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Installation of the new Austrian exhibition at the Auschwitz Memorial

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The preparations for the new Austrian exhibition at the former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau are progressing well despite the difficult circumstances caused by Covid-19.



The future exhibition will be accommodated on the ground floor of Block 17 of Auschwitz I, where the first Austrian exhibition was on display from 1978 to 2013. The general renovation of Block 17 began in autumn 2019; the vast majority of the renovation work was able to be completed by the end of 2020.

In the course of the careful structural and conservation work on the listed building, which was once used to accommodate prisoners, previously unknown original wall remains were exposed and a number of objects hidden by prisoners were discovered.

Since December 2020, preparatory work has been underway for the installation of the exhibition. In keeping with the plans drawn up by the exhibition architect Martin Kohlbauer, a continuous second wall made of pale wooden panels has been erected to create a "room within a room". At several points this inner wall allows for visitors to view the surrounding camp grounds through glass panes.

In the first stage of the exhibition's installation, the five stained glass windows designed by Heinrich Sussmann for the 1978 exhibition were also newly framed. The Auschwitz survivor created the memorial installation with the intention of presenting the people who had been tortured and incinerated there as a whole again, "as the whole people they had once been." One of the windows is dedicated as a very personal memorial to his son, who was murdered at birth by SS camp doctor Josef Mengele.

In the next stage, the other exhibition structures and equipment will be installed – subject to the tightening of future pandemic-related regulations, foreseeably in March 2021. The exhibits will be delivered shortly before the exhibition opening.

The opening of the Austrian national exhibition in Block 17 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is planned for 2021. However, it is not possible at the moment to set a fixed date due to the uncertainties of the Covid-19 situation.