

Materials – Relationship – Gender. Artefacts from Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen Concentration Camps

Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten / Brandenburg Memorial Foundation in cooperation with the Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft / University of Applied Sciences Berlin

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The growing relevance of visual and material testimonies for the historiography of the Nazi concentration camps, and their future importance in educational work in the field of political history, are the starting point for this research project. The depots of Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen memorial sites contain over 900 artefacts, including cigarette holders, miniatures carved out of toothbrush handles, illustrated address books and notebooks, and hand-embroidered cloths.

These objects shall be systematically and comparatively examined in the framework of the research project. The research will investigate the methods of production, the significance, and the socio-cultural functions of the artefacts as well as their subsequent utilization and collection histories. The focus will be on *agency* in the sense of social behaviour in situations of brutal control and constraints, with reference to the multi-relational category of gender.

Subsidiary projects will investigate the artefacts first of all in terms of their motifs and iconography and the biographies of the producers and collectors; second, the social relationships and networks in the camp connected with the artefacts will be analysed; and third, the characterisation of the material used and its provenance, along with the production techniques, will be examined in detail. Additionally, conservational concepts for different groups of materials will be developed in teaching projects.

By interlinking research perspectives in the fields of cultural science, materials and technological history and conservation, the Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten / Brandenburg Memorial Foundation and the Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft / University of Applied Sciences Berlin will illuminate the material testimonies from the concentration camps in all their many aspects. This will contribute to the interdisciplinary research debate on witnesses of truth and testimonies of victims of Nazi persecution.

Planned results of the project include two monographs, an interdisciplinary workshop and an international conference, as well as an online databank and development of an exhibition concept for presentation of the objects and working results.