

Widok na blok 11-ty
Вид на 11-ый барак.

Une vue de la 11-ème baraque
A View of the 11-th Barrack

Auschwitz-Birkenau

Poland, Barrack 11, Author unknown, source: Yad Vashem public domain

guidelines for the rearrangement of auschwitz museum based on web picture analysis

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This paper attempts to answer the question whether the exhibition of the Auschwitz Museum communicates its message properly to the audience or it should be modernised/rearranged. The aim of the study is so to investigate the way visitors currently look at Auschwitz via the filter of social media. Between November 2014 until January 2015 the number of Instagram pictures with hashtag "Auschwitz" posted on-line nearly doubled to astonishing 80.000 images. In August 2016 the number of images reached over 151.000 making Instagram the essential tool for web picture analysis. In this case, the use of found photography was especially important for the authenticity of correlation between the visitor and one's architectural surrounding. Specifically, using Instagram and Instagram feed sites, e.g. websta.me we address the questions of how people react to the architecture of the dead camp, how they photograph this place and what is the emphasis of captured images in this particular place.

keywords Architecture, Museum design, Photography, Web 2.0, Inter, Picture analysis, Auschwitz Birkenau

introduction

The tourist industry is growing all over the world. In Europe, many touristic attractions relate to the past. These are urban and architectural heritage complexes and also memory parks referred to significant battles, cemeteries and concentration camps from the WWII period. Auschwitz-Birkenau is considered the most powerful symbol of the humankind tragedy of that time.

The aim of my study was to investigate the way tourists currently look at Auschwitz via the filter of social media, and to question whether we should improve its exposition (including buildings) or leave the complex as is. Accounts and recordings of Auschwitz by younger generations give us the means they perceive this place and its traumatic history and if they really understand its contemporary message.

Images captured by visitors of the Auschwitz concentration camp could help us to understand the relationship between the visitor and their architectural surroundings. In order to investigate this, free-access images found online, identified with the hashtag "Auschwitz" have been analysed.

Given the historical importance of Auschwitz, some questions arise: Should the camp's exhibition, as well as its architectural structures, be updated or modified to reflect societal changes? How can we bridge the gap between its history, present day and the future using architecture? How can we preserve the genius loci of this horrific place while ensuring its relevance to younger and future generations? Is the visceral experience of being in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp enough, or would adding additional layers of visual content deepen it?

contemporary museums and exhibitions. current design trends

According to "Architecture vs. Art: The Aesthetics of Art Museum Design" by Larry Shiner, establishing the Centre de George Pompidou in Paris, France, has brought new ideas and rules of design to museum buildings. Prior to the Pompidou project, museums were purely a public space orbiting around presented art collection, with the main purpose of providing the appropriate exhibition and viewing place.

Although well known for its revolutionary exterior, the ground-breaking ideas of Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers' project lie in the facilities of the museum. The building includes a film centre, library, gift shops, bar, and even a restaurant on top of the building with a panoramic viewing area. These additional features not only made the centre more versatile and inviting, but just as importantly made the institution more financially viable. These sorts of amenities can generate an income and attract new clientele beyond regular museumgoers. By reconfiguring the museum as a venue for multiple activities, the integral and actively functioning public space was created.

Since 1977, the Piano-Rogers concept has been widely implemented in contemporary architecture objects and further developed. Museums nowadays often include gardens, which allow visitors a respite from hectic city life. Gardens, besides being an obvious art exposing space (e.g., MoMa, New York, USA) can also provide a venue for art workshops, events and go as far as being integrated open spaces with functioning farms (e.g., Serralves).

In the case of the Serralves, the garden is as important as the museum building itself and has been widely recommended as a tourist attraction. Visitors can skip the Álvaro Siza Vieira's museum altogether and spend their time wandering around the park complex. Spaces around museums are designed to hamper the inhabitants and allure potential

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guests. Kiasma, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki designed by Steven Holl, is an example of a well-designed public space. Large green area divided by long benches proposes the popular gathering place for holding outdoor events and activities.

Cafés and restaurants are also becoming an integral part of museums. As previously mentioned, the restaurant at the Centre de George Pompidou provides breath-taking views of the city. Spaces such as this are intended as the last stop on a tour of the museum, giving the visitor time to process and reflect.

In order to make the cafés and restaurants more art-oriented, the name of the designer may be used to attract clientele. In Madrid, Spain, we can find Café Nouvel, named for the architect of the extension of the Renia Sofia. In the case of the Fondazione Prada, their Bar Luce boasts interiors designed by world-renowned movie director, Wes Anderson. The question of whose name will resonate more profoundly with the public when thinking of Fondazione Prada - Rem Koolhaas, who was the architect of the entire complex, or Wes Anderson's - is yet to be answered.

Another significant challenge of the museum design is the flexibility of the exhibition space. While not essential for displaying the permanent collections, a common practice today is to exhibit temporary shows to attract visitors and make them visit a museum more often. Holding consecutive, different exhibitions in the same space can present challenges. The designer must consider hidden floor boxes for electrical devices, ways to control the environment (temperature, outside light, humidity,) proper artificial lighting and finally, transportation of the artefacts among other concerns.

The revolution in the museum design can also refer to the exhibitions' layout. Truly multi-sensorial experience using contemporary IT technologies can be offered to visitors. While museum displays in the past were primarily built on showing documents, books or other historical artefacts, today we can further the experience by adding additional layers of tactile, kinetic, olfactory, visual and audio stimulants in order to help the visitors to engage. When visiting museums, the quality or amount of the antiquities is slowly becoming less important than the overall visitor experience. We may assume that ongoing process of change of a museum building itself and its surrounding, as well as the way of exposing objects in the nearest future, will bring a new standard, far more exciting to the visitor than in case of a "traditional" museum.

auschwitz - the history

Auschwitz (also known as Aschwitz I), Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II) and Auschwitz-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) and their architectural forms should be deeply embedded in the awareness of mankind. Those sites were a silent witness of the murder of an estimated 1.1 million people, of whom 960,000 were Jews, 74 thousand Poles, 21 thousand Gypsies and 17 thousand of other ethnicities.

The main idea behind the settlement of Auschwitz I was the concept of a quarantine camp, which was never executed. The camp was established in 1940; on a site used previously by the Austro-Hungarian artillery, and it was the first camp in the Polish territories occupied by Nazi Germany. The first prisoners, who were Polish political prisoners, arrived to Auschwitz I in June 1942. Until 1942 Auschwitz I served mainly as a concentration camp, place of slow killing by creating brutal living conditions, starvation, and labour. From 1942 until October 1944, this particular camp also functioned as a place of mass murder.

The answer to the Nazi Final Solution to the Jewish Question was Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the largest camp of the whole complex. The idea of building Auschwitz-Birkenau started after the inspection of Heinrich Himmler in March of 1941 and the construction

began in October of the same year. First Sergeant-Major Wichmann, head of the Blue Print Office, was in charge of preparation of the construction plans. SS officers, as well as several prisoners with an architecture background, were tasked with drafting the plans. These were to include living quarters, medical and administrative facilities, infrastructure barracks and buildings, as well as crematoria and gas chambers. It was divided into four sections, only three of which were constructed, and separated with electrified barbed wire. The main organizational units of the camps were: women's camp, men's camp, Gypsy Family Camp, hospital for men, quarantine camp for men prisoners and a family camp for Jews from Theresienstadt. Guard towers were placed around the entire camp. Other important parts of Auschwitz's layout include the unloading ramp and warehouses (Kanada II) used for confiscating, storing and sorting victim's property.

Like Auschwitz I, Auschwitz-Birkenau served two functions: as both a concentration camp and extermination center, estimated by Germans to have the capacity to slaughter 1.5 million people a year.

The key purpose of Auschwitz-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) was connected with IG Farbenindustrie A.G. The camp was strategically placed between Oświęcim and the villages of Dwory and Monowice to insure access to natural resources, transportation, and an available workforce. The work began in 1941 and continued until 1942, when the typhus outbreak stopped the work. It was then that the company decided to turn the barracks to SS, for the prisoners. An estimated 10000 people lost their lives as a consequence of working for IG Farbenindustrie A.G.

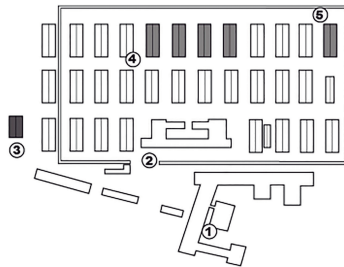
The soldiers of the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front liberated Auschwitz on January 27th, 1945. Prior to that date, Nazi soldiers managed to destroy the evidence of the crimes. Documents were burned, crematoria were blown up, Kanada II set on fire.

Right after the war, on the June 14th, 1947 Auschwitz Museum was open. The opening ceremony brought together many former prisoners, delegations from different communities as well as political delegations. On July 2nd of the same year, the Polish parliament passed a law stating that Auschwitz is a Museum, the Monument to the Martyrdom of Polish People and other Peoples. In 1979 concentration camp was inscribed on the list of Unesco World Heritage cultural sites.

The permanent exhibition opened in 1955, and it is located in blocks 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and features documentary photographs, documents, and items confiscated from the prisoners and models of the camp. Block 4 holds the exhibition called "Extermination", with a model of a gas chamber at Birkenau and a glass display case with human hair cut from estimated 140,000 prisoners. The displays in Block 5 are dedicated to the "Material Evidence of Crime", with an enormous array of shoes, suitcases, artificial legs and crutches collected from the arriving prisoners. Block 6 features the artefacts collected at the time of the admission. The exhibition includes prisoner clothes, footwear, and also the daily food ration. In the exposition called "Living and Sanitary Conditions" in Block 7, one can find out about living conditions of Auschwitz with reconstructed parts of the brick barracks and bunk beds. Another part of the exhibition is in block 11, also known as the death block, where prisoners were kept under Gestapo surveillance, and also where the SS was testing the use of Zyklon B. Reconstructed Dead Wall is in the yard beside block 11 and is where SS shot a few thousand of prisoners. The first gas chamber and Crematorium I in Auschwitz I are well preserved, but two out of three furnaces and chimneys were rebuilt from the original parts. Block 27 has displays about Jewish prisoners, while blocks 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 and 21 are devoted to other nations, who were victims of Nazi Germany, e.g. European Roma, Slovak Jews, Hungarian Jews.

Since 1945, more than 44 million people have visited Auschwitz. More than a million visitors come to the camp annually since 2007.

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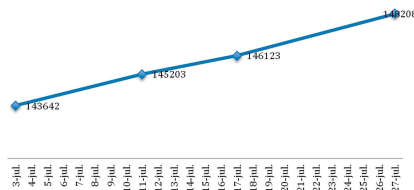
- 1 Admission building, tourist information
- 2 Arbeit Macht Frei Gate
- 3 Blocks 4,5,6,7 and 11
- 4 Crematorium and Gas Chamber
- 5 Dead Wall

f2_Map of the Auschwitz museum

2016, Authors' study

perception of auschwitz museum architecture research method

User generated content sites and social media are currently the most popular among Internet users, such as domains like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are shaping the contemporary world. This has allowed to observe how an everyday visitor to Auschwitz Museum might experience and understand its message. The authors focused on image analysis as a tool for easily identifying main interest points and recurring motifs. For the research an Instagram fed webpage called websta.me. have been used. All of the pictures are publicly accessible. As already mentioned, the number of pictures with hashtag "Auschwitz" has been growing quite rapidly over selected period. For example, on July the 3rd 2016 there were 143 642 photos, rising to 145 203 on July 11th, 146 123 on July 17th and reaching 148 208 on the 27th of July.



f3_Number of pictures marked with hashtag #auschwitz

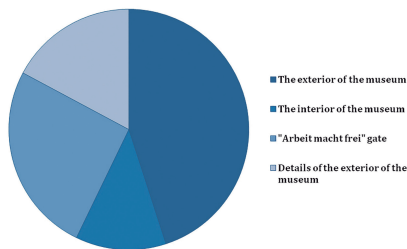
Authors' own elaboration

There are a number of categories we have used to classify the pictures with the hashtag Auschwitz found on websta.me. First of all, there are images of people's stay in the museum, which could be split into the following groups: 1. The exterior of the museum; 2. "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate; 3. Details of the exterior of the museum; 4. Rooms in the museum

Second are photographs that are less relevant to the museum, that can be grouped by the following themes: 5. Books related to the topic of Auschwitz; 6. People posing in Auschwitz; 7. Humour and memes; 8. Historic images; 9. Travel pictures; 10. Undefined

Analysis of categories 1- 4 is the most important to answer the research question on the level of acceptance of the current Auschwitz Museum exhibition. Hence the study sample of 500 images taken between the 19th and 23rd of July, 2016 was chosen, discarding categories unrelated to the Auschwitz Memorial (points 5-10).

In the corresponding categories there were 225 images picturing the exterior of the museum, 128 photos of "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate, 86 images of details and 61 pictures of the interior and its details. Most of the images were shot in colour, nevertheless, to evoke the darkness of the place, 111 images were shot black and white. Besides black and white photography, a wide array of the Instagram filters is applied to the images, especially ones that desaturate colours. In a couple of cases HDR has been used.



f4. The number of pictures in the sample
by category, Authors' own elaboration

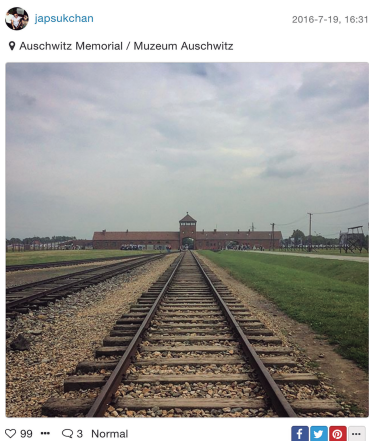
analysis of selected picture categories the exterior of the museum

The major group in the selected categories, nearly half of the images, were shot outside. The main object of the photographs is the entrance to Auschwitz II shot from different distances. In many cases the frame includes the railway, making the building part of a background, rather than the primary object. The vanishing point of the rails is widely used as it accentuates the entrance itself, but also heightens the end of the road. In most cases the composition of the images is very symmetrical, with the same ratio of sky to ground, placing the building in the exact middle. The tower of the building with its opening is in the centre of the frame and the distance between the edges of the building and the ends of the frame are in most similar. Some of the photographs show the close-ups of the building, yet it is always distinguishable, featuring the tower, or its opening.

Another quite common photographed element is the place between the blocks with the concrete poles and barbwire. Similarly, to the pictures of Auschwitz II photographers are using a dramatic focal point and therefore making symmetrical composition (left to

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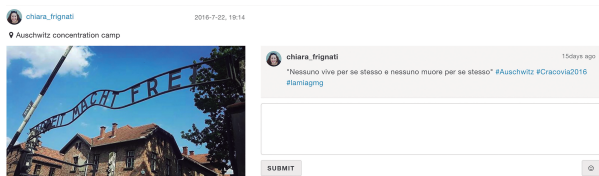
right, rather than top to bottom). Guard towers and electric fences are also often presented in the photographs. Electric fences are usually shot in a very dramatic way, in many cases with different angles e.g. fences are not straight. The barbwire is in the foreground, blurred, adding to the artistic value of the image.



f5_The example of the most common photograph of the entrance to Auschwitz II, Auschwitz, 19.07.2016, Japsukchan

“arbeit macht frei” gate

The second most popular category of Instagram images taken in Auschwitz are pictures of the replica of the “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate. The most taken shot includes only the sign, without the vertical parts of the gate. In many cases, only two words are seen on the photographs - *macht frei*. The angle of the shot is very dramatic. Interestingly, most of the shots are taken from the right side of the gate, rather than from the left. The shot is taken from below. In the background, there is one of the camp’s building and part of the sky in a various ratio. More rare pictures are *en face*, further from the gate. On the right-hand side, there is a tree and part of the sign disappears which could explain the lower popularity of that framing.



f6_ The example of the most common photograph of the “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate Auschwitz, 22.07.2016, Chiara_frignati

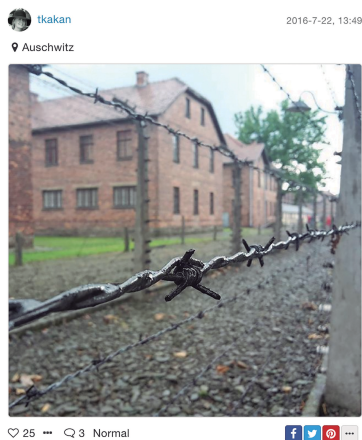
details of the exterior of the museum

There are several of reoccurring motifs concerning pictures of details. The most frequent ones are close-ups of barbwire, from one single element to the multiple. The background is completely blurred out due to the aperture capabilities, in some cases consisting of the building, ground or sky. In the most cases, the angle of the wires is quite steep, to enhance the dramatic feeling of the photograph.

Pictures of the sign with the black skull and crossed bones and warnings in two languages "Halt! Stój" and the ceramic element of the electric installation are often being photographed, proving that the electric fence has been a major visual element of the museum.

Other types of pictures capture the commemorative plaques in various languages, as well as information boards (e.g. infographics, historic photographs, information about the camp, signs).

Architectural details like doors and windows, lamps, and gates of the concentration camp are frequently present on the photos, accentuating the age of the buildings.



f7_ The example of the most common photograph of exterior details of the museum
Auschwitz, 22.07.2016, Tkakan

the interior of the museum

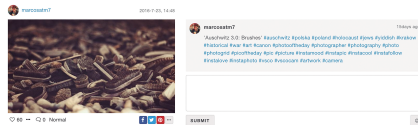
The least popular category amongst the photos found on the Instagram are pictures from the interiors of the museum. Auschwitz memorial does allow taking pictures on the insides of the bunkers, except in Room 5 of Block 4, in the cellars of Block 11 and the area of the security check of visitors. The use of flash units and tripods is prohibited, yet the exhibition is well lit and therefore taking pictures is obtainable.

Main motive of the images are parts of the glass displays showing the overwhelming amount of artefacts collected from arriving prisoners like shoes, suitcases, and glasses.

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The heap of items helps to imagine how many people had been killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp making it easy to shoot, yet highly suggestive picture.

Other examples include images taken in the crematorium, showing the furnaces, row of pictures of the prisoners' mug shots.



f8_ The example of the most common photograph of the interior of the museum
Auschwitz 3.0: Brushes, Auschwitz, 23.07.2016, Marcos Carrasco Muñoz

conclusions

The standpoint of Auschwitz history should be intact, and it should be reflected in the way younger generations photograph it. More and more of the images taken there are disrespectful showing selfies and other inadequate behaviours. There is also strong disproportion between images taken outside vs. inside, which would suggest that the interior of the memorial is not as engaging as the outside. The motifs of the interior pictures are limited and often repeatable.

Since Auschwitz is under the patronage of the UNESCO, there are strict restrictions on changes of its structure and adding new buildings or adapting the old ones. On the other hand, the interior exposition is out-dated and could be described as “deteriorating”. A place like Auschwitz is to make younger generations understand its horror, yet the analogue exposition may no longer fulfil the purpose.

Following successful museum buildings all over the world and the suggestions included in the Centre for the Future of the Museums Trends watch 2014, Auschwitz Museum should include some of the digital and interactive techniques in its exposition, making it modern and relevant for the visitors. A good example of successful use of contemporary visual language to communicate the dramatic period of Poland's history is the Warsaw Uprising Museum. Picture, light, and sound were used to build the atmosphere of heroism and terror. Multimedia devices, computers and monitors are the main part of the exhibition, helping to understand, educate and honour those tragic events of 1944.

The findings of the study show that architectural landmarks in Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum should be left as they are but changed, but the museum's exhibition must be updated. Engaging visitors by using contemporary techniques would follow the changes in global tourists' society attitudes and help Auschwitz Museum to attract and touch the visitors. More relevant and memorable exhibition may warn and educate people more effectively to avoid tragedies like that one in Auschwitz in the future.

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CV

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Marta Mantyka. A graduate of the Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design from Krakow Technical University and the postgraduate Advanced Illustration program at Sheridan College in Oakville, Canada. She is a scholar of the Bauhaus Universität in Weimar, Germany, Masters in Fine Art Photography in IED Madrid. Marta Mantyka's main interest is urban design and town planning. She addresses vernacular photography, as a way of documenting urban landscapes, and its elements as a way of preserving it from fading. She is also fascinated by the history, and silent witnesses of it to investigate its influence on our everyday life, working both with her pictures, as well as found photography. Exhibition and publication history includes Photo España, Applied Arts, CMYK, ND Awards, NexoFoto Awards, DOCfield Awards, Photovisa, Pingyao FotoFestival etc.