, follows an approach taken by Claude Landsman's "Shoah."<sup>41</sup> Such works are distinctly of a different category, but because of its uniqueness, it deserves a separate discussion. Testimony films are reserved not only for museum archives, but have also entered the territory

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<sup>34</sup> James Chapman, "Re-Presenting War: British Television Drama-Documentary and the Second World War," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>35</sup> Joshua Hirsch, "Posttraumatic Cinema and the Holocaust Documentary," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence Douglas, "Film as Witness: Screening Nazi Concentration Camps before the Nuremberg Tribunal," *The Yale Law Journal* 105, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Hebard, "Disruptive Histories: Toward a Radical Politics of Remembrance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog," *New German Critique* (1997).

<sup>38</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (2000).

<sup>39</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations* (1989).

<sup>40</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *The Memory of the Holocaust in the 21st Century : The Second International Conference on the Holocaust and Education* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999). Y. Bauer was addressing an audience at the Ninth International Conference On Holocaust Education (Through Our Own Lens) July 7-10, 2014, held at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

<sup>41</sup> S Lillian Kremer, "Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation," (JSTOR, 1991). Gabriel Mayer, "Holocaust Cinema: Agency, Authenticity, and the Limits of Representation," (2016).

of popular cinema. A film such as "Kitty: Return to Auschwitz" is an early example that achieved wide circulation, and at the same time was able to maintain its moral compass.<sup>42</sup> A most curious and quite genuine example of introducing survivors to audiences is the 1952 appearance of Hanna Bloch Kohner on the television show "This Is Your Life." Although it was maligned later for being frivolous and trivializing, Hannah was not portraying a character but being her real self, demonstrating the character of a survivor in her particular circumstances of life at that time. Her appearance also exposed the audience to a person they had never seen or heard before: the persona of a Holocaust survivor.

The presence of fiction in the visual narrative is inescapable, and needs to be confronted. Libby Saxton makes perhaps the clearest case for authenticity in make-believe: "Fiction becomes the condition of possibility for authentic testimony while a past that is never reconstructed is nonetheless represented through the bodies of the actor-witnesses as they relive, re-enact, are acted by or 'incarnate' their traumas."<sup>43</sup> One reason for fictionalizing the Holocaust is that it is receding into an ever more distant past, and as a result, its meaning and representation become increasingly malleable for audiences born after WWII, especially as they are scattered across the globe. The response to film is often shaped by the local culture of the audience. Consequently, we find that memory is culturally mediated for those affected by the Holocaust as well as for first, second, and third generation descendants.

Perhaps the most unexpected consequences were seen in the reaction to the 1978 miniseries, "The Holocaust." This American television miniseries was broadcast in four parts, on April 16-19, 1978 on the NBC television network. Although the miniseries won several awards and received critical acclaim, yet abhorrent to some, especially Holocaust survivors, including Elie Wiesel, who described it as "untrue and offensive", criticized it.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the miniseries enjoyed unexpected popularity. The nightly viewership in the US ranged from 15-20 million households. So many people watched in New York City when it was first broadcast, that during the commercials the local water pressure dropped because of the number of people using the toilets at the same time.<sup>45</sup>

The miniseries was shown in West Germany, in 1979. According to estimates, 20 million people, or half the population, watched it.<sup>46</sup> When it was aired on German television, police switchboards were flooded with confessional calls during the "Kristallnacht" scene. People who had participated in the actual event were calling to confess their participation, but because of the statute of limitation no action could be taken against the callers despite their confessions. The ensuing furor led the West German government to change the relevant laws and extend time limits to enable the prosecution of perpetrators.

Yet another consequence of the miniseries may have been the announcement by President Jimmy Carter, on November 1, 1978, to establish the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Chaired by author and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel.<sup>47</sup> The Commission recommended

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<sup>42</sup> Tim Cole, "Crematoria, Barracks, Gateway: Survivors' Return Visits to the Memory Landscapes of Auschwitz," *History & Memory* 25, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>43</sup> L Saxton, "Haunted Images: Film, Ethics and the Holocaust," (London: Wallflower Press, 2008), p. 38.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> Gabriel Mayer, "Holocaust Cinema: Agency, Authenticity, and the Limits of Representation," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 1, no. 10 (2016).

<sup>46</sup> Alf Lüdtke, "'Coming to Terms with the Past': Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* (1993): pp. 544-46.

<sup>47</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust 1979* (Commission on the Holocaust, United States Commission on the Holocaust).

establishing a memorial with three main components: a national Holocaust memorial and museum an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience. Ironically, although neither the Weiss family nor Meryl Streep are authentic representations, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is perhaps one of the most significant establishments memorializing the Holocaust, and the television series may have played a role in its establishment.

Any observer at this point will surely become aware that the interplay between film, and then, the museum is interlinked and geographically dispersed. As the new United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USMMH) was being built, it became all too obvious that Jerusalem was lagging behind.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1990s, Yad Vashem began searching for new direction in its narrative approach, and Avner Shalev, the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate,<sup>48</sup> indicated that this should be “a narrative from the viewpoint of the victim as an individual human being who is the subject of history” and, as a result set the museum’s curators on an unusual challenge: to supply a variety of authentic components that make up the exhibition... we decided to launch the effort of collecting Jewish artifacts...”<sup>49</sup> It took years of planning and construction before these new visions were realized.

On March 15, 2005 the new facility was dedicated and opened to the public. The announcement was conveyed to the world at large, including the new theme: “The Voice of the Individual” This announcement was found in the Yad Vashem Magazine, issued in Winter 2005.<sup>50</sup>

The compelling elements of the few example given up to now, demonstrate the diverse and profound influence visual encounters have to offer. Indeed the value of authentic artifacts is spelled out by the very vision of the new Yad Vashem museum. Dorit Harel, who was the first director of displays and one of the initial few specifically involved in designing the new Yad Vashem, has written extensively on the value of artifacts to teach and to convey messages that speak directly to the historical memory of the Holocaust.<sup>51</sup>

The Yad Vashem Magazine commenced a monthly issue in 1996 and is still continuing the monthly issuance. This publication turned out to be a perfect source of data for determining the influence of articles or object to a factor we termed “Artifactuality” by preparing a set of data documenting the ever increasing reference to articles in the monthly issues. The following graph illustrates the point perfectly.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> G. Mayer, "Interview: Shalev, Avner," (Aug. 30, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Dorit Harel, *Facts and Feelings* (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Vashem, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Leah Goldstein, "The Voice of the Individual: The New Holocaust History Museum," *Yad Vashem Magazine* 36, no. 7 (2005).

<sup>51</sup> Harel, *Facts and Feelings*.

<sup>52</sup> G; Mayer, *Holocaust Museums: Artifacts Linking History and Culture* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Scholars' Press, 2016).



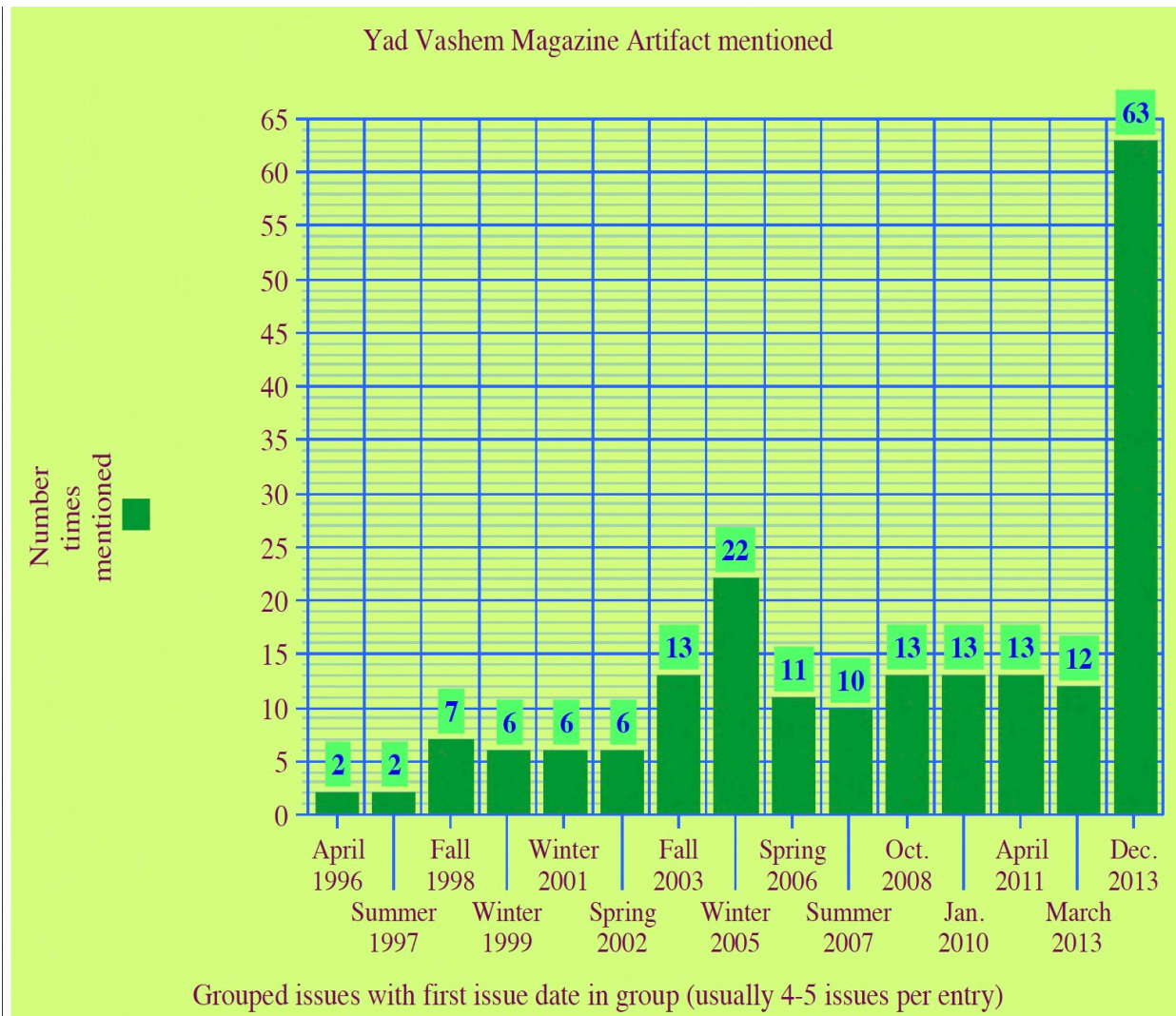


Table 4.2.1 Statistical graph depicting the frequency of utilization of the word “artifact” in Yad Vashem Jerusalem magazine in 75 successive editions.

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The sharp rise in consideration of artifacts as a means of conveying history has not only gained acceptance worldwide, but has also led to new methods in teaching. Professor Paul Salmons, of the University of London, has developed curricula that are centered on authentic artifacts accompanied by a history lesson.<sup>54</sup>

We have already noted the paradoxical nature of Elie Wiesel leading a museum planning committee that was initially stimulated by viewing the Shoa TV miniseries. Similarly, “Schindler’s List” a fictional movie garnered so much public attention that it became a dynamic for leading the average citizen to seek further information regarding the Holocaust. Produced and directed by Stephen Spielberg, the work cemented his leadership role in promoting the knowledge of horrific facts and was one of the dynamics instrumental for the founding of the

<sup>53</sup> The above graphics are created by and permitted to use by author. G. Mayer

<sup>54</sup> Paul Salmons, *Unesco: Artifacts in Holocaust Education*, podcast audio, UNESCO Holocaust Education2013; “Artifacts in Holocaust Education,” (Yad Vashem2014).

USC Shoah Foundation.<sup>55</sup> Cinema became, as long as it maintained respect for agency, a valuable teaching tool.<sup>56</sup>

In various parts of the world, new Holocaust museums were founded with authenticity and historical accuracy as the heart and soul of the founders. A fine example is New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage-A living Memorial to the Holocaust.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, the ideals of postmodernism began to seep into the concepts of history.<sup>58</sup>

Holocaust Historiography was a recently founded discipline and still struggling to occupy a standing in Judaic History.<sup>59</sup> Yet, on the other hand, some academicians were hijacking the concept and using it to promote the notion of cosmopolitanism.<sup>60</sup> Suddenly the Jews and the Holocaust were transformed into a useful teachable moment, never mind the concept of agency. In film there were shocking examples of totally vulgar and disrespectful movies, which exploited the term for a profit. Among the most disgusting and vulgar examples are "The Night Porter"<sup>61</sup> and "Inglorious Basterds."<sup>62</sup>

The rise of Genocidal Studies as a discipline, further consumed the uniqueness of the Holocaust as an unequalled tragedy.<sup>63</sup> It now became, once again, uniquely posed as a role model in a long line of historical tragedies.<sup>64</sup> The massive shifts in academic disciplines have rippled through the general discipline of history. And, as a result, the interpretations of historical realities have shifted as well. Indeed, when Maryanne Hirsch came up with the concept of Postmemory, she was describing the future of history.<sup>65</sup> Today's audience, scholar or public, seems to have developed a new senses of "Visuality" and is marching to the tune of a different drum.

### REMARKS

We are hoping that this paper has made a case for the fact that what is heard loudest when searching for Holocaust representation is, that which is seen by the eye. In asking for a conclusion, we are not able to respond. However, we must suggest that a sense of morality, integrity, and consideration to the agency of the lives destroyed in the course of history, should prevail over the economical and political needs of today's "players."<sup>66</sup>

Do not expect, but still hope that the goodness in humanity combined with academic rigor prevails over money and power.

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel Gustman et al., "Supporting Access to Large Digital Oral History Archives" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2nd ACM/IEEE-CS joint conference on Digital libraries, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> "Heritage and Holocaust on Display: New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust," (JSTOR, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (Sage, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002); "The Institutionalization of Cosmopolitan Morality: The Holocaust and Human Rights," *Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 2 (2004).

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