

DISPLACEMENT, EXPULSION, RECONCILIATION ATELIER BRÜCKNER DESIGNS DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

In Berlin, not far from the government district and directly opposite the ruins of the Anhalter Bahnhof railway station, the Documentation Centre Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation opens on 23 June. The architecture of the Deutschlandhaus has been renovated and supplemented architecturally by Marte.Marte. The exhibition design comes from ATELIER BRÜCKNER.

On the first floor, the exhibition shows "A European history of forced migration" and, on the second floor "The displacement and expulsion of Germans". The two areas differ from each other as regards their spatial imagery. A continuous design of the graphics and digital media as well as the integrative interpretation of all areas and contents of the exhibition serves as a linking factor. This includes a guidance system for the blind, tactile orientation models, exhibition objects that can be experienced with several senses, an audio tour in six languages and explanatory films that offer an overview and introduction to the individual sub-topics of the exhibition. They are accompanied by texts in easy-to-understand language and German sign language. Developed by Space Interactive, the films convince visitors with their severely downscaled graphic animations, which correspond to the abstracted design of the exhibition.

A monumental staircase guides the guests of the documentation centre from the ground floor up to the first floor. There, they are welcomed by the forum, a place for meeting and communication that invites the visitors to insert their own narratives. Every guest can digitally store their own story of displacement and give written answers to questions that present themselves in the room: "What I wouldn't leave behind...", "For me home means...", "We should talk more about...".

The exhibition entitled "A European history of forced migration" is to be understood as an introduction to and overview of the subject from the beginning of the 20th century up to the present day. Causes of forced migration, phenomena and discourse are considered descriptively, whereby six space-creating exhibition elements characterise and structure the extensive pillar-free exhibition area. They consist of modular, filigree frames that are fleshed out with different themes. Large-format exhibits and object installations accompany the themes and awaken curiosity.

An outsized fur coat that the seven-year-old Eitel Koschorreck wore on his flight from the Masurians in the winter of 1945 is the main exhibit of the area dedicated to the theme of "Routes and camps".

The porthole of the Wilhelm Gustloff guides the visitor into the area devoted to "Memory and controversy". The ship was sunk in January 1945 and swept several thousand fugitives to their deaths. In the area "War and violence", a replica of a mortar shell is designed as a tactile object. The shell presents itself as evidence of a war crime.

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It was fired at a market in Sarajevo in 1994. Other areas of the exhibition dedicated to specific themes are "Nation and nationalism", "Rights and responsibilities" and "Loss and new beginnings".

The second floor looks at the displacement and expulsion of the Germans at the end of the Second World War, which was initiated by Germany. Three space-creating cubes accentuate and structure the route through the exhibition both in terms of content and chronologically.

Access is gained via the exhibition cube "German expansionist policy and World War II". The accompanying explanatory film talks about the seizure of power, the war of extermination, the systematic mass murder of the Jews and the resettlement and resettlement plans associated with the actions of the Germans. The exhibited objects are located in showcase drawers. When they are opened, i.e. Hitler's "Mein Kampf" enters the room in the form of a large-scale animated projection that is intended to exert an overpowering impression. Fascistic power ideology becomes tangible.

The second cube entitled "Expulsions and the new post-war order" is designed as a transit pavilion. It provides an overview of the displacement of borders and people that took place following the Second World War due to decisions made by the Allies. They are visualised in the centre, on a square projection surface near the floor. Several million Germans were affected by displacement and forced resettlement. The walls of the pavilion show photos of flight situations that are anchored in collective memory.

The third pavilion is finally dedicated to the new home. It is designed openly and offers views of the outside. Provisional household objects, including a curtain made of fishnet or a cot, arrange themselves in the space, as if floating in from above. Between them are missing-persons posters. Even today, the whereabouts of innumerable people has still not been clarified.

The visitor walks through the time from the 1940s to the present, accompanied by elongated exhibition displays that flank the route for the visitors. The last chapter is dedicated to the public and private culture of remembrance.

Formative for the experience of the exhibition, human silhouettes encircle the entire space. The life-size graphics have a blurred look and seem disconnected behind the displays. The exhibited objects create an emotional access to the people, their profound experiences and the losses they suffered. The diary of Charlotte Schmölei, for example, talks about the hunger, hard labour and violence that the young women experienced in East Prussia until she was able to leave in 1947. As soon as the visitor uses the audio guide to select a story, a projection starts: the grey shadows are given the facial features of people shown on historical photos that have been passed down to the present. A living image of remembrance arises.

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Remembering is a living process. The epilogue of the exhibition is formed by a digital collage of images that is extended and supplemented continuously. It reflects the regional culture of remembrance in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Federal Foundation Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation is the sponsor of the documentation centre. It was established in 2008 by the German Bundestag under the roof of the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. The documentation centre is intended as a place for historical education and living debates in the spirit of reconciliation.

The opening ceremony takes place from 3.00 to 4.30 p.m. on Monday 21 June in the presence of the Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel. It will be broadcast online under the link: <https://flucht-vertreibung-versoehnung.avepro.io>.

The broadcast will include a short film that presents the variety of what the documentation centre has to offer. Apart from the exhibition, this includes a library, an archive of witnesses of the past, and a room of silence, which is on the ground floor of the new building. A wide range of educational features and a diverse programme of events will be offered.

The opening times of the documentation centre are 10 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday. Entrance is free. The current requirements relating to the Corona pandemic are shown on the website: <https://www.flucht-vertreibung-versoehnung.de/visitor-info-en>

In our media library, you can find photographs (jpg_300 dpi) and plans for downloading: www.atelier-brueckner.com/en/documentation-centre-displacement-expulsion-reconciliation

Contact for press enquiries

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