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Barry Falk *In Search of Amnesia* *Jewish Narrative in Poland and Ukraine*

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Jedes Foto ist ein Fenster in die Geschichte, dokumentiert Orte des Holocausts und bewahrt die Erinnerungen derer, die nicht mehr sprechen können.

2017 flog Barry Falk nach Krakau, um zunächst seiner eigenen Familiengeschichte nachzuspüren. Dies war der Beginn eines fünfjährigen Fotoprojekts, das nicht Ahnenforschung, sondern ein besseres Verständnis für die jüdische Historie in Osteuropa zum Ziel hat. Der Titel *In Search of Amnesia* beschreibt die Zerrissenheit zwischen dem Verlangen, die schmerzhaften Erinnerungen an die traumatischen Ereignisse verdrängen zu wollen, und dem Wunsch, genau jene Erinnerungen bewusst bewahren zu wollen. Behutsam, aber zugleich wissbegierig, spürt er Orte auf, an denen Jüd:innen ermordet wurden, dokumentiert physische Objekte, die in Museen aufbewahrt werden, und spricht mit Historiker:innen, forensischen Archäolog:innen und Künstler:innen.

» *The project grew out of my own personal family history and Jewish roots in Poland and Lithuania. On the 2nd January 2017 I flew to Krakow to begin a research project exploring the Jewish narrative in Poland and Ukraine, an area previously rich in Jewish culture. This was the start of a long term documentary project and begins, almost predictably, in Auschwitz, but then follows a route that shifts and changes, following leads and hunches, ideas and directions, rivers and transportation lines, 'dead ends' and surprising synagogues. It could have been more personal: a return to specific Jewish family roots but genealogy was never my purpose. My interest was in the wider collective memory, specifically how Jewish memory is held in places that suffered atrocity and immense loss.*

Though the Holocaust looms large, casting its shadow backwards and forwards, this is not specifically about the Shoah. Within Poland and Ukraine, there is a rich historical narrative of a vibrant Jewish culture. Poland's & Ukraine's cities, towns and villages once

held sizeable Jewish populations active in trade, commerce and politics; the shtetls were a product of Jewish trade promoted and taxed by Polish nobility. Within this narrative is the birth of Hasidism, a spiritual reform of the orthodox tradition, and the rise of Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, an intellectual reform of Jewish tradition. This was destroyed during the Second World War by the German policies and actions designed to deal with the 'Jewish problem' and clear the way for the German Volk.

Today it is difficult to find traces of these once vibrant communities in the small towns and villages where Jews comprised a large percentage of the population. This project, therefore, seeks to find traces of this narrative through a variety of methods: by seeking remnants of these once vibrant communities in the form of still extant synagogues, often derelict or repurposed; by looking for the physical objects, the relics, stored in museums or sold as tourist trinkets, and by meeting the various custodians of memory: the historians, conservationists, archivists, forensic archeologists, tour guides, artists and academics. As I travelled through this memory rich landscape I kept a journal, written over the course of five years, attempting to make sense of overt and buried memories, past atrocities and contextual history. These journal entries became the text for the final book. « – Barry Falk

Barry Falk ist ein britischer Fotograf, der psychologische Themen und Orte kollektiver Traumata, besonders in Osteuropa, dokumentiert. Er erforscht auch Bewusstsein und Empfindungsvermögen in Zusammenarbeit mit Forschungszentren. Als Mitglied des MAP6 Photography Collective wirkte er an Projekten in Russland, Litauen und Finnland mit. Seine Arbeiten wurden international ausgestellt und in der Portrait of Britain 2020 präsentiert.

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Pressebilder



01_ Judy Josephs and Rose Lipszyc, survivors of the Lublin Ghetto, during the Brama Grodzka Lubliner Reunion. Lublin, Poland, 2017 © Barry Falk



02_ Participants walk to the Umschlagplatz following the route that Jews took out of the ghetto on their way to being deported to the death camps, Lubliner Reunion. Lublin, Poland, 2017 © Barry Falk



03_ Jewish boys at the Jewish school. Bila Tserkva, Ukraine © Barry Falk



04_ Participants walk to the Umschlagplatz following the route that Jews took out of the ghetto on their way to being deported to the death camps, Lubliner Reunion, Lublin, Poland, 2017 © Barry Falk



05_ Valentyna, waitress at the Jewish-themed Mandragora Restaurant. Lublin, Poland © Barry Falk



06_ Oskar Schindler's desk, Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum. Kraków, Poland © Barry Falk



07_ Maksymilian Kolbe, Polonia Wax Museum. Kraków, Poland © Barry Falk



08_ Elderly Jewish man, Holocaust survivor from a village near Zvenyhorodka, Ukraine © Barry Falk



09_ Basement with bust of Lenin, Old Synagogue. Chortkiv, Ukraine © Barry Falk



10_ Disinfection units, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Oświęcim, Poland © Barry Falk



11_ Goods wagon, edge of Białowieża Forest, Poland © Barry Falk



12_ Caravan, outskirts of Treblinka, Poland © Barry Falk