

gestures of archiving

07.10.2023 - 27.01.2024

Andrii Dostliev, Olya Fedorova, Thomas Heise, Nikita Kadan, Eduardo Molinari, Isabel Peterhans and Simone Schönnett, Esther Strauß, Miriam Visaczki and Claire Waffel

Curated by Nadja Ayoub und Iryna Kurhanska

In cooperation with Jenische Archiv (a project of Initiative Minderheiten Tirol) and Office Ukraine Innsbruck.

An archive is always a form of storage, of preservation, of ordering and structuring, of remembering. Archives shape our present. They are sites of knowledge that perpetuate power relations and forge our collective memory.

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An idyllic meadow between Schwaz and Buch (Tyrol) was once the site of a Nazi forced labour camp. People interned there in 1944 were made to work for the Nazi arms industry in harrowing conditions underground in the nearby mine. Many died.

At the end of the war, the area was declared part of the French occupation zone and the labour camp became a denazification camp named "Oradour" to commemorate a small French village that had been destroyed, and its inhabitants massacred by the SS Panzer Division „Das Reich“ in 1944.

High ranking Nazis, many of whom were local residents, were among those detained in Schwaz at the Oradour denazification camp. In 1948, Oradour became „St. Margarethen“, a refugee camp for displaced persons predominantly from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. From 1954 until the 1980s, the barracks served as accommodations for impoverished families from Schwaz and the surrounding area. The remaining barracks were demolished in the late 1980s.

Today, beyond the kitsch scenic backdrop, like something out of a Tyrolean tourist brochure, there is not much left to remind us of the history of this site.

In 2015, the city of Schwaz erected a rust-brown stele bearing a cut-out of the name "Oradour".

Giving the stele this name shifts and transports the atrocities that took place here to someplace distant, Oradour-sur-Glane. Our gaze is directed to France, to this site of victims, and away from a site of perpetrators right here.

"Oradour" is representative of many places and events in the world. It raises the question of what we are willing to remember? What is visible and what is not? How do we move from remembrance to political imagination and from imagination to political action? For

what do we assume responsibility, or rather: which narrative of history are we prepared to be held accountable for?¹

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An essential aspect of the exhibition "gestures of archiving" is to establish a connection between artistic practice and research in an international context, as well as addressing local issues related to the culture of remembrance.

The invited artists Andrii Dostliev (UKR), Olya Fedorova (UKR), Thomas Heise (DEU), Nikita Kadan (UKR), Eduardo Molinari (ARG), Isabel Peterhans (CHE), Simone Schönnett (AUT), Esther Strauß (AUT), Miriam Visaczki (DEU), and Claire Waffel (DEU) show various approaches and methods in their works, exploring forms of memory culture, history, politics, and territory.

They tell a plural story from a diverse range of social, cultural and political contexts, spanning the spectrum from the local *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (process of coming to terms with the past), the search for acknowledgement, various dictatorships of the world through to the current war in Ukraine, thus providing an insight into the burning issues of our time.

This exhibition is part of the cooperation project "Memories of Memories" of the Tiroler Landesmuseum with numerous museums in the region (Klangspuren Schwaz, Kunstraum Schwaz, Museum der Völker, Rabalderhaus, Toni Knapp Haus, and the Stadtarchiv Schwaz, Klocker Museum in Hall), as well as in Innsbruck-city, including the Institute of Design of the Faculty of Architecture and Tyrolean Regional Theatre.

¹ see Arye Wachsmuth: Tirol: Fehlendes Geschichtsbewusstsein, 19.9.2022, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000139202165/tirol-fehlendes-geschichtsbewusstsein> (most recently visited on 25.09.2023)