

Press Information

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Deutsches Historisches Museum acquires the “Wolfgang Haney Collection” containing 15,000 artifacts documenting antisemitism

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Thanks to generous support from the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, and the Kulturstiftung der Länder, the Deutsches Historisches Museum has acquired the notable Wolfgang Haney Collection. Across 30 years of work, Haney amassed 15,000 objects documenting the history of antisemitism, the persecution and murder of European Jews, concentration camps and ghettos, as well as how Nazism was processed in the media after 1945 and contemporary forms of right-wing extremism. The DHM will store and preserve the collection as a whole, protecting this contemporary historical documentation from trade on the free market.

The acquisition of this collection is linked with legal and ethical questions as to the origins of these objects, reflecting the criminal setting from which they stem: as such, the Center for Antisemitism Research at TU Berlin is researching the complex history of the objects among the collection in cooperation with the museum in two research projects, the results of which will flow into the conception of the Deutsches Historisches Museum’s new permanent exhibition. Furthermore, the DHM has partnered with the Arlosen Archives, the successor to the International Red Cross tracing service, bringing in vast expertise in tracking down victims of Nazi persecution.

The remains of Tora rolls from plundered synagogues in Eastern Europe, misused as packing paper by German soldiers, are also obvious loot. They have been checked for appropriate handling in keeping with religious laws in an additional cooperation with the Claims Conference and loaned to the museum for historical research.

Raphael Gross, President of the Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum: “In the course of re-conceptualizing our permanent exhibition, one of the DHM’s key interests is confronting antisemitism in both history and the present in a more meaningful scope than was previously the case. The Haney Collection functions as an essential cornerstone for that. Researching the collection will help us and our visitors achieve a deeper understanding of the extent to which antisemitic sentiment, imagery, and hate propaganda penetrated everyday life in Germany and other European countries from the mid-19th century on.

Monika Grütters, Federal Minister for Culture and the Media: “The Haney Collection contains historically unique artifacts tracing Nazi crimes against humanity and the gradual escalation of the racist terror system in a harrowing way. As such,



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this collection is an invaluable trove for researching the antisemitism that is currently challenging us again. If we learn from the experiences of the past for the present and future, that is also an expression of our appreciation and concern for democracy. The Haney Collection makes an invaluable contribution to that as well.

Anja Karliczek, Federal Minister for Education and Research: "Antisemitism is a scourge that must be countered resolutely by society as whole. Researching the Haney Collection can provide us with valuable insight into the emergence and spread of antisemitism. This insight is the foundation for effectively fighting antisemitism and durably strengthening our social fabric. We must all ensure that antisemitism has no place in our country: civil society, security agencies and other state offices, but also very crucially, scholars.

Markus Hilgert, General Secretary of the Kulturstiftung der Länder: "The collection amassed by Wolfgang Haney documents the persecution and murder of European Jews. In his decades of collecting these objects, Haney did pioneering work on the elucidation of Nazi crimes and the persecution of Jews. No museum or archive has amassed such objects in a comparable way. Thanks to the acquisition by the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the planned research project with TU Berlin, the collection can now be researched comprehensively and made public through publications and exhibitions.

About the Wolfgang Haney Collection:

Wolfgang Haney (1924–2017) consciously built up his collection in memory of his family's persecution by the Nazis. His Jewish mother worked at the Otto Weidt Workshop for the Blind and survived hidden in a forest from 1943 on. His father had to perform forced labor at the Todt Organization. Haney himself helped Jewish people hide. From the outset, he intended to provide these mass-distributed documents of hate and persecution—including postcards, posters, flyers, knickknacks, coins, food cartons, papers, photographs, and films—to museums and archives as educational material. At his initiative, a series of exhibitions and publications drawing either entirely or substantially on his collection occurred from the 1990s on.