

Aura versus Dialogue

Displaying Nazi Objects in the Exhibition

*Disposing of Hitler: Out of the Cellar, Into the Museum*¹

“Where and how can I ‘dispose’ of books from the Nazi era, including *Mein Kampf*, which must all have been owned by my grandparents or the family back then, but which really no longer belong in our attic. And dubious collectors making a profit on them, I don’t want that either. Whether the books have any ‘museum value’ is beyond my modest level of knowledge. With many thanks in advance and best wishes.”²

Every week, offers for possible additions to the collection arrive at the House of Austrian History (hdgö) in Vienna, the republic’s first federal museum dedicated to contemporary history, opened in 2018 (with the legal mission to constitute a “forum for discussion” of Austrian history from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, embedded in international contexts).³ With remarkable regularity, these are objects with a connection to National Socialism, such as those mentioned in the above-quoted email, dated 30 August 2021. This shows that more than 75 years after the end of Nazi rule, its material legacy is still ever-present. People in Austria encounter these objects in a range of different contexts – in their own cellars, via online trading, at flea markets, in libraries, at their place of work, or even in the garbage. Irrespective of age, background, or family links to National Socialism, people find themselves in

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- 1 We are grateful for the contributions of Sarah von Holt and Dominik Ivancic in researching material and jointly developing this exhibition and to Joanna White for the translation of many parts of this text from German. In this paper, we also revisit considerations which we have already published in: Monika Sommer/Louise Beckershaus/Stefan Benedik/Markus Fösl/Laura Langeder/Eva Meran (eds.), *Disposing of Hitler. Out of the Cellar, Into the Museum*, Vienna 2021.
- 2 Letter accompanying an anonymous donation by postal mail, House of Austrian History, hdgoe-000-501/a.
- 3 Federal law on federal museums, Bundesmuseen-Gesetz 2002, BGBl. I Nr. 20/2016, 1–4. https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_I_20/BGBLA_2016_I_20.pdf#sig=26 (26 November 2022).

situations where they are forced to come to grips with Nazi artefacts and their future whereabouts. The wider social question of how to deal with such objects is often a fraught one. Even today, the emotions that long characterized discussions about Austria's Nazi past continues to inhibit broad-ranging analytical debate. No matter whether these objects are found in a newly bought house or as part of an inheritance, being confronted with a Nazi artefact often triggers a strong reaction, which might range from psychological strain to fetishization. Objects come to us – the House of Austrian History – in a variety of ways: some people contact us, offering their items as a donation and seeking dialogue. Others simply leave the objects at the ticket desk with no prior warning, commentary, or information, or send objects to us in the post – sometimes anonymously. Still others come to the museum on the advice of an academic or as the result of their own research. Frequently people also try to sell us Nazi memorabilia – we do not buy it in order not to support what is a problematic trade.⁴

The House of Austrian History is committed to an understanding of itself as a museum of the twenty-first century and to developing its work on the basis of the Code of Ethics set out by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). This Code states: “Interaction with the constituent community and promotion of their heritage is an integral part of the educational role of the museum.”⁵ This dialogue with the public, in whose ownership the museum lies, represents a special task for us. The vast majority of all objects held by the hdgö have come into the collection as donations from private individuals. National Socialism is part of our history and has left material traces. Many people do not want material witnesses to this violent regime in their homes (anymore). They come to us, as a relatively newly founded museum of contemporary history, seeking a site where a critical evaluation of this burdened heritage can take place. The many potential acquisitions of objects connected to National Socialism are frequently challenging. Which of these objects should be preserved for the future, and for what reasons? How can we preserve and exhibit these objects in order for them to add to a critical understanding of the past? With the exhibition *Disposing of Hitler: Out of the Cellar, Into the Museum*, the House of Austrian History reveals a snapshot of its work, reflects on an important aspect of its social mission, and contributes to the debate about how society currently deals with the legacy of National Socialism.

4 Sammlungskonzept des Hauses der Geschichte Österreich, <https://www.hdgoe.at/sammlung> (15 February 2022).

5 International Council of Museums, Code of Ethics, <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/> (22 March 2022). See also: Gary Ethson, *Museum Ethics in Practice*, Abingdon/New York 2017, 176–177.

What would you do? Information, confrontation, discussion

The question at the centre of this exhibition is how Austrian society should handle the material legacy of the Nazi era. This question is one faced not only by museums and scientific research institutions but by individuals and organizations in a whole range of contexts. Taking this as our starting point, the education team at the House of Austrian History developed an interactive exhibition area that would both inform and challenge visitors – and prompt discussion. The area presents visitors with different examples of how individuals and institutions have dealt with National Socialist remnants and invites visitors to think about what they would do. They are faced with an object of the Nazi era and are asked to decide: preserve, sell, or destroy? The individual decisions taken by different visitors are put on show to encourage collective and open debate about how the ongoing presence of the Nazi past is dealt with today.

We have identified three fields of activity in which Nazi objects currently play a role: “Preserve”, “Sell”, and “Destroy”. The three chapters in the interactive section of the exhibition each deal with one of these current approaches to Nazi objects. They feature individual, institutional, and artistic positions and cover a broad spectrum of interactions with remnants of the Nazi era. We have chosen an investigative approach regarding the research for the three chapters, meaning that we asked curious questions that aim to produce an analytical and structured presentation of the findings. For this purpose, we went to flea markets and antique shops, contacted organizations and government ministries, visited military bases and a castle, delved into dubious online worlds, and met with people behind online trading platforms and charitable house clearance services. The content we ultimately prepared for the exhibition offers selective insights. The aim was to keep the quantity of information manageable while nevertheless give an overview of the extent of each field of activity, thus informing and empowering visitors to make their own decisions in the interactive area.

At the heart of this exhibition area are the decisions made by the visitors. Right at the beginning of the exhibition, visitors are invited to take one (or several) of a total of ten different object cards and, at the end, to assign these to one of the above-mentioned sections. Do visitors choose to preserve the object in question, sell it, or destroy it? And why? The front of each card features a description and illustration of the object. The back provides a fictitious account of how the object was found. Some of the more specialist terms are explained in footnotes, which serve as a glossary. Information is also given about what the object is made from and its estimated monetary value on the black market. Visitors are invited to write down their decision on the object card and add the reasons for their choice. Then they can put the card in the chosen section on the boards provided. This renders the decisions visible

and comparable, and illustrates the diversity of motives. The examples presented in the exhibition provide a context for visitors' individual decisions and prevent them from appearing arbitrary. Over the course of the exhibition, more and more decisions and motives become visible: what do different visitors decide to do about the same object? What role does sale value play, how important is the context in which something was used, and does a potential personal connection affect the visitors' decision? The invitation to get involved in the exhibition through a decision about a Nazi object makes people talking and allows them to reflect on their own standpoint. It encourages visitors to think about what factors determine their decisions – and how they come about. A space thus emerges that facilitates a differentiated discussion and ongoing collective thinking about the socio-political question posed at the start of this paper: what should we do with the material legacy of the Nazi era?⁶

Confrontation in ten object cards, for visitors and exhibition makers

The decision to use illustrations rather than photographs on the object cards was deliberate. Firstly, so as not to reference a real object for which a decision has already been made, and secondly to have some influence over the effect of the image. How can we break with Nazi aesthetics and propaganda in an illustration without rendering the object harmless? How should we deal with Nazi symbols such as swastikas, runes, or death's heads? How realistic must the reproduction be in order to trigger a sense of confrontation in visitors and engage them in genuine debate?⁷

In putting together the stories of discovery, our aim was to reflect the diversity of lived realities in Austrian society – the stories feature different financial realities as well as differences in the ways family biographies are entangled with the Nazi era. The object cards mean that from the outset visitors are confronted with the fact that – in theory – they too could be in the situation of having to find a way to deal with a Nazi artefact. The object cards thus also demonstrate that the topic of the exhibition is something that not only affects museums but society as a whole.

6 Ingrid Holzschuh/Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber (eds.), *Auf Linie. NS-Kunstpolitik in Wien*, Die Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, Wien 2021; Museumsverband des Landes Brandenburg (ed.), *Entnazifizierte Zone? Zum Umgang mit der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus in ostdeutschen Stadt- und Regionalmuseen*, Bielefeld 2015.

7 Thanks to our illustrator Ilona Stütz, who has more than done justice to the difficult task of breaking the Nazi aesthetic but not trivializing it.



Figure 1: Exhibition view of *Disposing of Hitler*. *Out of the Cellar, into the Museum House of Austrian History*, 2021/2022, photograph: Klaus Pichler/hdgö

Exhibiting the discussion, not the object

The numerous objects with connections to the Nazi era that the hdgö has received provided the initial impetus for this temporary exhibition, which sheds light on the museum's mission and role and, in doing so, seeks to make its work transparent. There are not only challenges in collecting Nazi objects for the museum but also in exhibiting these historically charged items. The aura attributed to original objects prevents a critical engagement with Nazism and its crimes. Even seemingly banal objects create connections to totalitarianism, extreme propaganda, rabble-rousing, and – usually indirectly – to the Shoah as a central point of reference in socio-political debates within societies with shared responsibility for Nazi crimes and in European states more generally (in the sense of what Dan Diner has termed a “rupture in civilization”).⁸

8 “Zivilisationsbruch”, Dan Diner, *Zwischen Aporie und Apologie. Über Grenzen der Historisierbarkeit des Nationalsozialismus*, in: Dan Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, Frankfurt am Main 1987, 62–73, 72–73.

The exhibition presents 14 objects or groups of objects that were incorporated in the public collection as witnesses to the past. Our selection focused, first, on the biography and reception of objects. We chose artefacts which make visible that most items of Nazi material culture were in fact still or re-used after the end of Nazi rule in 1945. Second, we focused on mass objects which make individual stories tangible, and, third, we prioritized objects that at first glance appear benign or even innocent but still served as transmitters of Nazi ideology over boldly propagandistic objects. Creating transparency with regard to internal decision-making processes is one of the defining features of a twenty-first-century museum that understands itself as a service institution and strives to be as open and accessible as possible. The exhibition illustrates this concept. The objects are shown as they are when they arrive at the museum, in a transitional stage between a remnant and an artefact in a collection. Placed on a work table, visitors are able to examine them critically from all sides. The design, therefore, recreates the moment in which the collections team evaluate and discuss the objects. The acquisition decision-making process revolves around five key questions, the answers to which have been expanded to create the exhibition texts. What is this object? What does this object mean? Who used this object and how? What story does this object tell? How can this object be used in the Museum?

Unsettling objects

The 14 exhibits from our collection are ordinary, sometimes inconspicuous, objects that reflect on people's everyday life in a totalitarian regime. They represent National Socialism as a mass phenomenon that penetrated society and has left traces until today, not only within families but also in the public space. Except for two bronze heads portraying Adolf Hitler, we chose not to display objects that might be understood as sensational or representative of the biography of prominent leading figures of National Socialism. Similarly to the decision made on whether or not to collect an object, the exhibits have been picked according to their ability to demonstrate how people chose to deal with National Socialism then and now. Objects on display range from a propaganda sticker album, later used as a reference for costumes in historic movies, to a microphone which has for decades been rumoured to have been used by Adolf Hitler. We exhibit fundraising badges, whose power to spread ideological messages is hidden behind innocent depictions, as well as a commemorative medal, engraved decades after the Nazi regime for commercial sale. Another noteworthy object is a piece of furniture from the lodging of a Nazi organization, upcycled by a Jewish family upon their return from exile.

To go into detail about exhibited objects, we will briefly describe two examples that relate to the question of how to exhibit a history of violence. A Wehrmacht dress bayonet with NS-symbols etched in after 1945 is a telling case. The donor's father carried this blade as a young Wehrmacht soldier. His grandfather later had the inscription "souvenir of my time in the service" etched on it. This turned a mass produced item into an object of individual memory. The donor says that, after the war, his father kept the knife in a drawer that was unreachable for him as a child. He eventually found the bayonet among his mother's belongings after her death. The donor relates that the Nazi symbols always made the knife seem menacing. Later, after he became a historian, it was a reminder of his own family's proximity to Nazi ideology. The museum label of the exhibit argues that such an object can be used to illustrate the way Nazi society was organized according to military principles. It can also be exhibited to discuss the way individual soldiers and their families remembered the Second World War – and for both reasons it seems to be worth displaying, as it appears to (and has proved to) enable discussions. However, we are also opening up the debate to the public of how to actually put such an object on show. Therefore, the exhibition text reads: "Even if this blade was not designed to kill, it poses a challenge to a museum: how can you exhibit a weapon without making violence seem attractive?" To pose this question here was also the result of preliminary discussions among our whole team about how to integrate actual weapons or even just illustrations of them in an exhibition: show-casing or staging them in a way that irritates hegemonic perceptions may prove counter-productive in the sense that it makes them even more eye-catching or attractive. On the other hand, presenting them in an everyday setting as if just put on a desk would create a *mise-en-scène* with the visitor who would be represented in the position of someone who would have just put the weapon down or almost be invited to feel as if they could pick it up. In the end, we opted for a presentation between these two approaches, putting the knife almost, but not entirely, parallel to the showcase's edge with the knife handle to the left, so as to avoid putting it symbolically "in reach", at least for the right-handed majority of visitors.

Another example are three photo albums compiled by an Austrian Wehrmacht soldier. Between 1957 and 1962 he sorted the pictures he had taken, putting them in order and labelling them. This created an apparently seamless narrative about his participation in the war as an officer from 1941 to 1945. Pointing towards the inclusion of the history of the Wehrmacht into Austrian military history, several modern Austrian Armed Forces stickers and one with symbols of the Habsburg Monarchy decorate the cover. The donor told the museum that his father often referred to this album when talking about the war. Even as a child, however, the donor suspected that these were sugar-coated memories. When he asked questions, he was only given

vague answers. Like many other soldiers, the father presented the war as an adventure in distant lands. Another typical approach is his tendency to omit violence and war crimes from his – oral, written, and visual – narratives. Photo albums are valuable artefacts in an exhibition on memory in Austria in general because they can visualize connections between private photography, propaganda, and memory. Not only are they representative of hegemonic ways in which former Wehrmacht soldiers later presented the war. Such albums also influenced how families imagined the reality of war. The justification or absence of violence also helped fuel the myth of a “clean” Wehrmacht, making them important objects in exhibitions on contemporary history. This was shown for example in the famous “Wehrmacht” exhibitions, where photos created by the perpetrators themselves became key evidence.⁹ The late onset of the visual turn in German speaking contemporary history has rediscovered them, taking into account their production, visual and narrative construction, their reception and their ongoing biography as objects.¹⁰ Recent studies have looked at photo albums as specific, multimedia objects, constructed by medially different and often conflicting narratives and thus providing a specific insight into how memory is formed and transformed within families.¹¹ This increased interest in photographs and albums in research and museums has also brought about a shift in standards by which they and their presentation is judged. This was one of the reasons why we decided on displaying this specific set of albums in this exhibition rather than choosing one that includes graphic depictions of violence, thereby avoiding to stage the perpetrator’s gaze and humiliating the victims once again. However, we presented pages in the showcase that exemplify the blatant whitewashing of the war, linking them to the exhibition text: “While violence mostly remained invisible, war was presented as a kind of adventure trip.”

When such objects are being displayed at a museum, visitors often experience them as authoritative and charismatic. Walter Benjamin attributes an aura to objects displayed that appeals to the object’s observer.¹² In many cases this aura can support an exhibition narrative by drawing visitors in and adding to a unique museum experience.

9 Petra Bopp, *Fremde im Visier. Fotoalben aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bielefeld 2009; Markus Wurzer, *Fotografie*, in: Marcus Gräser/Dirk Rupnow (eds.), *Österreichische Zeitgeschichte – Zeitgeschichte in Österreich, eine Standortbestimmung in Zeiten des Umbruchs*, Vienna/Cologne 2021, 448–466, 453–455, doi: 10.7767/9783205209980.

10 See for instance the very recent volume of the journal *Zeitgeschichte* solely dedicated to this group of object, *Zeitgeschichte 2/2022*, edited by Vida Bakondy/Lukas Meissel/Eva Tropper/Adina Seeger, titled “Fotoalben als Quellen der Zeitgeschichte” (Photo albums as sources of contemporary history).

11 In the context of both mentioned objects, the knife and the photo albums, we are especially grateful for the contributions of and discussions with Markus Wurzer from which this exhibition benefited greatly.

12 Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Benjamin’s Aura*, in: *Critical Inquiry* 34/2 (2008), 336–375, doi: 10.1086/529060.

rience. However, when exhibiting objects connected to National Socialism this alleged aura bears the risk of providing a reference point for glorification and identification, and, in the worst scenario, a gate to reinforce a violent ideology. Thus, finding a way to avoid adding any positive appeal to these objects was one of the main objectives in creating this exhibition.¹³ In order to cancel out the aura, the symbolism and the propaganda, as a team of curators we decided in favour of a calm and sober view of the objects. We have given them only limited space in the showcases, have not used lighting to accentuate them, and without exception we have placed them on the base of the display cabinet rather than on a raised pedestal. The display cabinets are designed as wooden tables, so that the objects sit at a familiar height. Objects are not arranged for presentation but put in their showcases as they would be put on a desk for assessment and discussion. Visitors should have the opportunity to assess the object, just as the museum team had that chance when we decided to accept it into the collection. All-glass display covers allow to see the objects from (almost) all directions, and thus to have full view of all parts of the object including damages or changes. This distinct exhibition design¹⁴ and the carefully considered graphics emphasize commentary, knowledge, criticism, and discussion to counteract the aura of the objects.

Exhibiting National Socialism without the grey

In order to emphasize that debates around objects and context happen in the here and now, we chose a range of colours with a contemporary look for the exhibition. Another important factor for this decision was to avoid reproducing the visual language of Nazi propaganda, as well as an aesthetic associated with archives and thus with historical research. What was perhaps the most difficult design question to solve was the search for a dominant but symbolically neutral colour to frame the exhibition space. The patterned grey, green and blue carpet creates an office setting and signals that the main focus of the exhibition is not the objects but rather their

13 We discussed how one could exhibit the objects in all of the cases individually, and explicitly, titled “How can this object be used in a museum?”. In doing so, we were drawing on the productive discussions in that field. To name but a few: Rosemarie Burgstaller, *NS-Feindbild-Ausstellungen 1933–1945. Propaganda, “Volksgemeinschaft” und visuelle Gewalt*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna 2012; Birgit Kirchmayr, *Nationalsozialismus ausstellen. Überlegungen zu den Herausforderungen von Zeitgeschichte, Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur*, in: *Jahresschrift des Salzburg Museum, Salzburg 2007*, 39–42; Katja Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust. Museale Repräsentationen zwischen Individualisierung, Universalisierung und Nationalisierung*, Göttingen 2012.

14 Thanks to the architects Gabu Heindl and Hannah Niemand, who designed the exhibition in the complex spatial context of the Alma Rosé-Plateau in den Neue Burg.

context and the discussions around them. The contemporary colour palette is also shaping the exhibition panels and texts. Using recurring colours for recurring questions guides the narrative and offers orientation.¹⁵ The colours, and especially the carpet, also irritate the Late Historicism and splendour of the staircase of the Neue Burg. This specific exhibition space connects directly to one of the most significant sites of Austrian ‘national’ memory: the Neue Burg palace on Heldenplatz square functions as a symbol of the country’s National Socialist history. From the plateau on which this exhibition is hosted, one can access the area above the building’s main entrance often described as the “Hitler balcony”. It was from this spot, on 15 March 1938, that Adolf Hitler announced to a jubilant crowd of over 200,000 followers that Austria was now part of the National Socialist German Reich. Currently, this “balcony” is closed to the public, but the House of Austrian History is dealing with its history and possible future as part of this and future exhibitions at this site.

When the museum’s collection team discusses whether or not a donation should be accepted, the object is not considered as a stand-alone piece: many are acquired as part of a bundle that includes objects from other eras. In the exhibition, we show the extent of the acquisition as a whole by exhibiting the packaging in which it arrived. This sheds light on historical continuities and the casualness with which many of these objects were preserved, turn up in the present or indeed remain hidden. This is illustrated perfectly by the light bulb box we have chosen as the main image for the exhibition. A donor put the objects, which she had unwillingly inherited from her grandfather, in this box and labelled it “Nazi filth” (“Nazi Dreck”). In doing so, she not only devalued the various badges it contained but also classified them. Without this relevant knowledge, what at first glance appear to be unpolitical and childish motifs might otherwise not be recognized as the products of Nazi propaganda at all.

Disrupting objects, not destroying them

On the Alma-Rosé-Plateau of the Neue Burg in Vienna, where the exhibition is located, the lighting is very difficult to control. To put original objects on display there unprotected would mean that in extreme cases images and text would fade. Whether the possible destruction of these Nazi relicts by exhibiting them was acceptable – even preferable – was keenly discussed by the exhibition team. However, the disadvantages of this option are clear: any damage to a Nazi object can also be characterized as destroying evidence and lessens the value of the original for research

15 Thanks to Maria Kanzler and Theresa Hattinger, who gave the exhibition its sensitive graphics.

or other forms of critical exploration. The developments in educational and exhibition standards over recent decades illustrate that today it is impossible for us to predict how future generations will use the objects. Responsible exhibition practice must therefore always ensure that objects deemed worthy of the museum are preserved, not least because as part of Austria's Federal Collections, the objects in the collection of the hdgö are protected under a monument preservation order. Therefore, our decision was to disrupt the objects in the ways described above, to irritate the expectations towards conventional presentation of museum artefacts – but to keep their material integrity intact.

Our in-team restorer Petra Süß worked with the design team to develop solutions that counteract the conservatory conditions in the Rosé-Plateau. When weighing up the necessity of displaying an object and the risk of possible damage (which is a feature of every exhibition), in the case of this presentation one consideration was that not everything on show had to be handled to the highest standards of conservation. Most of the packaging on display is shown unprotected and will be disposed of after the end of the exhibition. Or, in the case of two Wehrmacht transport crates, it will be returned to the depot in such condition that the material traces left behind by the exhibition remain legible as part of the object's history.

Hitler: Time to dispose of a metaphor

During the fledgling discussions of our ideas around exploring, collecting, and exhibiting Nazi objects, *Disposing of Hitler* was already on the table as a controversial working title. Our critical and reflexive deliberations revolved around two questions: first, whether we, as the hdgö, should be circulating phrases that draw on the Nazi cult of personality; and second, whether this eye-catching title, with its potential “Hitler sells” effect, might overshadow the analytical content of the exhibition.

But it was precisely these reflections that led us to the conclusion that the term “Hitler”, with its emotionalizing and scandalizing connotations, is a metaphor – and one that should be left behind. The paradoxical combination of the words “Hitler” and “disposing” is therefore to be understood as an invitation. A key task of any democratic society is to question propaganda. The fact that the history of National Socialism is a collective history must not be relativized – it cannot be told simply as a history of individual figures. Explanations that use charisma, seduction, and mass hysteria must be contradicted and to do so, societies must find approaches that make use of the history of violence and propaganda – and their objects – as a vehicle for productive critical debate in the present. Moreover, it is the very task of museums in this debate to provide material evidence for how Nazi propaganda constituted a culture of violence that transpired in every aspect of daily life and was, therefore, easily

transmitted in seemingly harmless or even charming items of popular culture. However, museums should also highlight that an emotionalization or even demonization of such objects perpetuate their charismatic effect and impede analytical approaches. With *Disposing of Hitler: Out of the Cellar, Into the Museum*, we invite visitors to take an active role in this debate and emphasize what we, as a museum, regard as our responsibility towards these ongoing discussions in society.

Creating sources by exhibiting and collecting

The exhibition *Disposing of Hitler: Out of the Cellar, into the Museum* has been the first exhibition at the House of Austrian History to have been resourced exclusively by objects from our own collection. In addition to that, the concept has been the result of a reflection of our daily work approaches and routines. As an exhibition team compiled of public historians as well as members of the education and the service departments¹⁶, we have created, discussed, and repeatedly overthrown our ideas of collection and exhibition practice. First and foremost, working on this exhibition has shown that museum practice is not a fixed set of methods but in constant progress. Thus, working in the museum sector and creating exhibitions – especially if they are concerned with sensitive topics or include objects associated with violence – calls for an ongoing re-evaluation of strategies, including voices from the public and making exhibitions relatable by interactive elements proves essential time and again.

This exhibition is an intermediate result of our occupation with observations and experiences made in working with visitors and donors of objects. In forthcoming projects, the earlier described object cards will be evaluated to learn about the public's mindset towards an appropriate dealing with relicts from the Nazi era. Further, the exhibition has encouraged even more people to contact us about objects in their holding. With increasing regularity, we receive phone calls, e-mails, and letters that confront us with questions and comments and contribute to our understanding of the implications of donations made to the House of Austrian History's collection. In this way, the exhibition has not only been a vehicle for us to present and reflect on our work and instigate discussion – it has in turn brought forward new material and sources to facilitate research in contemporary history.

¹⁶ Thanks to Enid Wolf, Anna Bausch, Marianna Nenning, and Tanja Jenni, whose administrative and management work were essential for the realization of the exhibition.