

A black and white photograph of a man with a beard and a dark hat, wearing a dark jacket over a white shirt. He is sitting and leaning over a large sketchbook, using a black pen to draw on a piece of paper. His left hand is resting on the sketchbook. The background is blurred.

Roman Kroke

Author & Illustrator

Berlin 2010

Index

Roman Kroke Author & Illustrator	1	V. Press & Media	25
I. Eddy Hillesum	2	VI. References	28
II. The Bielski Brothers	11	VII. Contact	29
III. BERLIN <i>intim</i>	20		
IV. Cooperations with Schools and Universities	22		

Photographers

Alessandra Calo (Italy): p. 27

Elli Metiletsi (Romania): p. 4

Alexey Rezvykh (Russia): p. 1

Alina Rudya (Ukraine): title page, p. 3 right

Roman Kroke

Author & Illustrator

Kroke has been writing and illustrating stories for children and adults for about 13 years.

He first studied law in Freiburg/Germany, Geneva/Switzerland and Berlin/Germany. During his studies he first specialized in International Human Rights Law which *inter alia* involved: working as a research assistant at the *UN Centre for Human Rights* (Geneva), as a personal assistant to Prof. David Weissbrodt at the *UN Sub-Commission* (Geneva); a photo-documentation for a non-governmental organization during a project against child-labour in Quetzaltenango/Guatemala. He has held scholarships from the *German Academic Exchange Service* (DAAD) and the *Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation* with an emphasis on journalistic workshops. During his studies Kroke also created his first picture books. After working several years part-time as a lawyer and researcher at the international law firm *Hogan & Hartson Raue LLP/Berlin* and a working stay in Israel/West Bank, Kroke is now devoted to his artistic work full-time. Since June 2008 he has his atelier in Arthouse Tacheles, Berlin.



One main pillar of Kroke's artistic work is the illustration of historic events - with a special emphasis on the **SHOAH** and the history of **BERLIN**.

In these areas he is engaged in national and international cooperations with schools, universities, museums, foundations and TV-productions.



I.

Etty Hillesum

(1914-1943)





Etty Hillesum

Etty Hillesum (1914-1943)

In 2009, Kroke illustrated the *Diaries of the Dutch Jew Etty Hillesum*. The illustrations were part of the documentary movie *"The Convoy"*, sponsored by the European Commission and the Jewish Foundation of Belgium.

Amongst others the movie was shown:



- ★ on **arte.tv**
- ★ at an international conference organized by the "Akademia Oświecimska" in Krakow/Poland commemorating the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau
- ★ on French & Belgian television



Sketches (2009)



A **book** based on the illustrations is also going to be published. Each illustration will be accompanied by an **extract** from Etty Hillesum's diary as well as an **annotation** in which Kroke explains the concept behind the illustration.

Kroke in his atelier in **Arthouse TACHELES**, situated in the former Jewish Quarter of Berlin (2009).



Peace



Bolin 2009, Rama-Khan

Flowers



Future



The Spider and its Web



Sky



God



Fear



Travel Eastward



Freedom



Thinking Heart



Peace



#10 Future

"(...) we still have so much to experience together and so much work to do. And so I call upon you: stay at your inner post, and please do not feel sorry or sad for me, there is no reason to."



3rd of July 1943

Annotation by R. Kroke:

The illustration represents November 30th 1943, the day when, according to a Red Cross report, Etty died in the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Etty compared herself writing the diary with the work of a spider spinning its web. On the one hand, the illustration shows a spider's web - *without* the spider, which symbolises Etty's death. On the other hand, the spider's web is *complete*. With this I want to express that Etty's work, her diary (= the spider's web), had been completed on time before her death, so that it may serve future generations as a spiritual legacy of her findings.

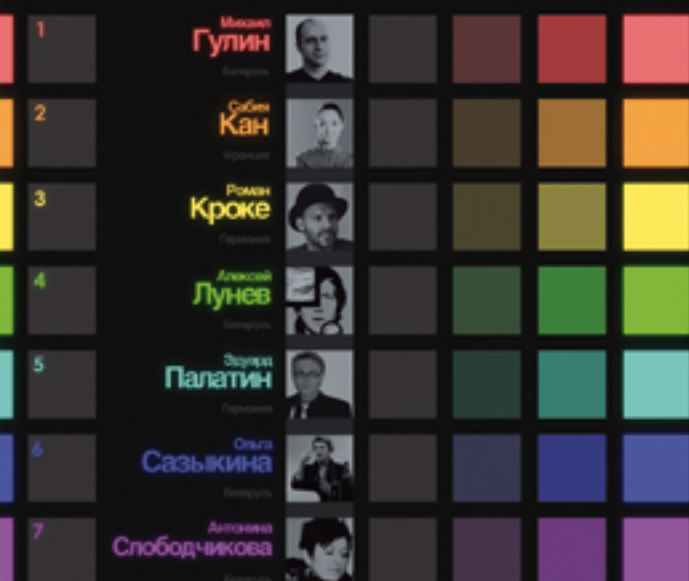
You may also note a special relationship between the spider's web and the barbed wire fence. The barbed wire fence, as a means of keeping the prisoners from escaping, did indeed dominate on the *material* level - Etty died in Auschwitz. However, the spider's web as a metaphor for Etty's diary and findings survived and imposed itself on the *spiritual* level. The barbed wire fence even served the spider as a "construction frame" for her web. With this I intend to highlight one of the basic principles of Etty's philosophy: not trying to avoid the atrocities of her time but looking for direct confrontation in order to be able to dissect them intellectually. This illustration therefore stands for a certain domination of the spiritual over the material level.

Fragments of the
RESEARCH WALL,
Arthouse Tacheles,
(2009).



Мастерская 7 художников

Куратор - Кристина Сташкевич
29 марта - 3 апреля 2010
Открытие выставки и встречи с художниками
29 марта 18.00



Партнерская художественная галерея при поддержке ГИИ
Минск, пр-т Рокоссовского, 40 8 (017) 291-16-16
Пример работы: 11.00 - 19.00 www.urban.by
info@urban.by <http://urban.by>

Организация выставки при поддержке ГИИ-института, Минск
Информационные материалы
и материалы культуры "Урбан", сайт "Новая Европа",
галерея современного искусства "7"



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Exhibitions 2010

- Etty Hillesum Illustrations -

May 2010

Exhibition at the "Culture Fair" of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation,
Berlin/Germany.



March/April 2010

Exhibition "Atelier of the 7 Artists",
Minsk/Belarus.

Travel & accommodation sponsored by:



February/March 2010

Exhibition on the occasion of the 20th anniversary
Arthouse Tacheles, **Berlin/Germany.**



January 2010

Exhibition "Black & White in Snow" on the occasion of the 65th
anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp **Ausch-
witz-Birkenau/Poland.**



Discussion with Dr. Inna Gerasimova, Director of the Museum
of Jewish History and Culture, Minsk/Belarus.

Upcoming

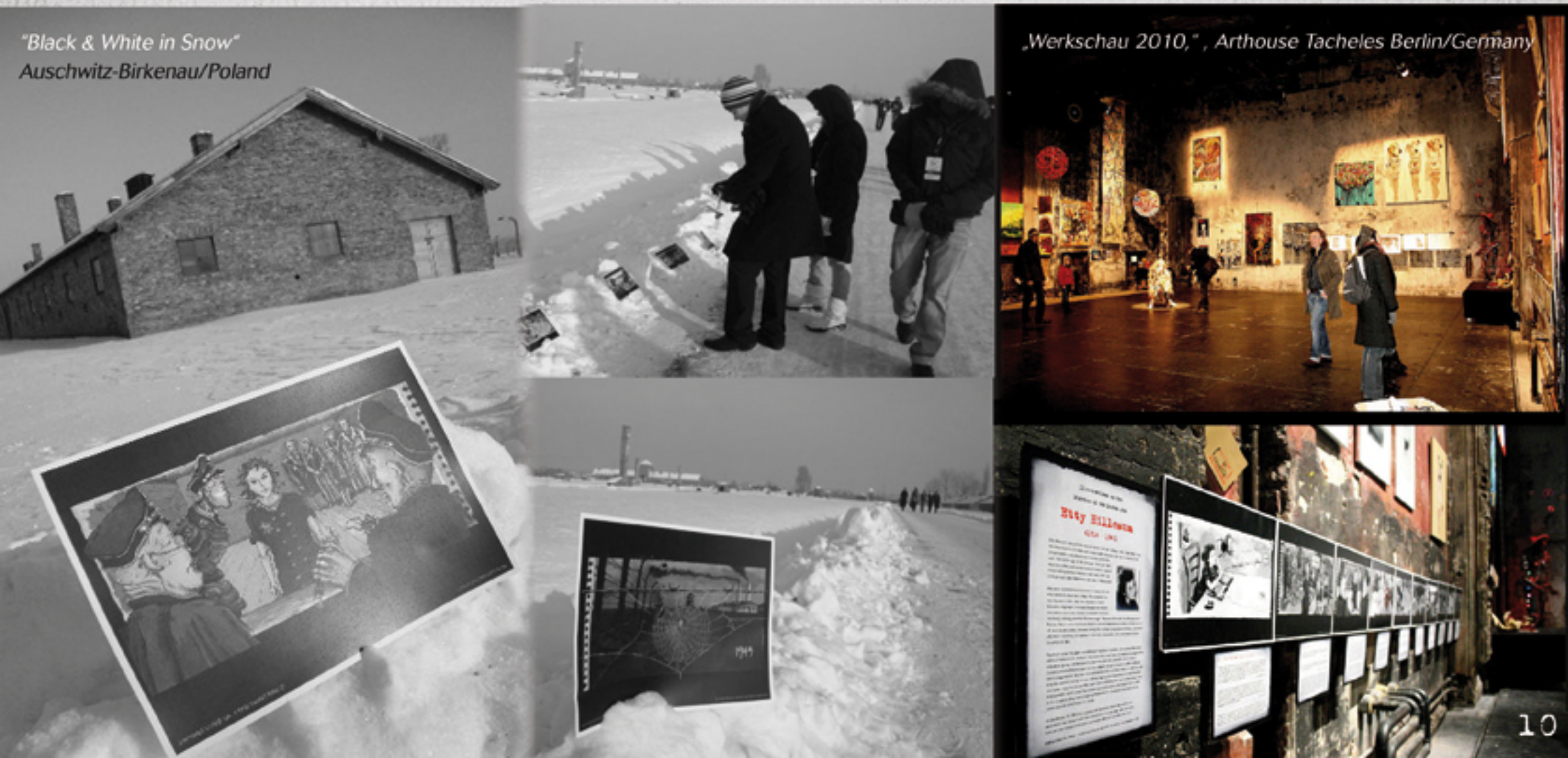
Exhibitions 2010

- Etty Hillesum Illustrations -

Etty Hillesum Research Centre,
Ghent University,
Belgium.



Museum of Jewish History
and Culture,
Minsk/Belarus.



BELARUS



II.

The Bielski Brothers

(1942-1944)

- ⊙ National capital
- Oblast' centre
- Town, village
- ✈ Major airport
- International boundary
- - - Oblast' boundary
- Main road
- - - Secondary road
- Railroad
- Obelisk numbers are the same as their respective centres

0 25 50 75 100 km

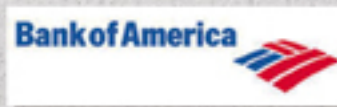
Die Bielski Brüder (1942-1944)

For 2010, the **Bielski Family Foundation** (Florida/USA) entrusted Roman Kroke with illustrating the history of the Jewish Partisan Commander Tuvia Bielski. This true story is about Tuvia Bielski and his two brothers who decide not to go into the ghettos established by the Nazis but to hide in the forests of Belarus in order to organize a partisan group. They survive the Holocaust and lead what historians believe to be the largest armed rescue of Jews by Jews. When they are finally liberated in 1944, their community numbers more than 1200 people. This historic event received broad international attention last year through the movie *"Defiance"*, with Daniel Craig portraying the Jewish Partisan Commander Tuvia Bielski.

Krokes illustrations will be part of the travelling exhibition *"Courage & Compassion"* which is currently hosted by the **Florida Holocaust Museum** (USA) and will then visit museums and schools throughout the country. Kroke will release a **book** which will contain the illustrations accompanied by extracts from Tuvia Bielski's memoirs as well as the testimonies of other contemporary witnesses. This work will also be integrated into his cooperations with schools & universities.



Nationally presented by:



<http://www.courageandcompassionexhibit.com>



Tuvia Bielski





Letter of Support

(extract)



The Bielski Family Foundation

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

(...) I am the Grandson of Tuvia Bielski.

We learned of Kroke's specialization in illustrating historic events through a TV-documentation presenting his artwork on the diaries of the Dutch Jew Etty Hillesum. We are convinced that Kroke's work will constitute a valuable contribution to our exposition and its goal to spread my Grandfather's story showing to others that anyone has the capability to do whatever they set their mind to. Kroke possesses strong artistic talent as displayed through his involvement in the documentary movie on Etty Hillesum sponsored by the European Commission and the Belgian Foundation for Judaism. His engagement in the Hillesum-project also reflects his particular sensitiveness towards the history of the Shoah. During his former law career Kroke also acquired special competences in profound research. This qualification was of enhanced importance for us so that the artwork lives up to the responsibility implied by this particular topic. Finally, we strongly esteem Kroke's experience in realizing (historic) projects in cooperation with schools. We are convinced that due to this didactic competence the annotations to his illustrations will provide valuable starting points for further discussion. As our traveling exposition particularly aims at reaching young people, amongst others by visiting schools, Kroke's artwork could therefore constitute an innovative tool for teachers to use in history, politics or art class. We believe that teachers will profit from the fact that, in general, young people consider illustrations a very motivating medium to approach historic events as comics form part of their daily living environment. (...)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brendon Rennert'.

Brendon Rennert

President

The Bielski Family Foundation
www.BielskiFoundation.org

Research-Stay in Belarus (March/April 2010)

As part of the research for the Bielski-Illustrations, Kroke travelled for two weeks through Belarus. He visited the **historic sites**, interviewed **contemporary witnesses** and met with **scientific researchers** specializing in the Jewish partisan movement.

Special thanks to *Tamara Vershitskaya*, Director of the Museum of History and Regional Studies in Novogrudok, for her help in organizing the stay.

Researching historic photos, museum in Novogrudok.



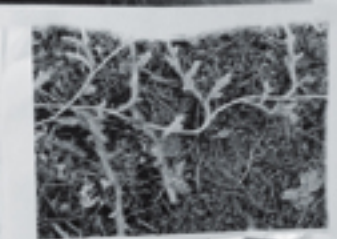




RESEARCH WALL

- Photos & testimonies from Belarus, sketches -
Atelier Arthouse Tacheles,
Berlin (May 2010).





"Memorial Tree" (sketch)





III.

BERLIN *intim*





The comic-strip series "BERLIN *intim*" is devoted to the history of Berlin. Each of the comic-strips highlights a different episode in the diverse history of the German capital. The journey leads through the ancient world, medieval times, the times of the German Emperor, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, divided & unified Germany.

The principle of **INTIMACY** is one leitmotif in Kroke's work. In its conventional meaning the term "intimacy" applies to relationships between *people*. It describes a feeling of familiarity and comfort. Intimacy thereby usually does not emerge from one day to another but by people sharing stories that create a connection. In his comic-series "BERLIN *intim*" Kroke transmits this principle of intimacy from a person-to-person relationship to a person-to-city relationship. If nowadays the relationship between a person and their city is characterized, it is often - particularly in large cities like Berlin - used in the contrary sense: *anonymity*. The goal of "BERLIN *intim*" is to create a more intimate relationship between the reader and Berlin by sharing intimate anecdotes of the city. An integral component of all these strips is therefore that they present some kind of remainder of the historic events left in today's Berlin, which can serve as a bridge between the present and the past.

IV.

Cooperations with Schools & Universities





Cooperations with Schools & Universities



Yeshiva University HSB, New York/USA
Video-Conference. Kroke held a lecture about his Shoah-projects on "*Etty Hillesum*" and "*The Bielski Brothers*", 2010.



University of Bologna, Italy

Interview with Kroke on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 2009.



University of Bergamo, Italy
Department of Human Sciences/Centre for Research on the Anthropology and Epistemology of Complexity.
Kroke held a lecture about one of his artistic leitmotifs: "*The Intimacy of Walls*", 2009.

Goethe-Gymnasium, Berlin/Germany

On the basis of Kroke's comic-strip-series "*BERLIN intim*" students worked in history class on the topic "*Night of Broken Glass, 9th of November 1938*", 2008.

Carl-Zeiss Schule, Berlin/Germany

After having been introduced to Kroke's comic-strip-series "*BERLIN intim*" students developed in art class their own comic-strips on the topic "*20 Years Fall of the Berlin Wall*", 2009.

Video-Conference, Yeshiva University (2010)





Extract from a student's comic-strip on the history of the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin/Germany.

30. Januar 1933 feierten die Nationalsozialisten mit einem Fackelzug durch das Brandenburger Tor ihre "Machtergreifung". Erwähnenswert ist dabei, dass während des Zweiten Weltkrieges ein Gipsabguss von der Quadriga genommen wurde.



Nach der Niederlage im Zweiten Weltkrieg, wurde an der Quadriga die rote Fahne gehisst, weshalb deutsche Soldaten sie beschossen und schließlich stark beschädigten. Das einzige was vom Original erhalten blieb, war einer der Pferdeköpfe, welcher heute im Berliner Märkischen Museum ausgestellt ist.

Upcoming Cooperations:

Goethe-Gymnasium Berlin & Gymnasium Haganum

In summer 2010 the Goethe-Gymnasium Berlin/Germany and the Gymnasium Haganum/Netherlands will start a school-partnership. Kroke will contribute to their student-exchange program with an artistic workshop in which students will work on the diaries of the Dutch Jew Etty Hillesum.

Etty Hillesum Research Centre (EHOC), Ghent University, Belgium



Intensification of the collaboration with the EHOC: Translation of Kroke's texts into Dutch by Prof. Dr. Klaas A. D. Smelik (Director). Kroke will also visit the EHOC and hand over an edition of his Etty Hillesum-Illustrations for the institute.



Gymnasium Haganum, Den Haag (NED)

Goethe-Gymnasium, Berlin (D)





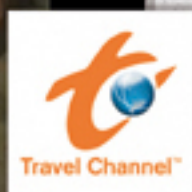
V.

Press & Media

- selection -



Roman Kroke
Artist



Belarus - TV
Report about the exhibition "Atelier of the 7 Artists", Minsk/Belarus, 2010.



ROMAN KROKE
ХУДОЖНИК (ARTIST)

US Travel Channel

„Andrew Zimmern's Bizarre World - Episode Germany“, 2009.



University of Bologna, Italy

Interview with Kroke on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 2009.

Toronto Star (Canada)

„Using art to break down barriers“
Report by J. Hunter, 2009.



arte.tv



„The Convoy“

Documentary movie about E. Hillesum, extracts shown on ARTE-TV, 2009/2010.

thestar.com

Hunter: Using art to break down barriers

Growing up in West Berlin, Roman Kroke never forgot his journey to see relatives in East. Now an artist, he repeatedly draws barriers to illustrate a society that continues divided

Article

Published On The Nov 5 2009

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By Jennifer Hunter
Columnist

BERLIN—Ever since he was a boy of 6, Roman Kroke has been obsessed with walls. Concrete walls, metal barriers, wallpapered walls, walls within offices, bedroom walls, psychological walls that impede progress.

Now an artist, he draws walls, usually in the form of cartoon strips or children's books. But the motif is always the wall that separates people and



Roman Kroke's drawings for a documentary were also published in a book about the Berlin Wall.

JENNIFER HUNTER/TORONTO STAR



tv.berlin

tv.berlin
„Kultur Check“,
Report/Interview,
August 2010.



WDR 5

WDR 5

„Scala - Aktuelles aus der Kultur“,
Report/Interview by Tini von Poser,
July 2010.



Radio France Internationale (rfi)
« Chronique Culture »,
Report/Interview by Pascal Thibaut,
August 2010.

La Gazette
de Berlin

Auteur et illustrateur de ses propres écrits, Roman Kroke est l'un des nombreux artistes ayant leur atelier installé au célèbre squat de Berlin, le Tacheles. Fasciné par la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, il illustre le journal intime d'Edith Hillelson, une jeune juive déportée et emprisonnée à Auschwitz entre 1941 et 1943. Kroke se penche également sur l'histoire des Bielski, trois frères juifs qui se sont réfugiés dans la forêt biélorusse pendant la Guerre et qui ont fini par être rejoints par des centaines d'autres à qui ils ont sauvé la vie (leur histoire est racontée dans Les Insurgés, film de 2008 d'Edvard Zwick). Ses œuvres tournent autour d'une question : comment illustrer les massacres ? Comment créer un lien entre le passé de la Guerre et le présent ?



Roman Kroke dans son atelier au Tacheles



„Ich bin - Je suis - Jestem“

Participation in a movie by the Louvranges Broadcast (BEL) about the commemoration of individuals/events linked to World War II, sponsored by the *European Commission*, Illustration of the life of *Edith Stein*, *Hans and Sophie Scholl* etc., Realization of the film: 2011.



Gazette de Berlin,
« Culture » (No. 34),
Report by Sophie Le Ster,
August 2010.



REPORT

Strich für Strich gegen das Vergessen

Der Berliner
Künstler Roman
Kroke illustriert
die Geschichte
der Partisanen-
Brüder Bielski

Von GERNARD LEHRKE

Bäume, Gruben im Wald, ein alter Akkord, Erinnerungen eines großen Ehepaares. Das ist das Material, aus dem ein Berliner Künstler Bilder einer nahezu bildlosen Zeit schaffen will, in der vermeintlich Wehrlose dem Terror der Nazis ausgesetzt waren.

Es ist die Zeit der deutschen Besetzung einer weltvergnügten Gegend, die Ostpolen war und heute Weißrussland ist. Es ist die Zeit von 1941 bis

1944, als drei jüdische Müllerstübe beschlossen, sich nicht wie ihre Eltern und Tausende anderer Juden im Ghetto von Nowogrado von den Deutschen massakrieren zu lassen, als sie beschlossen, mit dem kleinen Bruder in die Wälder zu gehen, um am Ende mit 1200 Getriebenen wieder herauszukommen.

Ein Anführer im buntschmuddigen Tschelke an der Granienburger Straße, ein Mann mit zerschissener Melone auf dem Kopf, das Sakko direkt über dem legergeprägten Unterhemd, ein irritierender Silberblick (oder bläuliches das war?) – das muss ein „Künstler“ sein. Aber falsch, Kroke legt Wert darauf, Autor

und Illustrator zu sein. „Künstler“ ist ihm zu allgemeinend nichtssagend. Ein Vertreter guter in Temp (Florida) fern. Eine Seite der sturries Essen, denn in Berlin, in dem Film tauchen Kroke und sein Hillem Projekt auf.

Der Vertreter Brenden kennt ist Ekelohn von Tera Bielski. Er schickte Kroke ein Mail. Kroke soll für die Bielski-Familienstilung illustrieren über Wälder und Gruben von Großvater und Großmutter zeichnen.

Dafür kribbelte Kroke durch den „Nollhol“-Wald weißlich von Mink. Denn Zeichen bedarf der Rorbeche. Er traf die weißrussische Ehepaar Viktor und Nina Shimen. Beide über 80 und glücklich. Kroke: „Sie waren begeistert, erübeln können, begeistert, das sich-mand für sie und ihre Geschichte interessiert.“ Selbst wenn ein Deutscher ist.

Viktor, der damals als Kurier zwischen den Partisanen im Wald und dem Ghetto fungierte, Ich habe Botschaften in der Eke eingebracht und kam in den Posten vorbei, weil ich dich zum Schneider muss.“ Einmal habe ich eine Botschaft geschickt, aber konnte sie nicht lesen. Sie war auf Jiddisch geschrieben.“

Das klingt wie eine Anekdote. Weniger anekdotisch in der Schilderung der Bielskis, mit der Deutsche, Kollaboranten und Partisanen aufeinander losgingen, tödend und lebend.

Das Völkchen in den Wäldern der Alten zeigt noch heute von der allgegenwärtigen Angst. Nina hat mit ihrer Mutter fort. Nachts kamen die Partisanen, um es zu holen. Hatten die Partisanen das mitbekommen, wäre



Roman Kroke durch die Reihe der Bielski-Malerei. Das Foto darunter zeigt das Hof der Familie vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.



Kroke mit Viktor, einem Malerjüngling der Partisanen.

Nina (oben) hat Brief für die Partisanen geschrieben. Das Foto links zeigt eine Skizze Krokes von Viktor.



Daniel Craig als Tera Bielski im Kinofilm „Defiance“. In Weißrussland fand man die Filmkulissen und sie gut gekleidet.



BERLINER KURIER
SONNTAG, 4. JULI 2010 19

Roman Kroke illustriert die „Reise der Bielskis“. In einem Baum, der in der Vergangenheit zerstört wurde, hat er Portraits von Menschen aus der Region gemalt.

das das Ende des Dorfs und seiner Bewohner gewesen.

Den Backstein hat Kroke gemalt, die Bielski-Familie und Gruben. Der alte Viktor, der dort für Partisanen und Flüchtlinge das Akkordwesen gespielt hatte, führte ihn hin.

Die Gruben sind die Überreste der Unterschlüpfe, der Synagoge, der Schule, des Krankenhauses, des Gerichts, der Werkstätten. Eine Stadt im Wald, gut getarnt und schwer zu finden – heute ohne Dächer, aber mit ein paar Löchern mehr, weil Schlämmer nach Gold suchen, das reiche Flüchtlinge dort verborgen haben könnten.

Dort hat Roman Kroke etwas wie Intimität gefunden. Die Bielskis stellten sie her. Bielski, die in wahrscheinlich blutgetränkter Erde wurzelte, gedüngt mit den Knochen der Toten von vor fast 70 Jahren und grüne Bielskier zwischen dem Heute und dem Damals.

Deshalb werden sie mit den Gesichtern, den Akkorden, den Rauten in Krokes Bildern erscheinen.

Es zu 20 sollen es werden. Es wird etwa ein halbes Jahr dauern, bis sie fertig sind. Am Ende sollen sie in Brenden Rennworts Wanderausstellung durch Schulen und Museen der USA ziehen und seine Botschaft verbreiten helfen: „Ich sage den Leuten, dass mein Großvater ein ganz gewöhnlicher Mann war, der in der Lage war, ungewöhnliche Dinge zu tun. Buchstäblich jeder Mensch hat die Fähigkeit zu entscheiden, ob er den ersten Schritt tut oder eben nicht. Raus aus der Kuscheldecke – Tera tat, was er tat, weil er nicht glaubte, eine Wahl zu haben.“

www.Roman-Kroke.de
www.Bielski-vandoren.org

VI.

References

Prof. Dr. Klaas A. D. Smelik

Director of the *Etty Hillesum Research Centre*,
Professor for Hebrew and Judaism at *Ghent University/Belgium*

Dr. Geoffrey S. Cahn

Chair of the History Department, *Yeshiva University HSB*, New York/USA,
Founder of the *Post-Holocaust Reconciliation Workshop Project*

Dr. Inna Gerasimova

Director of the *Museum of Jewish History and Culture*,
Minsk/Belarus

Tamara Vershitskaya

Director of the *Museum of History and Regional Studies in Novogrudok*,
Novogrudok/Belarus

Brendon Rennert

Director of the *Bielski Family Foundation*,
Florida/USA

Dr. Walter Domke

Chair of the History Department,
Goethe-Gymnasium, Berlin/Germany

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VII.
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- * Illustrations
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- * Video-Conferences
- * Workshops
- * Exhibitions

Sponsoring:

"The Bielski Brothers" (see pages 11-19)

Kroke's current illustration project has already been sponsored during the research period by the *Bielski Family Foundation* (USA). The project is open to additional sponsors.

All sponsors will be mentioned:

- in connection with the future illustrations as part of the travelling exhibition "*Courage & Compassion*" which is currently hosted by the Florida Holocaust Museum (Florida/USA) and will then travel to schools & museums throughout the country;
- in all other exhibitions of the Bielski-Illustrations;
- in Kroke's book in progress on the Bielski Brothers which will also be integrated into his cooperations with schools & universities.