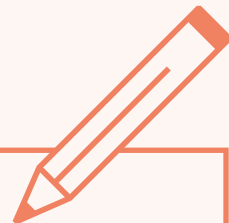




LEARNING UNIT **GRAPHIC NOVEL**



LEARNING MATERIALS 1



QUESTIONS:

- ▶ Turn your mind to the Holocaust/the German occupation of Greece: what photos do you imagine there are of this?
- ▶ Who took photos and who did not?
- ▶ What do you think about what they depict and what they ignore?



BACKGROUND INFORMATION: **SOURCES ON THE HOLOCAUST AND FORCED LABOUR**

There are very few sources on events in Karyä. The image we have of events in Karyä is largely formed by the 80 or so photographs from Hanns Rössler's album. So the photographer's lens also shapes our perception. But his viewpoint is specific. He is a German civil engineer and committed Nazi. As such, he photographs mainly the progress of construction work. The photos fail to depict many things: the forced labourers' experiences of backbreaking work, the hunger, illnesses, poor hygiene, fear and violence; the murder of forced labourers by the Germans; their despair, but also the solidarity that existed among those made to carry out forced labour in Karyä.

This is because no one was able to photograph these things. Jews who were deported from the ghetto in Thessaloniki to Karyä were made to leave all their belongings behind. So, no one had a camera – and even if one of them had managed to smuggle a camera into the camp, it would have been forbidden to take photos.

This imbalance is typical of the history of the Holocaust and forced labour. Many of the sites of Nazi atrocities were photographed almost exclusively by the perpetrators. The people who were turned into victims had no opportunity to take photographs. Their perspectives – in so far as we know them at all – come from interviews, diary entries, sketches or a handful of photos taken in secret.

We know of no sketches by forced labourers in Karyä, only the accounts of survivors. The exhibition organisers therefore decided to create illustrations and animated graphic novels based on these accounts. You can find the thoughts of the illustrators in Learning materials II. They have endeavoured to stick as closely as possible to the survivors' testimonies. Nevertheless, they were forced to be inventive at times, since no photos exist.

There is a long debate between historians and other experts as to whether events surrounding the Holocaust should be portrayed in this way. Some are of the opinion that it is acceptable and even vital to augment the photos taken by perpetrators. Others believe that this form of speculation is wrong and that some events cannot or should not be depicted.

What do you think?



BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Born in Nuremberg in 1905, **Hanns Rössler** worked on motorway construction in Lower Franconia before the Second World War and met his future wife Hilde (1908–2007) at a forester's lodge near Bad Brückenau. They married but had no children. In 1930, Rössler joined the National Socialist Party (NSDAP). He was stationed in the Balkans during the war, and from 1942 worked in various places in Greece as a construction site manager for Organisation Todt (OT), including Karya. After the war, Rössler was employed by Fränkische Überlandwerk AG (now N-Ergie AG), a regional electricity supplier in Roth. The Rösslers travelled widely and also visited Greece. Until his death in 1995, Hanns Rössler lived with his wife in a small detached house in Freiligrathstraße, Roth.

As a construction site manager, Rössler's photographs depict his building projects. His focus was on the progress of construction and successful completion of the project. The naturalness with which he photographs the forced labourers reveals that Rössler had no qualms about exploiting the Greek population – to him it seemed normal. As site manager, Rössler was responsible for the deployment of forced labour and therefore for the inhumane conditions at his construction sites.

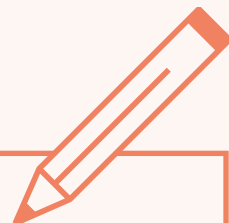
Many of Rössler's photographs give the impression that his time in occupied Greece was a tourist trip to be bragged about with friends back home. He therefore ignores completely the crimes committed by Wehrmacht soldiers on Greek soil: the massacres, the victims and the burned down villages.

In many photos it is possible to detect Rössler's fascination with ancient Greece. He poses in front of famous landmarks. Many members of the German occupying forces took photos of this kind. In several of his photographs, Rössler focuses on the simple architectural style or dilapidated buildings. Basic living conditions are clearly highlighted deliberately to make all Greeks appear primitive.

Rössler is not visible in most of the photos. This suggests that he took them himself. For interesting subjects or important events, however, he hands the camera to someone else so he can be in the picture.



LEARNING MATERIALS 2



QUESTIONS & TASKS:

- ▶ Describe your initial reaction to the illustration/graphic novel.
- ▶ What viewpoints are depicted?
- ▶ What are your thoughts on how the graphic novel/illustration has been illustrated? Where does it place the focus?
How would you describe the style?
- ▶ Do you like the style? Do you find it appropriate?
Why (not)?

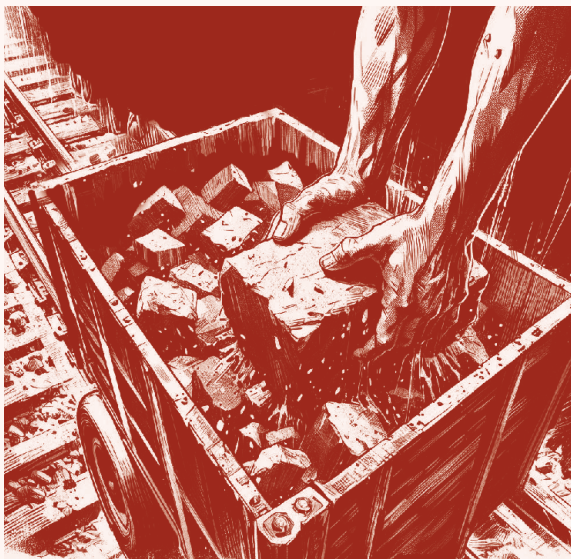


GRAPHIC NOVELS AND EYEWITNESS STATEMENTS



»One man was struggling to push a mine cart and was shot by the foreman. Other foremen were even more sadistic: one killed a Jew hauling a mine cart by stabbing him in the back with a bayonet.«

Isak Koenka



»We worked for 12 hours, day and night without a break. From the first day, the work was backbreaking, we had to lift stones weighing 200 kilos. On the very first night they killed two young men, I remember that night very well.«

Schmuel Arditti



»Sometimes trains transporting Italian soldiers would pass by and we would shout ›pagnotta, pagnotta‹, which is Italian for bread. They would throw us some bread, the Italians.«

Sam Cohen



»We were treated so badly that Karya seemed to me like hell on earth.«

Isak Koenka



»The rocks were razor sharp. You couldn't walk on them. Of course, I had cheap shoes which wore out in no time at all. So I used the sleeves of my coat and wrapped them around my feet. They were constantly bleeding.«

Sam Cohen



BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE

The Graphic Artist Jan Wünsche from Berlin-based design studio FORM-ID on graphic novels

Graphic novels are increasingly a key tool in the communication work done by museums and exhibitions. This form of visual narrative, which ranges from detailed illustrations to abstract representations, opens up new ways of conveying historical events. But in the context of memorials, in particular, we must ask ourselves two crucial questions. Is it right to depict crimes such as massacres or, as here, the suffering of Jewish forced labourers in Karyd? And how much (artistic) licence can you take when creating a graphic novel based on historical facts?

As you might expect, we believe the answer to the first question is a clear »yes«. Nevertheless, this »yes« goes hand in hand with huge responsibility on the part of curators and illustrators. The crucial factor here is what you choose to depict, how you depict it – and what you consciously leave out. These choices must always be made with respect for the victims and with great sensitivity.

The second question is a little more difficult to answer. Firstly, there is something inherently fictional about an illustration. For example, we draw people even though we don't know exactly what they looked like. We illustrate situations in which – thank God – we were not present. But then there are the factual elements, without which there can be no presentation in a memorial setting. We initially used the testimonies of survivors to provide the storyline and as a basis for creating the illustrations. We also incorporated quotes directly into the animations and illustrations. On top of that, of course, there is a huge amount of detail to get right: the right uniform, the shape of the mine carts or jackhammers, and the depiction of the ELAS partisans, the Greek People's Liberation Army. They certainly never wore a red star on their caps, as in our early drawings.

»



For the »Karya 1943« exhibition, we deliberately chose a variety of narrative approaches. On the one hand, we use self-contained narrative units and present these as interconnected storylines in the form of short animations. On the other, we use individual images that offer a fragmented depiction of the life, work and suffering of forced labourers at the construction site. The complete picture of these terrible events therefore only emerges in the mind of the visitor. One thing unites these forms of illustration: the deliberate avoidance of invented dialogue or text. Instead, the fictional elements of the drawings are given a factual basis and authenticity by using testimonies from the survivors.

I'm particularly drawn to one perhaps rather inconspicuous illustration in this regard. When Andreas Assael discovered and bought the album at a flea market near Munich, he began to research his find in depth. To get a better impression of the construction site, he made a sketch of it using photos from the album. This original drawing was ultimately incorporated into a new illustration.

In our view, graphic novels can certainly be a useful addition to a museum's exhibits, documents, photographs and texts.



SELECTION OF COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS ON THE HOLOCAUST AND FORCED LABOUR

MAUS. A SURVIVOR'S TALE.

By Art Spiegelman, New York: Pantheon Books, [1986] 2011.

Perhaps the best known work on the Holocaust in graphic novel form. In »Maus«, Art Spiegelman tells the story of his father, an Auschwitz survivor. Jews are depicted as mice, the Germans as cats, other nationalities as various animals. »Maus« is considered one of the first graphic novels to be internationally recognised as literature, winning the Pulitzer Prize.

THE SEARCH.

By Eric Heuvel, Ruud van der Rol and Lies Schippers, Berlin 2010.

»The Search« tells the story of a Jewish woman who, with the help of her grandson, sets out on a search to discover what really happened to her family during the Holocaust. The comic book was created in collaboration with the Anne Frank Foundation.

THE BOXER: THE TRUE STORY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR HARRY HAFT.

By Reinhard Kleist, Hamburg 2012.

This graphic novel is based on the life of Hertzko (Harry) Haft, a Jewish boxer who was made to fight for the entertainment of Nazi officers during the Holocaust in order to survive. After the war, he became a professional prizefighter. Kleist narrates Haft's story in black-and-white drawings, depicting not only the Holocaust, but also his struggle to return to ordinary life.

YOSSEL, 19 APRIL 1943.

By Joe Kubert, Cologne 2005.

In this graphic novel, Joe Kubert tells an alternative version of his own life, in which he imagines what his future would have been like if his family had not fled Poland to escape the Nazis. The story takes place during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Kubert, one of the best-known American graphic artists, combines imaginary and historical elements to create a story about resistance and survival.



X-MEN: MAGNETO TESTAMENT.

By Greg Pak and Carmine Di Giandomenico, Modena 2023.

This comic book tells the back story of the popular Marvel character Magneto and depicts him as a Jewish boy in Poland who survives the Holocaust. His experiences as a survivor later inform his campaigns as a superhero and antagonist.

AUF DEN SPUREN ROGERS.

By Florent Silloray, Berlin 2013 (german, french only).

In »Auf den Spuren Rogers«, Florent Silloray tells the story of his grandfather Roger, a French soldier who was captured by the Nazis during the Second World War. The author uses diaries, letters and memoirs to reconstruct Roger's experiences as a prisoner of war and his difficult return home to France. Silloray uses the form of the graphic novel to combine his personal family history with a historical account of the war.

RESISTED, ARRESTED, DEPORTED: THE CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMOIR OF FRANCINE R.

By Boris Golzio, Annapolis, Maryland, 2023.

As a young woman, Francine joined the French Resistance in 1943. She was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1944. Francine was eventually deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp and from there to Watenstedt, a satellite camp of Neuengamme concentration camp, where she was put to work in an armaments factory. The graphic novel is based on Francine R.'s memoirs, which she shared as a 78-year-old with the book's author and illustrator, Boris Golzio.

I, RENÉ TARDI, PRISONER OF WAR AT STALAG 11B.

By Jacques Tardi, Seattle, 2019.

Jacques Tardi's graphic novel based on the memoirs of his father, René Tardi. 40 years after the end of the war, he encouraged René to write about his time in a German forced labour camp for French prisoners of war. He spent almost five years in captivity. Using coarse language at times, he depicts the war and everyday life in the camp.



THE SAND MINE.

Web documentary by Katalin Ambrus, Nina Mair and Matthias Neumann, with animation by Cosimo Miorelli, 2016.

It is as much a story of horror as one of courage, friendship, solidarity and dignity. The web documentary »Im märkischen Sand« tells the story of the end of the war in Treuenbrietzen, southwest of Berlin. On 23 April 1945, the Wehrmacht carried out a massacre of forced labourers at the munitions factory there. 127 Italian military internees were shot in a sand quarry. Among the dead bodies, four survived. They recount their story for posterity. This animated web documentary seeks to represent what happened here, a story with many protagonists and viewpoints.

MOBILE GAME »FORCED ABROAD« AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL »JAN BAZUIN. JOURNAL OF A FORCED LABOURER«.

With illustrations by Barbara Yelin, Paintbucket Games 2022.

»Jan Bazuin. Tagebuch eines Zwangsarbeiters« tells the story of Jan Bazuin, a Dutch forced labourer who was made to work in Germany during the Second World War. Illustrated by Barbara Yelin, the graphic novel uses Jan's diary to recreate Jan's harsh living conditions, his daily struggle for survival and his longing for freedom.

AIVALI (ΑΪΒΑΛΙ).

By Soloup (Antonis Nikolopoulos), Athens 2014. Translated into English by T. Papademetriou 2019: »Aivali: A Story of Greeks and Turks in 1922«, Boston, MA: Somerset Hall Press.

»Aivali« is a historical graphic novel that focuses for the most part on the population exchange between Greek and Turkey in 1922 and the fates of the displaced people that resulted. Although the Holocaust is not the main theme, the book also deals with Jewish life and displacement in the Aegean region. This is set in a broader context of persecution and displacement throughout Greek history.