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Title: Artificial Landscapes and Meaning

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U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Abstract

Historic landscapes may be conceptualized as a text written and read by individuals and groups for different purposes and with very different assumptions and interpretations. Such interpretations can change both over time and when the context of analysis changes from the specific site of an event to one that is geographically remote. The Permanent Exhibition of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was developed roughly twenty-five years ago to describe events that took place far from the location of the museum to a population that had little to no knowledge of or direct experience with the broader landscape of the Holocaust and World War II. While the number of visitors has remained high, at nearly two million visitors per year, and the exhibition continues to be viewed as highly effective in presenting such a difficult history, there has been a movement within the institution toward creating a discourse through special exhibitions on other atrocities that have occurred during different historical periods and in different locations. This presentation will focus on the reasons driving the new initiative and its relationship to the Permanent Exhibition.

Brief bio: Jane E. Klinger is the Chief Conservator of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. She earned her Masters of Conservation at Rosary College in Florence, Italy and is currently a Coremans Fellow at the University of Delaware working towards a Doctorate in Cultural Heritage Preservation. She has lectured and written extensively about the conservation of cultural heritage.