

NATIONAL FUND

OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA FOR VICTIMS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

in cooperation with

austrian cultural forum ^{lon}

**Arc of History Panel Discussion:
BRIDGING GENERATIONS –
30 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL
FUND OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AUSTRIA FOR VICTIMS OF
NATIONAL SOCIALISM**

**Exhibition Opening:
FROM REPRESSION
TO REMEMBRANCE**

21st January 2026, 7 pm

Introduction

On the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day 2026 and 30 years of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism, the Austrian Cultural Forum London is honoured to host a special panel discussion, as part of our Arc of History Lecture Series.

The panel discussion entitled 'Bridging Generations — 30 Years of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria' will feature speakers from different generations — from a survivor of atrocities committed by the Nazis to second- and third-generation descendants, as well as Professor Hannah Lessing, Managing Director of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism.

The discussion will be the framework for the opening of the travelling exhibition 'From Repression to Remembrance' by the National Fund of the Republic of Austria.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

In 1995, on the 50th anniversary of the Second Republic, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism was established at the Austrian Parliament as a belated expression of Austria's special responsibility towards the victims of National Socialism.

The exhibition 'From Repression to Remembrance' describes the tasks and activities carried out by the Austrian National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism in areas such as Nazi victim recognition, project funding, art restitution, documenting life stories of survivors, the restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Austria, the Simon Wiesenthal Prize for outstanding civic engagement to combat antisemitism and promote Holocaust education, the renewal of the Austrian exhibition at Auschwitz, and the General Settlement Fund and its compensation and restitution for Nazi victims.

Venue

Austrian Cultural Forum, 28 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PQ, UK

Programme

6.30 Doors Opening

7.00 Welcome

- Katharina Kastner (Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum London)
- Bernhard Wrabetz (Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the United Kingdom)

7.15 Keynote

- Hannah Lessing (Managing Director of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism)

7.30 Arc of History Panel Discussion

“Bridging Generations — 30 Years of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria”

- Hedi Argent MBE (survivor)
- Katherine Klinger (educator, initiator and chair of the Arc of History lecture series)
- Helen Emily Davy (artist and researcher)
- Hannah Lessing
- Chair: Katherine Klinger

8.00 Q&A

8.15 Wine reception and viewing of the exhibition

About the Speakers



Hedi Argent MBE was born in Vienna in 1929. The day following the Anschluss in March 1938, Hedi was expelled from her school; a week later her father's law practice was taken over by a Nazi lawyer; and before the end of the month, their family home was requisitioned for a Nazi family. Hedi's father was forced to scrub streets and clean lavatories and was finally arrested for making anti-Nazi comments. Hedi and her mother watched the pogrom of November 1938 from the apartment belonging to an Austrian socialist who had fled the country and left them her keys. The family desperately attempted to leave the country after Hedi's father was released from prison and given six weeks to get out or be sent to Dachau concentration camp. They already had visas for England but also needed affidavits from the USA to say that they were on a quota to move on to America in due course. They could leave Austria just in time, six weeks before World War II began, and one week after Hedi's tenth birthday. They arrived in England with one small suitcase each and only 217 shillings and six pence. 17 extended family members perished in the Holocaust. Hedi loved her school in the Midlands. She became a British citizen in 1946, married, had children and studied to become a social worker. She thinks of herself as a European Jew.



© Helen Emily Davy

Helen Emily Davy is an artist, researcher, and graduate of the Glasgow School of Art, the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and the Royal College of Art, London. For the past six years, she has been engaged in the artistic research project 'The Table That Doesn't Belong To Us' with Austrian artist Katharina Mayrhofer. This project explores their respective Jewish and Austrian family histories through a domestic object stolen from Davy's ancestors following the 1938 Anschluss. Mayrhofer and Davy developed the project into their co-curated exhibition 'Looted: Two Families, Nazi Theft, and the Search for Restitution', which was displayed at the Wiener Holocaust Library from July to October 2025. This exhibition raised difficult questions about memory, justice, and our responsibilities both to the past and each other in the present. In November 2025, Mayrhofer and Davy were awarded the Alma Rosé Special Prize by the University of Vienna in recognition of this work.



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Hannah Lessing has served as Secretary General and Managing Director of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism since 1995 and managed the Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria since 2010. From 2001 to 2022, she also managed the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism, which implemented an extensive restitution and financial compensation programme until its dissolution in 2022 after completing its tasks. Hannah Lessing oversees the diverse tasks of the National Fund, including fostering relations between Austria and victims of the Nazi regime and their descendants, as well as supporting Holocaust survivors and their families. She co-heads Austria's delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), serves on the Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation since 2011, as Vice President of the International Auschwitz Committee since 2017, and on the International Auschwitz Council since 2022. She has lectured extensively on the mission of the three Funds, and on international Holocaust remembrance.



Katherine Klinger studied English Literature at the University of Sussex. After a first career in teaching, she founded Second Generation Trust, a UK charity specialising in the generational transmission of trauma post-genocide. She developed a series of ground-breaking conferences in London, Berlin and Vienna and went on to run the Holocaust Education programme at the Wiener Holocaust Library, London, for over a decade. She developed the first Joint European Master's Degree in Comparative Genocide at Kingston University in 2007. She is an experienced video

interviewer, conference and programme director and lecturer, and initiated and currently chairs a lecture series at the Austrian Cultural Forum London entitled The Arc of History: Austria 1900–2020. She has recently acquired Austrian citizenship.



Please note: The ACF is a historic and therefore not a step-free building.

Data protection notice:
An audio and visual recording will be made of this event for informative, documentary and publicity purposes.