Representing/Roma/Holocaust: Exhibition Experiences in Europe and East Asia

Kyu Dong Lee

kyudows@gmail.com

Lecturer, Korea Military Academy

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5885-4573

Kyu Dong Lee is a lecturer at the Korea Military Academy. He studied Economics and History at Sogang University in Seoul nd later pursued a master's degree in History there, with a thesis entitled "Mnemonic Negotiations of the Holocaust in South Korea". His research interests focus on Cold War history/memory with a regional focus on transpacific spaces, and racial imagination in (public-) historical and aesthetic representations of past and public memory.

Eve Rosenhaft

dan85@liverpool.ac.uk

Professor of German Historical Studies, University of Liverpool

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1089-797X

Eve Rosenhaft has published widely on aspects of German social history from the eighteenth century onwards. She collaborates with museums, filmmakers, and theatre practitioners on projects about Romani and Black victims of Nazism. Recent and forthcoming publications include *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community 1884–1960* (2013); *Mnemonic Solidarity – Global Interventions* (2021); *Legacies of the Romani Genocide since 1945* (2021); *European Roma: Lives beyond Stereotypes* (2022). Together with Jana Müller, she co-curated the exhibitions "*…don't forget the photos, it's very important…*" and *Unwelcome Neighbors,* both of which are the subject of this article.

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Abstract

This article reflects on two exhibitions, in 2018 and 2019, about the Nazi persecution of German Sinti and Roma. One was produced by an Anglo-German curatorial team and toured Britain and Continental Europe. The second was designed by South Korean curators and installed temporarily in a gallery in downtown Seoul. The two exhibitions drew on the same photographic archive, narrated the persecution histories of Romani subjects of the photographs, and used the story of their relationship with the non-Romani photographer to ask questions about responsibility and to prompt visitors to reflect on their own status as "implicated subjects" in contemporary forms of discrimination. Given different expectations of the level of knowledge that visitors bring to the exhibition and different communicative tools familiar to them (the Seoul curators included creative artists), the two curatorial teams took very different approaches to informing and moving their audiences – and to meeting the recognized challenges of representing Romani history and identity – not least in the ways in which the exhibition's message was mediated in face-to-face conversations on site. The aesthetic approach adopted in Seoul did not fully succeed in maintaining the balance between explanation and exoticization. The evaluation relies on visitor surveys (quantitative and qualitative) and interviews with guides.

Keywords

- Exhibition
- Holocaust
- Genocide
- Memory
- Photography

This article reflects on exhibiting material about Roma genocide in Britain, Continental Europe, and South Korea. We look at two exhibitions, one devised for Western audiences and one for an East Asian one. The Seoul exhibition was, in many respects, an adaptation of the European one. Both exhibitions sought to convey new information about the Holocaust and to deliver messages about ethical and civic responsibility. Both drew on a particular body of photographic material illustrating the lives of a group of interrelated Sinti and Roma families from Central Germany.

The design and concept of the European exhibition followed a familiar "script" for narrating the story of Roma genocide, although the nature of the photographic and associated biographical material, and the curators' understanding of their responsibilities towards the victim subjects, called for conscious reflection on their representational practices. Differences in resources, context, and audience led to a radically different approach in South Korea. The dialogue between the British and Korean curators, and the very distinctive ways in which European and Korean visitors responded to the exhibition, focused on some persistent issues around the representation of Romani as subaltern and racialized subjects, as they overlap with and inflect critical debates about the uses of photography and other aspects of Holocaust representation and pedagogy. Key tensions emerged around the use and danger of aestheticization. Negotiating the gap between knowledge that visitors bring to the exhibition and the understanding we want them to take away posed particular challenges – in the case of Romani subjects, the need to explain without objectifying or exoticizing. And we realised the importance of on-site interpreters – guides, docents, curators – in mediating an exhibition's message. These issues were particularly acute in the Seoul exhibition, but a consequence of this was that we were moved to reflect on how far they had been present in the European "original" as well.

1. The Photographs

The photographs at the heart of both exhibitions were taken by the (non-Sinti) photo-journalist Hanns Weltzel (1902–1952) in Dessau-Roßlau (Anhalt, Central Germany) between 1933 and 1939. Representing a range of genres, from studio portraits to ethnographic-style outdoor shots, they portray roughly 100 members of a group of interrelated families, mainly Sinti. About 200 of the photos are from the archives of the Gypsy Lore Society at the University of Liverpool Library. Weltzel sent some to the editor of the Society's *Journal* as illustrations for a series of articles he published in 1938, and a further set of prints, negatives, and glass slides was acquired by the Library, along with some of Weltzel's papers, in 2000 (Weltzel 1938).[1] The photographs themselves are striking in their technical accomplishment and representation of Romani subjects as individuals; they are largely free of the tendency to stereotype that characterizes much of the photographic archive on "Gypsies" (Reuter 2014). They provide visual evidence of the extent to which Weltzel had established friendships and mutual trust with his subjects, whom he got to know during their regular stops in his hometown. The title of the European exhibition, "*…don't*

1 The photographs are held in the University of Liverpool Library, Special Collections and Archives, Gypsy Lore Society Collections SMGC 1/2 PX Weltzel and GLS Add. GA. Further material was acquired from Weltzel's family by the Dessau-Roßlau City Archives in 2019.

forget the photos, it's very important…", is a quote from a letter that one of the survivors wrote to Weltzel after the Second World War.

It is our knowledge of the relationship between photographer and subjects that gives this particular archive a special heuristic power. Correspondence amongst Weltzel's papers attests to his own affection for the Sinti, some of whom he was on intimate terms, while at the same time he adopted the *habitus* of an ethnographer and linguist for his readers. His manuscripts also include a detailed account of the persecution of his friends, a key moment of which was their expulsion from Dessau-Roßlau and internment in the Magdeburg "Gypsy Camp". When he wrote that account in 1948/49, he was aware that most of them had been murdered in Auschwitz (some in other concentration camps) and was full of regret for his own failure to take a stand on their behalf. For their part, surviving Sinti were convinced that Weltzel had collaborated with the "race scientist" Robert Ritter in the genocidal project of his Race Hygiene Research Unit (RHFS). For postwar Gypsiologists, too, Weltzel became a mythical figure onto whom their own survivor guilt and remorse was projected, particularly when he mysteriously disappeared.[2] Read against this background, Weltzel's photos pose critical questions about the ethical responsibility of the human sciences and the dynamic between observing and acting (or the "implicated subject") (Rothberg 2019).

For German audiences, particularly those in the former GDR, there is another dimension that makes these photographs meaningful beyond their visual impact: one young woman, Erna Lauenburger, whom Weltzel frequently photographed, was known to her friends and family as Unku. The communist writer Grete Weiskopf made Unku one of the child protagonists of her novel *Ede und Unku*, published in 1931 under the pseudonym Alex Wedding. The novel's content and Weiskopf's postwar testimony confirm that the author met Unku and her family in Berlin and was on friendly terms with them. Illustrated with photographs of Unku and her family, which the publishers attributed to John Heartfield, the novel tells a tale of solidarity between a Sinti family and a working-class family caught up in the political and labour conflicts of Depression Berlin. *Ede und Unku* was banned in 1933, but Unku's name, and to some extent her image, became part of popular culture in the GDR after 1965, when the novel was included on public schools' reading list; it became compulsory reading in 1972 and inspired a 1981 film (Baetz et al. 2007, 90–97). Unku's story subsequently became foundational, for both the Roma Rights movement and a new wave of research on Roma genocide, through the work of the GDR dissident Reimar Gilsenbach, whose own encounters with survivors from Unku's family spurred him to advocacy and memorialization. His account of Unku's death in Auschwitz made her photographic image an icon for the forgotten Holocaust in Germany before the Weltzel archive came to light (Gilsenbach 1993).

2 Weltzel was the object of some kind of political denunciation after the war, though not apparently for anything related to the fate of the Sinti and Roma; in 1952 he was executed on the orders of a Soviet Military Tribunal for involvement with an underground organization linked to West Germany (Rosenhaft 2014).

2. Exhibition Experiences (1) *"…don't forget the photos, it's very important…"*

These multiple dimensions of the photographic archive underpin the way in which the original exhibition was born. The co-curators, Eve Rosenhaft and Jana Müller, met in 2014 after both researching the subjects of the exhibition independently for several years: Rosenhaft's research began with the discovery of the photographs at Liverpool University, where she teaches German history. Müller, then leader of the Alternatives Jugendzentrum (Alternative Youth Centre) Dessau, had been working with Jewish Holocaust survivors for many years and saw the potential of the archive when conversations with surviving Sinti made her aware of the connection between "Unku" and her hometown. In 2008 she worked with young people from Dessau to produce a short film entitled *Was mit Unku geschah* (Alternatives Jugendzentrum 2008). Rosenhaft and Müller began actively collaborating on the background research and design for an exhibition in 2016.

The travelling exhibition *"…don't forget the photos, it's very important…". The National Socialist Persecution of Central German Sinti and Roma / "…vergiss die photos nicht, das ist sehr wichtig…" Die Verfolgung mitteldeutscher Sinti und Roma im Nationalsozialismus* opened in the Marienkirche in Dessau-Roßlau in January 2018, in time for Holocaust Remembrance Day and in anticipation of the 75th anniversary of the first deportations of German Sinti and Roma to Auschwitz (March 1943) (Exhibition Website n.d.). It had its premiere in the United Kingdom at Liverpool Central Library later in May 2018. This followed the display of a smaller prototype in Prague in the autumn of 2017. By the spring of 2020 thousands of visitors had seen the exhibition, either in its prototype or complete version, in cities in the United Kingdom, Germany, Czech Republic, and Poland (International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim). Hosting organizations and venues have included human rights organizations, churches and synagogues, concentration camp memorials, research organizations focusing on National Socialism and the Second World War, libraries and universities, the offices of local councils, and Romani/Traveller organizations.

2.1 *"…don't forget the photos…"*: Pedagogical Aims, Ethical Challenges, and Representational Methods

From the outset, the curators understood *"…don't forget the photos…"* as having a dual purpose of commemoration and education – both honouring the victims and explaining to a wider public the nature, course, and consequences of the persecution. As in all memory work with Roma genocide as its focus, both are informed by the awareness that this dimension of the Holocaust remains relatively unknown (forgotten or suppressed in public discourse), and that public neglect of that history is closely connected to the continuing exclusion of, and discrimination against, Roma and Travellers. The background research for the exhibition was therefore driven by an absolute commitment to reporting the recoverable facts of its subjects' lives in as much detail as possible. In a sense, this was an instinctive response to the danger of aestheticization inherent in the quality of Weltzel's photos: Visually striking as they are, the images can only be legitimately displayed if they are seen to stand for real people and entire lives. No image remains unexplained.

This very commitment gave the curators a series of ethico-epistemological challenges. First, they found themselves, in effect, reiterating the work of the German police and "race scientists". In the archive, the subjects of Weltzel's photographs are in most cases identified only by their Sinti names. In order to find out what had happened to each individual and their relationships to other victims, it was necessary to establish their identity in terms of their "German", or officially registered names. This was precisely the "problem" that preoccupied (to the point of obsession) German police authorities in their efforts to monitor and control the Romani population from the nineteenth century onwards, while the vision of comprehensive *Erfassung* and racial categorization, on the basis of reliable genealogies, was what drove Ritter and his colleagues during the first stages of the genocide. The curators drew on many of the same resources as Ritter's team and also used some of their genealogical material directly. Of course, they were able to supplement those sources with new ones, such as postwar testimony from the archives of the Red Cross' International Tracing Service, and (ironically) to use police techniques that were unavailable to Ritter, such as facial recognition software.

This turned into a representational challenge, since it made it all the more important *both* that the victims should feature as subjects of their own history within the exhibition space *and* that the exhibition should expose the role of those very systems of scholarship and everyday disciplining in their persecution of which non-Romani curators and visitors may be a part. One issue was how to balance the visually powerful but often silent evidence of Weltzel's photographs with the visual and textual noise generated by the perpetrators. The solution was not to suppress the perpetrator documents – police, Gestapo, RHFS and camp files, and mug shots which, in some cases, remain the only photographic record of family members – but to mark them as such exhibiting them as file folders. At the same time, the curators made a point of seeking and reproducing documents in which victims spoke for themselves. The layout of the exhibition panels, developed by Jana Müller and Jörg Folta, in collaboration with a professional design team, also gives Romani subjects a dominant presence by duplicating their images in life- and larger-than-life size.

The curators were conscious of the moral risks involved in making public the persecution stories of named individuals – a practice on which their whole heuristic approach depended. With so many examples of naïve and tainted scholarship before them, they were mindful of the imperative "nothing about us without us" (Bogdán et al. 2015). Here, they were fortunate in being able to work with members of the survivor community. Members of the Stein, Franz, and Lauenberger families are formally acknowledged in the exhibition credits, and Roma Respekt (a digital platform for networking and education around aspects of Romani life based in the German state of Saxony) is one of the exhibition's German sponsors. This type of engagement was found in the previous work of both curators. As already noted, Jana Müller came to the project through her work with Romani survivors and was able to draw on their advice in composing an account of Romani life and culture that informs the exhibition and interprets images and actions. At the beginning of Eve Rosenhaft's research, she made contact, through Reimar Gilsenbach, with the children of one of Weltzel's surviving subjects and sent them some photographs from the archive. In the course of their joint research new connections and contacts emerged and, as the exhibition travelled through Germany, people came forward who recognized their own relatives in the displays. Their stories have enriched the exhibition's knowledge base and testify to what has been gained in the rediscovery of

their own history. These encounters have not been without challenges: members of the very survivor family to whom Eve Rosenhaft had written 20 years before, asserting Weltzel's guilt, who still remember their grandfather's story of his betrayal, presented Müller with Rosenhaft's letter and pressed her hard to explain why the exhibition presents Weltzel as, at worst, merely passively complicit in the genocide. But they have become partners in the ongoing project of recovery, sharing their stories. Individuals often bring their testimony to events accompanying the exhibition (Küfner 2019).[3] In Britain, members of the immigrant Romani and the English Gypsy and Traveller communities have taken an active part in presenting their histories against the backdrop of the exhibition.

Figure 1. Romani activists who spoke at the exhibition (Liverpool Cathedral, May 2019): Mario Franz (Germany), Alexandra Bahor (Romania/UK), Sybil Lee (UK). Photo: Eve Rosenhaft.

3 The collaboration between journalist Juliane von Wedemeyer-Grimm and Janko Lauenberger was also a response to Jana Müller's publicizing of the Unku story and developed in parallel with the exhibition (Lauenberger and von Wedemeyer 2018). The book follows Lauenberger, the grandson of a surviving cousin of Unku, in pursuit of his family's history. It was launched in Dessau-Roßlau in March 2018 at the same venue as the exhibition.

In the full version of *"...don't forget the photos..."*, the commitment to anchoring the images in the details of their subjects' histories generated a very large and wordy display – visually, all the more so, given the exhibition is bilingual, so all explanatory text appears twice. It comprises 24 large pop-up banners, each double-sided – 48 panels in all – organized into six blocks. One of these blocks is introductory; it outlines the background and chronology of the persecution and introduces Hanns Weltzel's career, offering non-Romani visitors an identificatory focus for questions of complicity on which the curators would like them to reflect. The core of the exhibition is structured around families, with five blocks narrating the experiences of one, two, or three families. Four banners focus on the "Unku story".

This approach involves a degree of overlap and repetition; since the families in question were almost all interrelated, the same individuals often appear in more than one block. There is a certain repetitiveness, too, in the persecution narratives, because they seek to highlight the full variety of experiences across families and the particularity of each (respectively sterilization, medical experimentation, slave labour and death in concentration camps, flight and evasion), without suppressing the moments they largely had in common: expulsion from their campsites or neighbourhoods, internment in "Gypsy Camps" and/or immobilization in 1939, forced labour, transport of men to concentration camps following the 1938 "Operation Workshy", deportation to Auschwitz from 1943 onwards, and the postwar struggle for acknowledgement and compensation. The insistence on detail also reflected an anticipation of the knowledge that visitors would bring to the exhibition – following Georges Didi-Hubermann's observation that a Holocaust image "is merely an object … indecipherable and insignificant … so long as I have not established a relation … between what I see here and what I know from elsewhere" (Didi-Hubermann 2012, 112). The curators assumed visitors would have at least a basic knowledge of the Shoah and also some awareness that Roma count among victims (a list that British schoolchildren are expected to learn in the context of the primary school curriculum), but also that visitors would need to be told the specific features of their persecution – which carry distinct lessons for contemporary European societies. A text was needed to set out these dimensions, but it became clear that it was not enough: the fact of genocide was communicated but little nuanced detail was taken in.

Figure 2. Romani volunteer Iordan Abel advising a visitor (Liverpool Cathedral, May 2019). Photo: Eve Rosenhaft.

It is an adage among museum professionals that nobody reads the text, and yet of course exhibitors cannot do without text, and they want it to be accurate. Many visitors to *"…don't forget the photos…"* are happy to be led by the photographs, first identifying individuals who look interesting, before finding out what happened to them. In this sense the aesthetics of the exhibition allows for appreciation at different levels. However, some

visitors commented that they found it difficult to get their bearings in the forest of words and images, or to know what the curators wanted them to take away from the exhibition. A response to this was the English-language leaflet design. It summarises the narrative, has a map of key locations mentioned in the exhibition, provides guidance on how to view the banners, and is also a souvenir and a means to consolidate what visitors have learned.

It is also apparent that face-to-face interpretation on site by curators and volunteers and other active interventions, such as accompanying talks, are particularly important in drawing out the key features of the Holocaust experience of German Sinti and Roma and delivering what the curators take see as its key political messages: first, the genocidal practice of the Nazis emerged out of a longer history of everyday racism, and failure to acknowledge the genocide has allowed popular and institutional racism to persist. Second, related to it, the very “normality” of discrimination, policing, and social control that Romanies have suffered as a racialized minority means that key professional groups were, and are, implicated in their persecution, simply by virtue of doing their jobs. In the context of the exhibition in the UK, seminars and tours were organized for academics, photographers, health service workers, and police officers, and the exhibition provided a platform for training sessions for local council officers in Cheshire, where there is a substantial Traveller community. Both curators have also organized activities for schools and young people, based on the exhibition.

Figure 3. A workshop for schoolchildren (Liverpool Central Library, May 2018). Photo: Eve Rosenhaft.

2.2 Does It Work? Visitor Responses in Britain

The curators have attempted to measure the “success” of the exhibition mainly by using standardized visitor feedback forms. These ask visitors’ age and occupation, what brought them to the exhibition, and how much they knew about Romani genocide. Visitors are also invited to say what they have learned

from the exhibition, what actions they might take as a result of seeing it, whether they have any questions or any other comments or feedback. Unsurprisingly, only a relatively small proportion of visitors took time to fill these in, particularly at large venues. As of March 2020, 238 feedback forms were received. Ninety-eight were filled at Dessau-Roßlau in early 2018, most of them by schoolchildren. The remaining 140 come from UK venues between May 2018 and January 2020. Additional feedback was received from host organizations, and, in Germany, extensive media coverage testifies to the reception of the exhibition, if not to the response.

Here, we focus on the response of non-Romani visitors in the UK. This is not only because the range and number of feedback forms available is greater, but also because conditions there for the reception of the exhibition are distinct from those in Germany. In Germany it forms part of a highly developed culture of memorialization and political education about the Holocaust, in which people reflect on the dimensions of historical culpability in which they have a "genealogical" stake. So far, the exhibition has been on display mostly in cities in the region where the events it displays took place, and this, too, conditions visitor response. British viewers are also able and likely to draw on their experiences of institutionalized forms of Holocaust education and commemoration which have developed since the 1990s (Pearce 2014). But while the whole thrust of these initiatives has been to universalize the Holocaust experience – or at least the lessons we take from it – British audiences are positioned differently in relation to the actual events of the genocide. What they do share with the subjects of the exhibition, in a sense that is absolutely "genealogical", is a continuing pan-European history of prejudice, policing, and discrimination that is specific to relations between Roma and non-Roma. For British visitors to the exhibition, then, reflecting on "What we did then?" is less meaningful, while questions such as "What would I have done?" and "What am I doing now?" resonate more directly with the antigypsyism that they observe in their own streets, workplaces, and media – if they choose to look.

The fact that the exhibition introduces a group of victims whose experiences do not duplicate familiar Shoah trajectories is key to many visitor responses. To a degree it is perhaps surprising that visitors confess they knew nothing about Romani genocide or (less surprising) that what they knew was very general but its details were new and shocking to them. It seems that this unfamiliarity-within-the-familiar served to sharpen their attention and also add an edge to their reflective responses. There are certainly generic responses of the "never again" kind (Bachrach 2019). There is more often a self-conscious move from (paraphrasing) "Why haven't we heard this before?" to "I want to find out more" – about the people (Roma) *and* about the persecution, to "I will tell the story myself". One health service professional in Liverpool reported in a follow-up e-mail: "I have been impassioned by the stories and spoken to many colleagues and friends," and another wrote, "I see the world differently." Seeing Roma differently, interrogating one's own prejudices, is another theme: in Liverpool a visitor asked "Am I prone to forgetting the full horror of these events? Do I have any prejudices myself?", while visitors to a London synagogue said they would "look at news articles, comments I hear in a different light" or ask themselves "… how I regard Gypsies in the light of this exhibition".

In spite of the earlier complaints about the exhibition's size and complexity, it is clear that many visitors have taken the time to read the text. Although the photographs are most frequently singled out for praise, there are positive comments about the detail and depth of research, and, even without guidance, some

have spotted evidence of forms of everyday complicity: a 48-year-old director of public administration was struck by "the extent of state (police/church) cooperation with the Nazis in order to register and kill Sinti and Roma". An academic wrote: "I will approach my own research about real people and their photographic images with greater sensitivity and greater consideration of ethical issues."

In sum, "*...don't forget the photos...*" seems to have been successful in negotiating the ethico-epistemological challenges presented by the material itself, the research process, and the politics of representation (including co-production by Romani partners) – successful in that it has engaged and benefited both Romani and non-Romani "stakeholders" – and has demonstrably prompted visitors to reflect on their own attitudes and positions by providing them with new knowledge. In terms of the questions raised by Holocaust education and representation, the in-depth exploration of a relatively unfamiliar victim experience, that of Roma, seems to have sharpened the willingness of visitors to reflect, not only on the specific issue of antigypsyism, but also on wider issues of prejudice and ethical obligation. However, these outcomes reflect negotiations within a shared historical and cultural experience which has generated its own discourses about Holocaust, racism and responsibility, and a common grammar of representation.

3. Exhibition Experiences (2): *Unwelcome Neighbors*

The idea of taking the exhibition to South Korea/East Asia was conceived in 2018, when the Critical Global Studies Institute (CGSI) at Sogang University, offered to host it in Seoul.[4] It was a launch event for CGSI's "Mnemonic Solidarity" project, which explores the genesis of competitive victim narratives and possibilities for productive forms of shared remembering in both local transnational contexts (Lim and Rosenhaft 2021). The exhibition's journey to Seoul took place in the context of the well-documented globalization of Holocaust commemoration, which frames the mnemonic solidarity project, but exposed some of the unevenness of the "global mnemoscape" – or globalized structures of memory – which shared memorial practices are presumed to reflect (Lim 2018). The general outlines of the Holocaust may have become a universal knowledge but the level of detail, knowledge, and comprehension varies widely: for most East Asians, "Holocaust" evokes a set of basic facts and media tropes about the mass murder of Jews. The popularity of Anne Frank's diary in the region attests to this. More than 700,000 copies have been sold in China and more than four million in Japan. Even the North Korean government has recommended the book (Goodman and Miyazawa 2000, 167–72; Miles 2004, 375; Vooght 2017, 100), The planned exhibition offered an opportunity for Koreans to encounter a group of victims who have rarely been subjects in East Asia and expand their imaginative horizons and understanding of Nazi persecution. In the event, though, it quickly became clear that it would be neither practicable nor appropriate simply to import "*...don't forget the photos...*".

The substantially new exhibition, *Unwelcome Neighbors: Portraits of "Gypsy" Victims of the Holocaust and Others,* was on display at the Korea Foundation Gallery in downtown Seoul from 24 January until 28 February 2019 (Korea Foundation 2019). It had a total of 3812 visits. The Seoul exhibition also had Hanns

4 From September 2018 to August 2020 Eve Rosenhaft held a visiting professorship at CGSI.

Weltzel's photographs at its core but involved a largely new approach to presenting the material and communicating its ethico-political message. The specificity of the Roma Holocaust remained, as did the wider purpose of moving visitors from encountering victims, to reflecting on questions of complicity and responsibility in the here and now. This experiment in raising transnational awareness of the similarities between the treatment of Romani victims and that of other "unwelcome neighbors" at home called for a reconstruction of the European project.

3.1 *Unwelcome Neighbors*: Pedagogical Aims and Representational Strategies

Unwelcome Neighbors uses "Gypsy" in its title and exhibition texts. This was calculated. For most Korean visitors, the exhibition was their first close encounter with the concept and history of Roma, though many of them were familiar with the term "Gypsy". And the historical meanings and connotations of the terminology are completely absent in public discourse. Therefore, before introducing Romani victims, curators had to explain who Roma are, how they have been historically subject to racism, thus becoming objects of Nazi persecution, and finally why "Gypsy" may be a pejorative term. In essence this approach was not different from the one adopted by *"...don't forget the photos..."*. But the account offered in Seoul provided less detail. Relatively brief texts were juxtaposed with striking visuals: the first wall in the main gallery offered a map of Romani migrations, conventionalized images of the *chakra* and a concentration camp triangle (iconography that also featured on specially designed banners at the entrance to the exhibition).

Figure 4. Entrance to the Seoul exhibition. Photo: Eve Rosenhaft.

In spite of an acknowledged need for information (which we discuss below), the exhibition relied heavily on the power of Weltzel's photographs. In the introductory section, a number were displayed to illustrate

the everyday lives of Sinti and Roma in Germany before the persecution; the people and places in the photographs were not identified, and the photos were framed and hung, as in a gallery. Up to this point, the presentation focused on introducing the generic subject of "Gypsies". The display then focused on the specific, looking at Unku and her family. Images from "*...don't forget the photos...*" were selected and presented to form a narrative of the journey from freedom to persecution. It culminated in a family tree recording the deaths of Unku's relatives, represented by police mugshots, and ended with a brief textual account of the persecution and murder of German Sinti and Roma. The mugshots created a dramatic contrast with Weltzel's photos, serving as a reminder of the brutality of the police gaze. There were additional visual cues in the framing of Weltzel's photos: in earlier parts of the display, the frames were made of wood, whilst the pictures that hung in the "persecution section" were in unpolished metal frames. Visitors' senses were then mobilized, along with the gaze, in a process of engaging them emotionally, as they were drawn into the lives of individuals whom they had previously encountered as anonymous types. Once introduced to the Holocaust story, visitors could enter a set aside space to watch Jana Müller's film *Was mit Unku geschah*, running on a loop with Korean subtitles.

Figure 5. Introducing "Gypsies" at the Seoul exhibition. Photo: Yisook Son.

Figure 6. Unku's family tree. Photo: Yisook Son.

The goal here was to dramatize history so that Korean audiences would not only witness but also engage affectively with the memories of the Roma Holocaust. This signified a crucial difference between the European and the Seoul exhibitions, the involvement of creative artists in the Seoul team: artist-curator and filmmaker Ja Woonyung and photographer Yisook Son shaped the exhibition in collaboration with historian Jie-Hyun Lim. In extensive (and intense) conversations within the curatorial team Eve Rosenhaft (acting primarily as advisor) explained the history behind the photographs and what each of them represented. For the creative director of the Seoul exhibition, Ja Woonyung, the design of the exhibition was an expression of her emotional

engagement with Unku's story, and an effort to raise visitors to the same level of empathy and moral reflection. Before this project, she had worked on representations of global subjects, ranging from her own identity as a forced migrant under the South Korean military/developmental dictatorship to Arabs in Marseille's slums. In this sense, creative work on the exhibition had, for her, both a personal and a professional meaning.

The input of the artist-curators went beyond the structural rearrangement of images. Ja Woonyung crafted installations to materialize the Romani way of life and their experiences and comment on their persecution. One of the first things visitors saw was her life-size reproduction of a detail from one of Weltzel's photos of a caravan in the Magdeburg "Gypsy camp" (Figure 4), while in the gallery space, in front of the Unku narrative, she installed a scene representing an abandoned campsite. In a work of art directly invoking the fallacy of notions of "race", she set up two test tubes of artificial blood: a mocking comparison of "German blood" and "Gypsy blood", it also referenced the persistence of blood purity ideas in both Japanese and Korean nationalism (Robertson 2012; Han 2016, 30–31). Visitors happened upon Ja Woonyung's most daring and problematic installation at the end of the Unku section: a replica of the chair used by German police to seat people for mug shots. She anticipated that visitors would sit in it themselves, and by doing so would help close the temporal and spatial chasm between themselves and the victims of the Nazis.

Figure 7. Installation of an abandoned camping place. Photo: Yisook Son.

Figure 8. Police photographer's chair. Photo: Yisook Son.

Installations of this kind, including what might be called "violence re-enactment" works, are not uncommon in Korean exhibition spaces and historical and memory sites (Arai 2016); there is some overlap with "photo points" ubiquitous in public and tourist areas, which

offer opportunities for authorized placemaking (Zalewska 2017). This consideration served, to some extent, to appease Eve Rosenhaft's reservations about both aesthetic romanticization and "Disneyfication" (Metz 2008). Jana Müller, who was not involved in the curatorial process in Seoul, commented afterwards that installations "would not have been possible in an exhibition in Europe or Germany …. There would have been an outcry from the Sinti and Roma community" (Müller 2019). As familiar a strategy as it may have been, however, the replica chair proved problematic even for Korean visitors, illustrating vividly one of the central challenges of Holocaust representation: balancing empathy and horror (with the danger of re-traumatizing survivors).

Ja Woonyung actively defended her design as an artistic intervention, articulating retrospectively how the final shape of the exhibition reflected a real tension between her own aims and the historians' insistence on a pedagogical and documentary approach. Interviewed in 2021, she said she understood the concerns of Rosenhaft and Müller. Yet as an artist, her purpose in representing and exposing atrocious acts, in the most vivid way possible, was "to find redemption for the victims". She had intended visitors to react with horror, and her only regret was that she should have expressed her message even more strongly (Ja Woonyung 2021). In fact, Ja Woonyung's intuition echoed the comments of viewers of "*...don't forget the photos...*", who frequently ask about the head braces visible in the mug shots: in the absence of the kind of explicitly horrific images we are accustomed to seeing from the camps, they seem to be looking for visible evidence of abuse. The Seoul exhibition answered that question by inviting visitors to approach the police photographer's equipment as an instrument of torture. And visitors were in fact divided in their reactions when invited to sit down.

The most novel feature of *Unwelcome Neighbors* was its last section. Historians on the curating team, CGSI Director Jie-Hyun Lim and Eve Rosenhaft, envisaged the exhibition as a site where diverse critical memories could flourish beyond, and in dialogue with, Holocaust memory, prompting transnational reflection on ethical and political values. Accompanying public events focused on Korean labour and immigrant struggles and on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In order to bring home the message of solidarity and responsibility, the curators opened the final section to work by Korean photographic artists, Dongkeun Lee and Nari Lim, who take photographs of South Korea's ethnic minorities and immigrant workers. Lee documented the experience of a Vietnamese-Korean woman who had arrived as a marriage

Figure 9. Images of Korea's "unwelcome neighbors" today. Photo: Yisook Son.

migrants, while Lim's images captured how "foreigners" speak of their personal experience as aliens in South Korea. The subjects of both bodies of work affirm their ethnic and personal identities, as well as their struggle to belong to Korean society.

The critical juxtaposition of pictures of Roma and ethnic minorities in Korean society today, aimed to move visitors beyond empathy or identification with victims. In particular, the curators were determined to resist the temptation to mobilize discourses of Korean wartime and colonial suffering that have too often relied on rhetorical analogies with the Holocaust for nationalist purposes (Lim 2010). Denied the complacent closure of a generic "never again", visitors could reflect self-critically on their own attitudes. The lesson of the "forgotten Holocaust" was that they should open their eyes to forgotten victims of everyday racism, an acknowledged problem in Korea. (The exhibition was planned during a populist backlash over the settlement of some 550 Yemeni asylum seekers who arrived on on Jeju Island between 2016 and 2018.) In this sense, the Seoul exhibition was more aggressive than "*...don't forget the photos...*" in pressing home the shared message about racism and responsibility. It was also more daring, in adopting a strategy that might be charged with relativizing or even trivializing the genocide. This is an issue that both historian curators have confronted in their previous work, and they agreed that the critical juxtaposition of episodes from different times and places could legitimately test the potential for solidarity and meaningful commemoration across national and cultural boundaries. The first challenge was whether an analogy, drawn in such stark terms between historical moments that differed not only in time and place but also in the extent to which visitors could grasp them in detail, would convince at any level.

3.2 Challenges and Politics of Representation: Antigypsyism without Romani Subjects

We noted above that the curators assumed Korean audiences were unfamiliar with Roma, although they would recognize the term "Gypsy" and be somewhat familiar with the outline of the Shoah. Roma have never had any significant role in modern East Asia, although there was a small community of mostly Russian Roma in Shanghai during the early twentieth century (French 2013). In Japan, some key German texts reflecting the Roma Holocaust (including *Ede und Unku*) have been translated in the past decade (notably by the sociologist Ma[r]tin Kaneko – see Kaneko 2016) and have been subjects of literary critical scholarship. The genocide is also mentioned in history textbooks, but public resonance has been limited. There are even fewer publications about Roma in Korea, and most are translations of European survey histories such as Henriette Asséo's *Les Tsiganes, une destinée européenne* and Angus Fraser's *The Gypsies*. The only Roma-related public exhibition in South Korea before *Unwelcome Neighbors* was an exhibition of work by the Czech photographer Josef Koudelka, held at the Museum of Photography in Seoul in 2016–17. Koudelka occupies a key position in the photographic canon of Roma, but in Seoul questions concerning the politics of representation and Roma subjectivity were largely absent. It was his status as a photographic artist that was emphasised, and in reports of his press conference Koudelka, himself, was quoted saying that "the pictures are not about Gypsies. Instead, the Gypsies serve as a medium for telling the story of humanity and human lives" (Kwon 2016). Essentially, then, the curators of *Unwelcome Neighbors* assumed that their exhibition would be speaking to an empty space.

What they did not anticipate was the extent to which stereotypical, and indeed hostile, visions of Roma had already arrived from Europe. In most cases, Koreans' only opportunities for direct encounters with Roma are during visits to Europe and, as they travel, they are already conditioned to expect problems. Amnesty International Korea followed up a report on its website about evictions of Italian Roma with a Facebook post condemning the fact that many Korean travel sites warn visitors to Europe to "watch out for Gypsies" (Amnesty International 2013). In effect, the first challenge was to counter a particular form of antigypsyism without Romani subjects.

In this context, the strategy of starting by explaining "Gypsies" made sense, but it became clear that deploying the term itself, in order to challenge it, was a high-risk translational tight rope. It needed to acknowledge the marginalization of Romanies in European modernity, while not depicting them as primitive outsiders. But the curators' apprehension, about the emotional and physical distance between subjects and audiences, led to a decision to put aesthetic representation before textual explanation. In contrast to the Anglo-German curatorial approach, Seoul artist-curators themselves started identifying individuals in the Weltzel photos who looked interesting and exotic, and then proceeded to build a narrative that would give individuality to the photographic subjects and establish their status as innocent victims of genocide.

The art installations were similarly designed to stimulate sympathy and to serve as a cultural bridge between complex Romani pasts and Korean spectators. But the danger here, as with the selection and treatment of the photographs, was that it would result in ethnic essentialization and romanticization. The very tool that was used to prompt the audiences to understand the ethnic "other" laid its own epistemological traps. The installation showing a fenced-in caravan was not identifiable as a scene of persecution. The abandoned campsite, scattered with unidentified clothes and musical instruments, against a background of recorded violin music, was genuinely moving for a visitor who already knew the history or took care to read the exhibition texts, and many visitors testified that it successfully communicated the sense of despair and devastation that had inspired the artist. But the installations, inadvertently, confirmed stereotypes and emphasised difference, at best raising more questions than they answered, and not questions of the kind that the curators had hoped. The image of a racialized "other" was thus re-appropriated within the Seoul exhibition space.

In Seoul, as in Europe, face-to-face interpretation on site was a key aspect of the exhibition experience. Three guides (all women) were employed by the Korea Foundation to lead guided tours, and they were also on hand to answer questions; nearly all visitors interacted with them (Lee 2019).[5] In the absence of textual explanation their role was crucial, and the experience exposed the influence, as well as the danger of this practice. They were given some very basic training, including a walkthrough, a brief history of German Sinti and their persecution and some general guidelines. In practice they adopted individual approaches, in some cases subverting the narrative structure of the exhibition. In a sincere effort to "connect" with visitors, one of them regularly referred both to her own experience of being harassed by

5 Lee was present in the gallery as an observer throughout the whole period of the exhibition and interviewed the guides about their experience.

(presumed) Roma on the street in Europe and to the character Esmeralda from the Disney film version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. This was echoed in visitor responses to the figure of Unku. In the context of "*…don't forget the photos…*", attention to her story was motivated by its cultural significance for (East) German audiences. The even stronger focus on her in Seoul might have had some resonance with Korean visitors sensitized to the trope of the young woman victim – the comfort-woman-as-Anne Frank (e.g., Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation 2019). Esmeralda is, of course, an icon for the *sexualized* image of the Romni/Sintezza, and the archive of Weltzel's photographs bears undeniable traces of an erotic gaze (Rosenhaft 2008). The substantial number of visitors to *Unwelcome Neighbors* who commented specifically on Unku's exotic attractiveness was a disappointing outcome of this particular alchemy.

3.3 How Did Seoulites Respond? Limited Success and Different Mnemoscapes

The Seoul exhibition attempted to walk a fine line between historical exhibition and an aesthetic hybrid of art and history. Whether the combination would work, in terms of the curators' pedagogical and representational objectives, would depend on the interplay of materials, producers, mediators, and audiences. Visitor responses were captured mainly by survey forms which they were asked to fill at the end of the exhibition. The questionnaires solicited a range of information, from visitor demographics and pre-visit knowledge of the Holocaust, to their general impression of the exhibit's message and their views on the juxtaposition of the Holocaust and contemporary situations. The forms included standardized questions, as well as requesting visitors to write their own thoughts down. However, tracking and presenting quantifiable responses was not their primary purpose. Rather, the observations below reflect a qualitative analysis, aimed at identifying discursive responses that point to patterns and connections and display the constructive nature of meaning-making within the exhibition (Sandell 2006). The visitor comments that we have highlighted are significant, not least, in that they differ substantially from the responses that British visitors had to comparable questions (implicit and explicit).

Taken as a whole, visitor responses were mixed and sometimes nuanced. The 345 visitors who completed questionnaires had clearly paid close attention to the displays, and most respondents were willing to engage seriously with the issue of what lessons Koreans should draw from the Roma Holocaust experience, and how that is best represented. At the same time, the attempt by *Unwelcome Neighbors* to overcome Korean ignorance of Romani ethnicity clearly led to some unintended side-effects.

The vast majority of the respondents admitted that they had never learned anything about "other victims" of the Holocaust, let alone Roma, before seeing the exhibition. They expressed satisfaction and even gratitude to the curators for educating them about forgotten victims of the Holocaust. While they were appalled and saddened by the Nazi terror, they described being both enlightened and emotionally drawn to the Romani victims, developing a strong sense of affinity. As an affective mode of knowledge production, the Seoul exhibition thus seems to have been successful to the extent that it not only expanded their mental maps of the Holocaust beyond the Shoah, but also generated a basic and emotive recognition of Roma as an ethnic group.

For many visitors, however, this recognition was expressed as an acute, or even heightened, awareness of difference. There were persistent questions about who "Gypsies" (really) are, often couched in terms of mild suspicion. One of the visitors even e-mailed the organizers with nine questions; these included "Why did they pursue the Gypsy way of life? Do Gypsies just not have their own nation-state? Or do they pledge loyalty to the nation-state in which they reside? Do they have a national allegiance towards the country in which they live?" and "It seems difficult to maintain a travelling lifestyle, so why did they live as Gypsies and not as nationals within a nation-state?" Moreover, even visitors who had some contact with Roma repeated misconceptions, typically rooted in European antigypsy prejudice, such as pickpocketing or "asociality". Both questions and comments underline how different conditions for the reception in Seoul were from those in Europe; this mediated encounter with historical Romanies could not make up for either the physical absence of real Romanies, or their limited but powerful discursive presence in Koreans' vision of the wider (and stranger) world.

Aside from communicating Holocaust history, the main purpose of the exhibition was to have audiences seek the familiar within the unfamiliar. Ironically, the epistemological strangeness of Roma ethnic identity seems to have actually sharpened visitors' attention to critical interconnections and/or juxtapositions of Romani victims and other possible sufferers – though they differed in how they evaluated those connections. In a short text introducing the exhibition, Jie-Hyun Lim explicitly asked:

> Why do we have a sense of *déjà vu* when we look at the portraits of Romani victims? The passive objective complicity hiding behind Weltzel's camera lens reminds us of Koreans' hostile indifference towards their own unwelcome neighbors – refugees and foreigners – today. It is up to the audience to decide how to read the attitudes of contemporary Koreans towards their unwelcome neighbors.

The post-visit survey specifically posed two questions that probed the capacity of the Korean public for transnational solidarity and self-reflection in these terms: (1) In global history, do you think there have been any groups of people who have suffered a fate similar to that of the Romani victims? (2) In contemporary Korean society, do you think there have been any groups of people who have suffered a fate similar to that of the Romani victims?

In answer to the first question, nearly half of the respondents invoked atrocities and victims familiar from their own national past. Korean victims of Japanese colonialism (comfort women and forced laborers), the developmental dictatorship, and the Korean War were frequently named, along with Jews. Many respondents did mention other non-Korean victims, including immigrants, refugees, and slaves. These answers indicate that visitors were able to seize opportunities for the critical juxtaposition of diverse experiences and pasts, but the self-identification of Koreans as victims, like Roma, was more frequent than the acknowledgement of their role as implicated subjects or perpetrators. This is apparent from responses to the second question. A number of visitors responded as the curators had hoped. One wrote "There are three million Unkus in the community centres for immigrants. The Roma Holocaust is comparable." Another reported: "The moment I turned to the Korean section, I realized that if things go wrong, the situation in this country might turn into Holocaust."

However, a not insignificant number of visitors resisted the connection between the lives of Roma and the lives of their own Others. Their objections were often expressed as indignation at the relativization or trivialization of the Holocaust, though by implication they were minimizing the significance of racism at home themselves. In response to Jie-Hyun Lim's question, those visitors displayed what we might call a sense of *jamais vu*. One of the guides, a native of Jeju Island, which suffered a brutal anti-communist terror between 1948 and 1950, was very explicit on both points. She reported that her mediation of the exhibition narrative was informed by memories of the stories her grandparents had told her about those years. But this moment of multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) was at odds with her complaint about the "invasion of refugees" on Jeju.

Conclusion

"...don't forget the photos..." and *Unwelcome Neighbors* deployed the same core material to communicate the same history and pose analogous ethical challenges to two very different audiences. In both cases, the curators were aware that they were telling stories that would be unfamiliar to their audiences (at least in detail) and also asking them to see a familiar story (the Holocaust) in a new way, going beyond identification with the victims or the complacent closure of "never again", to see themselves as implicated subjects. The representational strategies they adopted took account of this, and one of the elements of this was to deploy conventions of display, familiar in the respective contexts: while *"...don't forget the photos..."* adopted an information-rich approach to stress existing Holocaust awareness, *Unwelcome Neighbors* addressed the presumed ignorance of Koreans with a structured but aestheticized presentation designed to take visitors on an emotional journey – a photographic exhibition that was much more than that. This had the effect, for some Korean visitors at least, of confirming rather than challenging stereotypes, a reminder of how important on-site, face-to-face communication is, in combination with static text and images. It is also to do with two other aspects of its reception: first, the presence/absence of Romani neighbours not only informed visitor responses in respective regions but also determined the extent to which the curators felt bound by a responsibility to Romani subjects themselves and their survivor community and were committed to a representational vocabulary that does justice to a problematic history of aestheticization and exoticization. And (second) that sense of responsibility is, itself, a discursive construct. It depends on the existence of a verbal and sentimental repertoire that emerged in the liberal West in the late twentieth century, which underpins a shared language of racial justice and informs responses to Holocaust representation. This discursive context is less well embedded in East Asian public culture, although the globalization of Holocaust memory and education has contributed to a complex process of change there. Moreover, it seems likely that while *"...don't forget the photos..."* generally attracted visitors who were already operating within that discourse (given its venues and hosts), while *Unwelcome Neighbors* drew more of a cross-section of the curious (despite the fact that substantial media coverage of the exhibition cited the curators' political aims). As of the spring of 2020 *"...don't forget the photos..."* was still travelling – its progress interrupted only by the coronavirus pandemic. The Seoul exhibition closed at the end of February 2019. It remains to be seen whether *Unwelcome Neighbors* will have left traces in South Korea's historical consciousness or memory culture.

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