

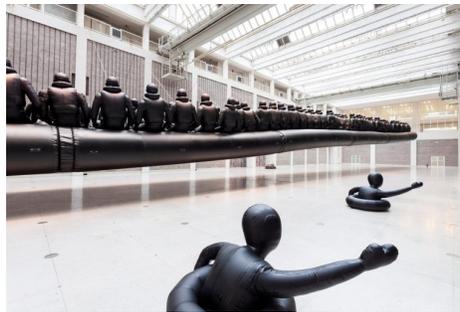


STAGE 1: GETTING STARTED

This stage serves as an introduction for the module and is aimed to get the students into the topic and to formulate their first questions. The same method will be used to close this unit.

Instructions

The facilitator hangs five „exhibits“/elements in the class-/seminar room's corners:



Ai Weiwei's art installation „Law of the Journey“
courtesy of the National Gallery in Prague



Banksy's art project „Dismaland“ (Bemusement
Park)
courtesy of Virginie Noel Photography



Photo of the efforts to deny entry to the passengers of the St. Louis in the harbour of Havana, Cuba. (June 1939)

AP Photo



Fred Packer in the *New York Daily Mirror* - June 6, 1939

Caricature by Fred L. Packer

Dr. Rafael Medoff, The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies; Originally published in: *New York Daily Mirror*, 6. Juni 1939

<http://new.wymaninstitute.org/2005/05/making-the-holocaust-unforgettable-through-cartoons/>



**Wladyslaw Szlengel –
Ships are Sailing (1938)**

Ships are sailing about the wilderness
About the oceans and the seas
They sail at day they sail at night
Ships are sailing with refugees
go and go – here and there
They knock at ports and at gates
the world has shut and bobbed itself
So they sail in an infinite drift
where ever they go – written on gates,
The words – “there is no room”.
Ships are sailing ships are sailing
Through the glare and through the depths
A ship, a coffin – not a ship
The place is just black ink
Enough of which
To write a billion letters
A reply is given in no less than
A billion letters without sympathy
four words only: “THERE IS NO ROOM!”

So they shall remain on ships
To ding themselves about the depths
Not privateers – not pirates
Or frisks – Some are rich
Not heroes – not wanderers
People without a tomorrow – no one’s souls
People out of our world
People for whom there is no room
The sphere of life spins, bathed
In rich treasures and wonders
The sun caresses it – brimming with flowers
So much land – so many countries
Then it stops! – did it surrender?
Please get out- there is no room
Ships are sailing...
Ships are sailing...
Ships are sailing with refugees...

Poem of Wladiyslaw Szlengel: Ships are Sailing (1938)

Background to the Exhibits/Elements

Photo of an Art Installation by Ai Weiwei (National Gallery of Prague, 2017)



Ai Weiwei is a Chinese contemporary artist and activist. Weiwei was born in Beijing in August 1957, the son of the Chinese poet Ai Qing. When he was one year old, his family was sent to exile, returning to Beijing 8 years later. Weiwei moved to the United States in 1981. After 12 years, in 1993, he came back to China due to his father's illness, and since then based his art there. Weiwei's artwork often plays with the relationship between the contemporary world and the traditional Chinese models of art, thought and production. Weiwei is a human rights activist and uses his work to discuss themes such as censorship, surveillance, globalization and corruption. His criticism of the Chinese government led him to multiple public arrests and detentions.

In March 2017 Weiwei revealed his biggest art piece to date in the National Gallery of Prague. The installation, titled *Law of the Journey*, features a 70 meter long inflatable boat sculpture, along with 258 oversized figures representing refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean. The installation has been created in a Chinese factory that also produces actual dinghies that have been used by refugees. In the past, Weiwei has made several other artworks dealing with the world refugee crisis.



Photo of the Art Installation "Dismaland" by Banksy (2015)

+

Banksy is an anonymous, England based graffiti artist, political activist and film director. Banksy has started creating street art in the early 1990s in Bristol, UK. It became known for its unique stencil-based style of graffiti, many of the works turning into viral images online. Banksy's work is often satirical, criticizing western politics and notions. In 20 years of activity, the artist – who's real identity is still unknown – has painted street art all over the world, as well as created films and installation projects.

In 2015 Banksy created an installation called *Dismaland*. *Dismaland* is a 'bemusement park', described by the artist as "the UK's most disappointing new visitor attraction." The apocalyptic, grim Disneyland parody included artwork from 58 world artists, criticizing consumer culture, immigration politics, celebrity culture and so on. One of the artworks is a boat pond, but in it, instead of the typical amusement park motorboats, float miniature refugee boats. *Dismaland* was open for visitors for 5 weeks during August-September 2015, attracting more than 150,000 visitors. After its closure, Banksy decided to donate all material used for creating the installation to the Jungle refugee camp near Calais, France, to be used for creating shelters.

Photo of the St. Louis in the waters near Havana (1939)

+

The photo, taken in Juni 1939, shows the efforts of cuban authorities to deny entry to the passengers of die German ship St. Louis. The overall 917 jewish refugees from Germany had no official entry permits. After president Bru had ordered the St. Louis to leave Cuban waters on June 2nd, the St. Louis – left with no alternative – started its way back to Hamburg, Germany.



Caricature by Fred Packer in the New York Daily Mirror (1939) +

Fred L. Packer (1886 – 1956) was an American illustrator and political cartoonist. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning in 1952.

The one image which most simply and dramatically summed up the abandonment of the Jews was an editorial cartoon that was published in the New York Daily Mirror on June 6, 1939, at the peak of the St. Louis crisis. Drawn by Fred L. Packer, the cartoon shows a tiny boat, the words “Jewish refugee ship” coming out of its smokestack, sailing past the statue of liberty. At the base of the statue are the famous words, “Give me your tired, your poor ... Send those, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,” but from her upraised torch hangs a sign reading “Keep Out.” Lady Liberty’s face is turned away from the refugee ship. The cartoon is headlined “Ashamed!,” and an accompanying editorial described Lady Liberty as turning away in shame over America’s anti-immigration policy.

Poem "Ships are Sailing" by Władysław Szlengel (1938) +

Władysław Szlengel was a Jewish poet, known as one of the most famous artists in Warsaw before the Holocaust. Szlengel continued to write and perform in the Warsaw Ghetto, where he was forced into labor in a factory that manufactured brushes. In the Ghetto he renewed a performance called “the living newspaper”, which he used to perform during literary evenings before the war. On May 8th 1943, during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, his hiding place was discovered by the Nazis and he was murdered together with his wife and approximately 160 other Jews who were hiding there.

Some of Szlengel’s works were found in different locations after the war ended. A collection of his poems was published in Polish in 1977, and was translated into Hebrew by Halina Birenbaum in 1987.

Walking in the room looking at the different exhibits, the participants choose one of the exhibits and stay standing next to it. In the small groups that are formed next to the exhibits, participants then discuss briefly the reasons for their choice and the questions that they think are related to this exhibit. They write them down for the following working steps.



Transition to stage 2

Szlengel's poem perfectly fits the stories and images we have constantly seen in the media in the last years (especially in 2015). It was written in 1938 in relation to German, Czech and Austrian Jews trying to flee Nazi Germany, yet being refused entry to other countries. One of most known and documented cases of such a ship, sailing with refugees and knocking at ports and gates and being refused entry, was the MS St. Louis.