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"Far removed. Austria in Auschwitz"

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Team led by Hannes Sulzenbacher and Albert Lichtblau is commissioned with the redesign of the Austrian national exhibition at Auschwitz. Concept described as "directional" by the Board of Appraisal.

Following the European call to tender for the positions of "Curator and Scientific Director" for the redesign of the Austrian national exhibition in Auschwitz, the team led by Curator Hannes Sulzenbacher and Scientific Director Dr. Albert Lichtblau has been announced as the successful candidate. Sulzenbacher has curated numerous exhibitions for Jewish Museums, among others in Hohenems, Munich, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, as well as exhibitions on gay and lesbian culture and history. Lichtblau is a Professor at the Faculty of History of the University of Salzburg, Deputy Director of the Center for the History of Jewish Culture and has headed, among other things, oral history projects on persecution and expulsion under National Socialism. The team is composed of the cultural scholar and curator Birgit Johler, business graduate Christoph Mai, historian Dr. Christiane Rothländer and historian and curator Dr. Barbara Staudinger.

In this stage of the procurement procedure, the Board of Appraisal – overseen by the National Fund and composed of ten experts from Austria and abroad – assessed the exhibition concepts presented to them by the teams. The concepts were all of a very high standard and demonstrated intensive consideration of the subject-matter. The Board considered the idea developed by Sulzenbacher/Lichtblau and team, "Entfernung. Österreich in Auschwitz" ["Far removed. Austria in Auschwitz"], to be especially innovative and directional in terms of the discourse surrounding places of remembrance and commemoration.

Curator Hannes Sulzenbacher on the idea for the exhibition: "The title of our concept refers to how far removed Austria and Auschwitz are from each other geographically. At the same time it refers to the way the deportees were physically removed to Auschwitz: removed from Austria and from the realm of the living. By focusing on this notion of removal, the exhibition brings this period of Austrian history closer to its visitors, creating a juxtaposition of the 'proximate' and the 'remote'". To enable the visitors to experience these different aspects of removal, an actual exhibition on site will deal with events in Auschwitz whereas everything relating to Austria will be displayed in a large scale projection. Sulzenbacher: "This is intended to create a stark contrast between the reality of Auschwitz and Austria as a virtual place". In terms of the exhibition's content, Sulzenbacher remarks: "The exhibition interlinks the history of the Austrian victims and the history of the Austrian perpetrators, helping to convey to visitors in a fitting manner the role played by Austria in the history of National Socialism."

The Secretary General of the National Fund, Hannah Lessing, commented on the appointment: "I would like to express my thanks to the members of the expert Board of Appraisal and am pleased that an excellent team has been selected to carry out this especially important and sensitive task."

Work on the content of the exhibition by the team is already underway. Over the next few weeks the National Fund and the Federal Chancellery will publish the European call to tender for the design realizing the exhibition concept.