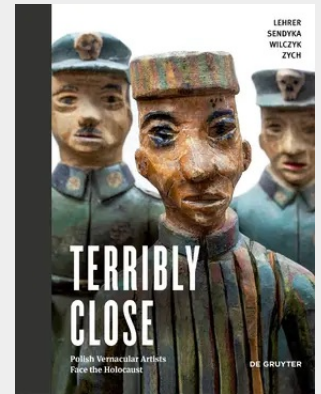


Terribly Close

Polish Vernacular Artists Face the Holocaust

Art responding to the Holocaust – an even often deemed unrepresentable – has sparked much discussion regarding its themes, strategies, challenges. As knowledge about World War II's genocide has expanded beyond the history of ghettos and camps, Eastern Europe's provinces have come into view. In this broader frame, vernacular, non-professional, so-called "folk" artists in Poland become visible, working outside of elite urban culture. What did such artists see? What did they experience? What remained in their memories in the postwar years? How were these represented? And indeed, whose memories were they? This book concerns the responses of Polish non-professional artists to the violence that they witnessed, or inherited as "post-witnesses" if they were born after the war and gained knowledge second-hand. It shows how memory was controlled, silenced, or amplified by institutions such as the state, the church, or museums both at home and abroad, particularly in Germany, and how amateur art connected Poles, Germans, and Jews, in forms of attempted reconciliation even as it served as a medium for the transfer of guilt.

Explored here are questions about how this type of art may have functioned to sustain the memory of the Holocaust, as well as to expedite its forgetting.



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