

Visual arts: 'Tribute to the Spiritual Space at Auschwitz' exhibit a haunting reminder



A beautiful but very somber and haunting exhibit in Capital University's [Schumacher Gallery](#) serves as an elegy for the more than one million people murdered at [Auschwitz](#) concentration camp in German-occupied Poland.

"[A Requiem: Tribute to the Spiritual Space at Auschwitz](#)," continuing through Dec. 11 in the gallery, is a small but powerful exhibit of large-scale black-and-white photographs by [Susan May Tell](#), a New York-based fine art photographer.

The works, each 4-by-6-feet with simple black frames, include images of remnants of gas chambers, barbed-wire fences, barracks with rows of

empty bunks, gates with padlocks and in one particularly disturbing scene, a pile of battered suitcases and satchels with printed names such as "Hanna Feitsma, Holland." None of the photographs include humans.



The untitled images, in black and white like many holocaust photographs, seem more potent and less distracting than if they were in color. The gentle, recorded string music that plays in the background serves as appropriate and thoughtful accompaniment.

In the text for the exhibit, Tell explains that she visited the grounds of Auschwitz on an impromptu trip in 1998. "I felt the presence of ghosts guiding me, guiding my camera and was then, and continue to be now, moved to share the tragedy of this place through the images I saw through my lens."

Auschwitz, located in Oswiecim, Poland, was the largest of Nazi Germany's concentration camps, where between 1.3 and 1.5 million people — 90 percent of them Jewish — were murdered in gas chambers.

In the exhibit catalog, Tell alternates her photographs with segments of poems by the late [Stanley Kunitz](#), former poet laureate of the United States. Between photos of the brick structures and fences of Auschwitz are words such as these:

"When they shall paint our sockets
gray/And light us like a stinking
fuse/Remember that we once could
say/Yesterday we had a world to lose."

Through such partnership of words and images and the strength of her photos, Tell has found beauty and grace in the midst of horror — surely an artist's role in ensuring remembrance.



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At a glance

"A Requiem: Tribute to the Spiritual Space at Auschwitz" by Susan May Tell continues through Dec. 11 in Capital University's Schumacher Gallery, Fourth Floor Library, College Avenue and East Main Street, Bexley. Hours: noon to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, 1 to 4:30 p.m. Saturdays. The gallery will be closed Nov. 24-28. Masks are required. Call 614-236-6319 or visit www.capital.edu.