



A Virtual Memorial | **RIGA**
Commemorative Interventions | 1-8 June 2012



Opening speech by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne

@ the Private View on 1 June 2012, 12h

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Wilfried Agricola de Cologne. I am the director of Cologne International Videoart Festival, and artvideoKOELN, the international curatorial initiative art and moving images from Cologne/Germany

In the name of the four event partners, i.e. the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum, the association Shamir, Culture and Art Project NOASS and artvideoKoeln, I would like to welcome and thank you very much for coming to this private view and opening of

A Virtual Memorial Riga 2012 – Commemorative Interventions featuring Shoah Film Collection

In first place, I would to thank these partners for their confidence and trust in my project. Particularly two persons have an eminent relevance for the realization of this project in Riga, I would like to thank them both very much. It is Rabbi Menachem Barkahan, chairman of SHAMIR and Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum, since he made it possible that this event is standing now in the major context of the International Conference of Holocaust Museums, and Dzintars Zilgalvis, the chairman of Culture & Arts Project NOASS which hosting this event on the floating art galleries. Without their cultural visions, engagement and activity you all would not be here and able to experience this wonderful event.

I would like join the words of the new German President Joachim Gauck when he started his speech after being elected as the president by the German Parliament

What a wonderful day!

I would like to repeat these words and would like say them loud: **What a wonderful day!**

Just arrived today, **The European Parliament** announced to honour the outstanding initiative of SFC-Shoah Film Collection by taking **Patronage** of this presentation in Riga!

What a wonderful day!

It is wonderful to have all of your here!!

Cordial thanks especially to your excellency, the Ambassador of Israel!

What a wonderful day!

What a wonderful day for the victims of Holocaust, since the occasion of this event is representing a milestone in the remembrance of the Holocaust via art.



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So, it is a wonderful day for art, since this initiative of the **Shoah Film Collection** would like to open new doors in dealing with the Shoah or Holocaust by using new technologies and contemporary approaches in art and for artists!

So, it is a wonderful day for the artists and in the same way for art lovers and all culturally active people like you.

It is a wonderful day !

How many of you were coming, while the topic of Shoah or Holocaust is really so very heavy like the weather today.

After World War II, it was said, art would be dead, but, obviously it was not like that, then it was said, the Holocaust would not be representable, at all, for all times. There are some, but not too many examples, that this is not completely true. But the new technologies, especially the use of interactivity and moving images in art opened the door for representing processes.

From my personal point of view, understanding the Holocaust means understanding the processes the victims were undergoing, starting from the simple discriminations in all day life to the dehumanizing escalation of the industrial extermination of millions of humans based on an insane ideology.

The new vision on the SHOAH as a conglomerate of multi-faceted processes allows artists to experiment with new approaches by focusing on the details of human life.

What a wonderful day!

You have the opportunity to meet eight of the wonderful 40 artists which currently are forming the basis of Shoah Film Collection, by name Doron Polak and Eitan Vitkon from Israel, Shelley Jordon, Jan Needham and Ben Neufeld from USA, Felice Hapetzeder from Sweden, Doris Neidl from Austria and Cristiano Berti from Italy.

Therefore, my special thanks go at this stage particularly to the Embassies of Israel, USA, Sweden and Austria who made the presence of these artists only possible.

So, this is really a wonderful day.

But **A Virtual Memorial Riga 2012** is placing Shoah Film Collection in the context of complementary interventions. I am really happy to invite you now to the opening of three exhibitions at the floating art gallery of NOASS who stand under the motto: „How Memories Survive”.

The photographs by Eitan Vitkon in the upper gallery show in an experimental and magnificent way documents of the performance Doron Polak was preparing for Riga, since Riga is the place of his ancestors. In Riga, there was the ghetto where his father was imprisoned by the Nazi and, thanks GOD, survived.



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The lower gallery is presenting drawings by the Italian artist Paolo Bonfiglio, a small selection from more than 10000 of these handmade drawings he created for his animated film „Mortale”, one of the highlights of Shoah Film Collection, its exhibitions and screenings.

The third exhibition component is representing the installation of Shoah Film Collection on flat screen monitors placed in the context of both exhibitions. All the exhibition components complement each other. Each of them intends to give relevant background information about the “making of”, thus for a substantial understanding of the films.

Following in short will another artistic highlight, the performance by Doron Polak from Tel- Aviv which he was planning for Riga already since some time pointing to the family roots in Riga based on the diary of his father he made during his time at the Riga Ghetto.

What a wonderful day!

For art, since the opening is just the starting point to three days of interventions, starting today, continuing tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday, on 19h with artists talks, lectures and discussions completed by the screening of 6 compilations presenting all films and videos from Shoah Film Collection, beginning each days on 9.30 at night.

While the exhibition is lasting until 8 June, I will have the honor to present Shoah Film collection and its initiative as an intervention also during the International Conference of Holocaust Museum taking place on 4 and 5 June at Academy of Sciences.

So, this will be the next following highlight and I am really very proud to be part of it.

What a wonderful day!

Finally, I would like to thank particularly the artists for coming and make this event so rich.

My special thanks go also to the team of voluntary collaborators of NOASS, by name Alise, Zanda and Kate.

This is really a wonderful day!

Now, I would like invite all of you to share it with me during this private view and this opening, this evening and the coming days.

Thank you very much!!