



A REQUIEM

tribute to the spiritual space at Auschwitz

SUSAN MAY TELL

A REQUIEM: TRIBUTE TO THE SPIRITUAL SPACE AT AUSCHWITZ

In Auschwitz, I felt the presence of its 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.

I arrived there almost by happenstance. While planning a trip to Prague and Budapest, I learned that an overnight train goes from Prague to Krakow—and from there it was a short local train ride to Auschwitz.

I walked the grounds in silence, in meditation, photographing the aesthetics, the mood, the sense of foreboding—and tried to capture the energy that lives in that space.

Hopefully visitors will find these images reveal the presence of unspeakable horror, convey the ever present pathos of desolation, and give a real sense of the large scale of this death camp.

Equally important to my artistic vision is my commitment to Auschwitz as a meditation on decay and memory. Like others' sacred grounds that are decaying, Auschwitz today is disappearing and raises questions about whether places of this kind should be restored and the importance of memory and commemoration.

Susan May Tell



Requiem 01, 1998
gelatin silver print, 72 x 48 inches

A REQUIEM AT THE MUSEUM OF ART / FORT LAUDERDALE



A REQUIEM AT THE GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY



TESTIMONIALS

Requiem touches a resonant chord in a diverse and wide group of nationalities, religions, cultures, and ages.

- A middle-aged Japanese woman was viewing the photographs inside the gallery while I was talking to the Director of the Griffin Museum of Photography, near the entranceway. When the woman left the gallery, the Director said “Here's the artist” and the woman burst into tears. All I could do was hug her. Later she approached me and in broken, accented English, said “very beautiful.”
- An Iranian Muslim emailed: “I simply wanted to let you know how I felt about your very poignant exhibition... As I stood in the middle of it...the images took me there and I could hear the yelling, the screaming, the feeling of hopelessness of the victims...and I could not stop the tears..... For this very reason your exhibit reminds the viewer of the prejudice, injustice and the fact that it is still happening to many all over this world.”
- A Latina high school student pointed to what looks like smudged eyes in one of the photographs and said that in her Puerto Rican culture, the smudges symbolize “ghost.”
- An American architect attended the gallery talk where the discussion included what should be done with places of this kind and later emailed: “I will continue to puzzle over the issues related to preservation of tragic sites and how to ensure that we do not forget for sometime to come.”
- A 14-year old pointed to the photograph with the valises and noted the date of birth, 1935, written on the one belonging to Gertrude Neubauer. “She must have been just a child.”
- A Scottish woman emailed: “The images are overwhelming & so sad, so strong, so important. I had a strong physical reaction, feeling weak and stomach turning. I found the cutlery shot so moving having read Primo Levi recently, and so knowing how important these mundane items became to the prisoners. I'm in awe of your ability to convey the horror so brilliantly, and the world of course needs to have all this kept in consciousness.”
- An administrator at a Holocaust museum emailed “Susan, your creativity and sensitivity make the photographs unique among holocaust-related artwork, as the images are sparse, stark, and intricate. The exhibit has the potential to greatly contribute to dialogue about genocide, while thoughtfully and powerfully commemorating the memory of all those who died in Auschwitz.”

NUTS & BOLTS

The exhibition contains up to 17 prints.

The photographs are printed 6 x 4 feet on gelatin silver paper, full frame, with the sprocket marks visible. The prints are specifically left unframed. They are mounted on 1/8" black sintra and attached to wood strainers, with adjustable length cable on top to adjust to the ceiling height of a venue. They can be hung on the wall, suspended singly from the ceiling, or doubly when attached back-to-back with velcro on the strainers. Each photograph (mounted, strainer, cable) weighs about 15 lbs.

The exhibition is housed and travels in one specially designed wood museum crate, 82 x 67 x 31 inches, currently in climate-controlled storage at [The Exhibition Alliance](#).

Requiem is installed without object labels and wall copy to heighten the experience of the viewer.

Catalogues and prints are available for sale.



The crate, packed with the entire *Requiem* exhibition.

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BIO

Susan May Tell is an award-winning fine art photographer whose work has been showcased in solo exhibitions at the Museum of Art | Fort Lauderdale; the Griffin Museum of Photography; the University of California at San Francisco; and the Avenue B Gallery. Solo exhibitions include *A Requiem: tribute to the spiritual space at Auschwitz*; *Structured Moments*; and *Real / Unreal: urban landscapes of the 1980's*.

Tell's photographs are in the Samuel Wagstaff Collection at the Smithsonian Museum and have been featured in group exhibitions at the Monmouth Museum; Hudson River Museum; Phoenix Art Museum; the Center for Fine Art Photography; and the Barrett Art Center, where Malcolm Daniel, Curator in Charge of the Department of Photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, awarded her First Place. Nat Trotman, Associate Curator of Art, Guggenheim Museum of Art, included her work in *New Directions / Art* which he juried at that same venue.

Also a successful photojournalist, Tell spent four years based in Cairo and four years in Paris working for the *New York Times*, *LIFE*, *TIME*, and *Newsweek Magazines*. This was followed by ten years as a staff photographer and photo editor at the *New York Post*.

Tell's subjects have been diverse and include: a 9-month project with Egypt's drug enforcement agency; the women fighters of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front; Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Turkey; Islamic and Pharaonic Monuments in Egypt; the National Basketball Association Finals; lunch with Yasser Arafat and his entourage in Kuwait; murders; car accidents; perp walks; stake-outs; actors; hot air ballooning; 3-star restaurants and 5-star hotels.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Heartfelt appreciation goes out to the wonderful individuals who believed in and encouraged this exhibition—and used their good names and reputations to help make it a reality: Helen Gee, Stephen Feinstein, Sherry Lansing, Barry Munitz, Christine Palamidessi and Sharon Waxman.

I am indebted to the wonderful Directors of the Museum of Art | Fort Lauderdale and the Griffin Museum of Photography who made the exhibitions such a success: Irvin Lippman and Paula Tognarelli, respectively; and their superb staffs—Anthony Lauro, Annegreth Nil, Michael Mills and Steve Cantrell at the former and Frances Jakubek and Frank Tadley at the latter.

Sam Mellon of CATE (Curatorial Assistance in Pasadena) who creatively solved how to mount the photos and designed the museum crate. And Modernage Photo Lab for making the exquisite prints.

Most important, too, my poetic and photographic influences: poets Stanley Kunitz, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens; photographers André Kertész, Roy DeCarava, Walker Evans and Lee Friedlander.

CHECKLIST



Requiem 02, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 03, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 04, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 05, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



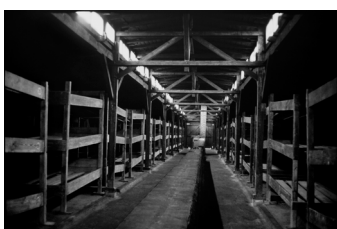
Requiem 06, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 07, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 08, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 09, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 10, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 11, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 12, 1998
gelatin silver print, 72 x 48 inches



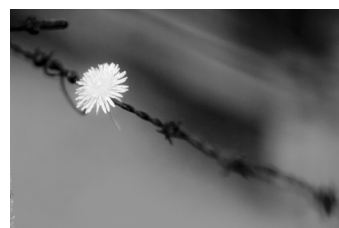
Requiem 13, 1998
gelatin silver print, 72 x 48 inches



Requiem 14, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 15, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches



Requiem 16, 1998
gelatin silver print, 48 x 72 inches

MEDIA

- [Traveling exhibition](#)
- [ARTnews](#)
- [SlideLuck Berlin](#), *Requiem* accompanied by composer Sagardía's *Blood and gold soldiers, chapter 1* "seven pages" for string trio
- [Le Journal de la Photographie](#)
- [New Landscape Photography](#)
- [Virtual Museum](#), Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota
- [GuestCurator](#)
- [The Forward](#)
- [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#)
- [Winchester Star](#)
- [New York Times](#)
- [Professional Women Photographers](#)
- [Elizabeth Avedon](#)
- [PHOTO/arts Magazine](#)
- [Monroe Gallery of Photography](#)

"You don't 'see' the things you photograph, you 'feel' them."

Photographer André Kertész

"[Susan May Tell's] austere compositions ... dramatize the infrastructure of destruction. Concrete pillars and hooked posts loom like silent sentinels still guarding the concentration camp's secrets; rainwater snaking through a drainage ditch gets cast as a river of tears ... Tell counteracts these stark landscapes with close-ups of the victims' detritus ... homing in on the intimate details of impersonal accumulation, she highlights the individuals lost among the masses."

– *ARTnews*

"haunting photographs without words, titles or frames – they stand alone as silent witnesses to the events in Auschwitz."

– *Forward*

"Training her lens on relics and abandoned property, Tell plucks poetry out of decay."

– *Museums / South Florida*

"... a series of large-scale, starkly black-and-white images of the place where so many Holocaust victims suffered and died. Unidentified by title and absent any human presence, these pictures nevertheless tell a story about entrapment, desolation and loss."

– *Sun-Sentinel*

"The emptiness of the landscape belies the evil that took place there. The images are haunting because we know what we know, but the pictures would have an eerie sensation whether or not we could identify the location."

– *The Palm Beach Post*

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