

18 OCTOBER 2013 THROUGH 9 FEBRUARY 2014

## A Time for Everything

Rituals Against Forgetting

The exhibition "A Time for Everything" was inspired by the famous passage from the Jewish Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, which begins with the words: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."<sup>1</sup> It is possible to interpret this text, which describes the cycle of life in 14 contrasting verse pairings, with the British rabbi Jonathan Magonet, as a wrestling with time, "to be able to make sense of the endless cycles and repetitions."<sup>2</sup>

"A Time for Everything" displays over 50 objects to present rituals that help us in this search for meaning. These rituals are embedded in the lunisolar Jewish calendar, which begins with the creation of the world. Calendar time is a profane measure of time. The procedure of cyclically recurring religious rituals, in contrast, harmonizes with the heavenly liturgy and represents a sacred measure of time. Each time we carry out a religious ritual, we overcome the profane measure of time and take part in the holy time. Thus, for example, the practice of Shabbat reflects by analogy God's day of rest: God's holiday in the creation legend becomes man's holiday, who thus enters into direct relation with the process of creation.

The annual cycle of Jewish religious rituals embeds worldly events in a mythical time, which we memorialize. The historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi explained these rituals with the words: "If there can be no return to Sinai, then what took place at Sinai must be borne along the conduits of memory to those who were not

there that day."<sup>3</sup> By presenting those rituals which refer to the reconstruction of a common religious experience, the exhibition attempts to point out the tension between history and collective memory.

Besides religiously anchored collective rituals, the exhibition also presents individualized rituals. Individuals, too, require recurring reminders which confirm their connection to a culture or religion and national identity—and confirm their own identity. Coming of age and marriage, birth and death, the annual birthday, wedding anniversary, or date on which a loved one died—these are remembered year after year with festivity or mourning, because they belong to the self, define the self, and therefore must not be forgotten.

The exhibition also addresses secular rituals of remembrance. These strategies against forgetting include, today, especially the remembrance of National Socialism and the Holocaust. These commemorations, as practiced by both Jews and non-Jews, are highly ritualized: the key dates of collective remembrance are: 9<sup>th</sup> of November, the day of the 1938 pogrom (in Germany); 27<sup>th</sup> of January, the day on which the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by the Red Army (internationally); and 27<sup>th</sup> of Nissan (April/May), memorializing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (in Israel).

Moreover, the exhibition pays special attention to a group of victims largely ignored by the public days of remembrance relating to the Holocaust: that of women who were sexually abused in concentration camps. In the area "Remembering the Taboo," we show works by the American artist Quintan Ana Wikswo, who has created a ritual against forgetting by photographing and filming over the course of several weeks the former site of the "special building" in Dachau used as a concentration camp bordello.

The women forced to become sex slaves were transported from the concentration camp in Ravensbrück to Dachau. The building in which they were abused and degraded was torn down. Wikswo's photographs show spaces that are empty in more ways than one. The cameras Wikswo used for her pictures were built for Agfa by forced laborers in the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück. That history, too, is impossible to capture in a photograph. And yet the artist succeeds in evoking this history with her veiled photographs. Her pictures show that which is absent, that which is not documented. It is precisely by focusing, as she does, on the attempt to make history forget these women's stories, that the artist creates a memorial to sexual violence and forced labor under the Nazi regime. A selection of Wikswo's photographs and short texts, together with one of her films, create a powerful complement to our "Calendar of Remembrance."

Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek

- 1 See page 13 of this *JMB Journal*
- 2 Jonathan Magonet. *From Autumn to Summer. A Biblical Journey through the Jewish Year*. Norwich: SCM Press 2000, p. 23
- 3 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York 1982, p. 10

### ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2013, 7 PM,  
OLD BUILDING, GREAT HALL  
ADMISSION: FREE

### CHRISTMAS AND OTHER COUNTINGS AND ACCOUNTINGS

Lecture by Rabbi Daniel Katz

Rabbi Daniel Katz talks about Christian and Jewish holiness and holidays, about the rituals that make up religious festivals and their development through time. What if the Christians celebrated Yom Kippur, and what if we based our common time accounting on the birthdays of other V.I.P.s? And, last but not least, he addresses the central question of what religion and soccer have in common.

**Das Laubhüttenfest  
Sukkot erinnert an die  
Wanderung nach dem  
Auszug aus Ägypten.  
Eine Laubhütte, Sukka,  
muss vier Wände haben,  
und ihr Dach muss so  
bedeckt sein, dass die  
Sterne hinein scheinen  
können. Diese Sukka ist  
ein seriell hergestelltes  
Exemplar. Baisingen,  
um 1925.**

Sukkot commemorates the wandering after the Exodus from Egypt. A Sukkah must have four walls, and through its roof one must be able to see the stars. This Sukkah was a pre-manufactured serial model. Baisingen, c. 1925.

