

Sunday January 21, 2018

## EATON THEATRE

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Free with RSVP

# THE EVIDENCE ROOM

## The Holocaust in Context

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**10:00 AM - OPENING REMARKS**

**10:10 AM - REMARKS**

Robert Jan van Pelt,  
Anne Bordeleau,  
Donald McKay

*The Evidence Room* Principals discuss the installation from conception to execution, and contextualize it within the Irving-Lipstadt trial.

**10:40 AM - REMARKS**

Bruce Kuwabara

Toronto-based architect Kuwabara speaks on the importance of displaying *The Evidence Room*, including why and how it was brought to the ROM.

*The Evidence Room* was organized by the University of Waterloo School of Architecture

LEAD PATRONS: Rob & Penny Richards, The Gerald Schwartz & Heather Reisman Foundation

SUPPORTING PATRON: Larry & Judy Tanenbaum Family

EXHIBITION PATRON: The Jay and Barbara Hennick Family Foundation

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**11:00 AM - TOWERS OF DEATH AND LIFE:  
ARCHITECTURE AND MEANING  
AT THE 2016 VENICE BIENNALE**

**John Onians**

The reconstructed tower for the administration of deadly gas to the innocent victims of Nazi persecution, the centrepiece of *The Evidence Room*, was by far the most sinister object at the Venice Biennale. Indeed it is perhaps the most sinister object to have been produced since the War. At the Biennale it was not, however, deprived of its aura of hope. This was activated most directly by its formal resemblance to Arturo Vettori's neighbouring Dwarka tower, designed to capture life-saving water from the air for the benefit of some of the poorest inhabitants of our earth. More paradoxically it was also evoked by the careful attention to detail manifested by the Canadian team responsible for its conception and realisation. Like other great works of art it repays contemplation in terms other than its own.

**11:30 AM - COFFEE BREAK**

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**11:45 AM - *THE EVIDENCE ROOM AS  
CONTEMPORARY HOLOCAUST  
RELIQUARY***

**Laura Levitt, Temple University**

This presentation will examine the work of scholars of material religion who insist on the ongoing importance of objects for religious devotion in order to address *The Evidence Room* as a contemporary Holocaust reliquary. By describing this forensic project in these terms as a tribute to the memory of the architecture of destruction, the future of Holocaust memory as an ongoing project of holding will be reconsidered. As nested memorials, reliquaries are a lot like those spaces created for the Venice Architectural Biennale, spaces within space, evidence held in and among other precious objects and their containers. Finally, this lecture will look at the notion that those who enter *The Evidence Room* are invited, as in more traditional forms of reliquary, to touch the evidence, a practice in sharp contrast to the etiquette of so many contemporary museum displays.

**12:15 PM - LUNCH BREAK**

**1:25 PM - AFTERNOON REMARKS**

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**1:30 PM - SEEING THE PAST,  
IMAGINING THE PRESENT**

Berel Lang

*The Evidence Room* enables viewers to see rather than only imagine the past- impelling viewers to imagine the present rather than only see it, as that relationship is usually construed. Historical relics, remains, memorials, commonly evoke imagined reconstructions of the past; in contrast *The Evidence Room*, going beyond the medium of reconstruction, provides a direct perception of the past joined to the imagined present - a combination usually associated not with historical events but with works of art. Here, them an unusual intertwining of art and history, with the implication of not only the potential but the actuality of a role for the imagination in designedly evil acts and creations. As Auschwitz was first imagined in both its construction and implementation, so the perception of the camp's designs represented in *The Evidence Room* both required and evokes matching acts of imagination by its viewers in order to overcome the ethical limits and taboos that normally limit not only their conduct but their perception. So the role of ethics in perception, exemplified in this evidence.

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**2:00 PM - PATINA, ABSTRACTION  
AND HISTORY**

Mari Lending

This paper frames the whiteness of the casts in *The Evidence Room* by discussing different ideals of surface treatment in nineteenth century architectural casts. Across galleries on both sides of the Atlantic, different takes on patina and surface displayed competing passions for truthful presentation of authenticity and history, spanning from ahistorical abstraction to empirical documentation.

**2:30 PM - COFFEE BREAK**

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**3:00 PM - POST-TRUTH IN THE COURTROOM:  
A JOURNEY FROM HITLER  
APOLOGY AND HOLOCAUST  
DENIAL TO ANTISEMITISM**

Richard Rampton QC

As is well known, the trial of David Irving's libel action against Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books ended in victory for the Defendants. The Judge found that, contrary to his protestations, Mr. Irving was indeed a Holocaust denier, that there was no historical foundation for such a position and that the purpose and effect of his many historical falsifications was, in part at least, to exonerate Hitler of responsibility for the annihilation of the European Jews. As is also well known, one of the principal instruments of that victory was Professor Robert Jan van Pelt's revelatory reconstruction of the vast homicidal engine that was Auschwitz - now vividly reproduced in *The Evidence Room*.

But the Judge went further: he found that Mr. Irving was an anti semite. This paper examines the connections between Mr. Irving's Hitler apology, his Holocaust denial and his unbridled anti semitism and asks the question whether there are any circumstances in which Holocaust denial and anti semitism can fairly be regarded as distinct, unrelated phenomena.

**3:30 PM - ON STAGE Q&A WITH  
ALL PANELISTS & AUDIENCE**