

# Marko Vogrič

**Grandfather Franc, Gorizia – Dachau.**

A Photo Letter from the Camp





**T**alking about the ‘Death Camp’ and the ‘Death Factory’, one comes to a bitter realisation that this actually refers to the largest Nazi labour and extermination camp – Auschwitz, a place where more people died during World War II than anywhere else. During the period that the camp was in operation, from 1940 to 1945, the lives of more than a million people, including children, from all over Europe came to a violent end. However, the story of Auschwitz, as well as of other no-less-cruel Nazi concentration camps, had begun just shy of a decade earlier with the establishment of Dachau, the first of such Nazi camps. The Nazis founded Dachau on 22 March 1933, shortly after coming to power in Germany. This camp, set up on the grounds of an abandoned munitions

factory, was originally intended for the internment and ‘re-education’ of political prisoners, however, over a span of just a few months, the Nazis set up a regime aimed at the suppression of the prisoners, which included forced labour, extremely poor living conditions, brutal punishment, tyranny, and terror perpetrated by the SS members. Dachau thus became a model for all other Nazi concentration camps. Following the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, other groups of the German Reich’s population (the Roma and the Sinti, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses), labelled as ‘racially inferior’ and ‘asocial’, as well as ‘professional’ criminals and persistent offenders, were increasingly imprisoned in Dachau. After the Kristallnacht, the first large group of Jews, i.e. a group of about 11,000 male members of the German Jewish community, was deported to Dachau and following the outbreak of World War II, the Nazis also started using Dachau for the imprisonment of deportees from the occupied territories and POWs, especially those from the Soviet Union. Due to a sharp increase in the number of internees, the living conditions – which were poor to begin with – in the camp, which developed into one of the largest labour camps in the German Reich, deteriorated dramatically. Dachau was in operation continuously for twelve years. More than 200,000 people were imprisoned in it and its many sub-camps, including thousands of Slovenians. About a fifth of all internees did not make it out of the camp alive – they died of starvation, disease, as a result of torture and



internment in general, or were executed. More than a third of these victims died in the last six months of the war. Dachau was liberated on 29 April 1945.

The Gorizia-born photographer Marko Vogrič is tied to the former Nazi camp Dachau through a very personal family story. In May 1944, the family of his father, Zdenko, who was only fifteen at the time, was arrested. Zdenko was arrested during a German police raid on an apartment in Gorizia, where a group of anti-fascist youth had gathered. His brother Emil, mother Marija and father Franc were arrested a mere three days later. As a minor, Zdenko was sent to a labour camp in Spittal an der Drau, while the other family members were deported to concentration camps – his mother to Auschwitz, and his father and brother to Dachau. Internment proved

fatal for Franc, who died on 22 May 1945 in Dachau, just a few weeks after the camp had been liberated.

The cycle of black-and-white photographs from Dachau, taken by Marko Vogrič in 2010, is marked by a special patina achieved by using a camera obscura – a pinhole camera, which gives the photos a vintage-like blur, as well as by choosing the worm's-eye view or, as interpreted by the photographer, the 'mouse's-eye view'. The bottom-up vantage point has been characteristic of Vogrič's work in recent years, as it allows him to see the subjects from a different angle, which is especially noticeable in a series of photographs dedicated to 'a mouse wandering around different places and towns'. By choosing this particular camera angle, here the photographer intensifies the expressive narrative of his

photographs, which, according to art historian Saša Quinzi, who wrote this when Vogrič's Dachau cycle was exhibited at the Gorizia synagogue, make the viewers feel "the anxious feelings of a fallen, humiliated and defeated man." Vogrič's photographs are further characterised by a keen sense of the choice of subjects captured in geometric compositions, whose properness and strictness versus the tenderly softened sharpness promote an aesthetic-lyrical impression of the photographs, thus moving away from a mere documentary value. Moreover, this also blurs the possible ambivalence of the captured scenes: if the photos were technically flawless and taken from a different vantage point, and if one only looked at a few individual photos from this cycle without knowing what they were depicting, one might think the photos were 'nothing but' images of an abandoned, dilapidated factory complex. However, the mood of Marko Vogrič's photos reminds us that we are faced with something much more unfathomable and sinister, yet also very personal. The photographer has managed to convey a feeling of the timelessness of remembrance, born from the historical reality of space and the fate of individuals in this space, and his works can thus be 'read' as intimate letters written in the present about the past as a forewarning for the future. He dedicated these intimate 'letters' to his beloved grandfather Franc, whom he knows only from the memories of those by whom Franc was survived.

Marjetka Bedrač



## References

- Boris Hajdinjak, »Tu se je smrt utrudila do smrti ...«: slovenske žrtve Auschwitza = "Here Is Where Death Worked Itself to Death...": Slovenian Victims of Auschwitz, katalog razstave = exhibition catalogue, Center judovske kulturne dediščine Sinagoga Maribor, Maribor 2020.
- Introduction, KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/en/> [12. 1. 2021].
- Dachau Concentration Camp 1933–1945, KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/en/historical-site/dachau-concentration-camp-1933-1945/> [12. 1. 2021].
- Usoda družine Vogrič, in: Dorica Makuc, *Primorska dekleta v Nemčijo gredo*, Goriška Mohorjeva družba, Gorica 2005, pp. 106–110.
- Saša Quinzi, Konzentrationslager Dachau, in: *Marko Vogrič: Konzentrationslager Dachau*, [exhibition leaflet], Associazione Amici di Israele – Gorizia = Združenje Prijatelji Izraela – Gorica, Gorizia 2017.



**M**arko Vogrič was born in 1961 in Gorizia, where he works and lives with his family. He was introduced to the world of photography at a young age by his father Zdenko, who was an avid amateur photographer and an active member of the Gorizia-based photo club *Skupina 75* for many years. Vogrič, the current vice-president of the club, has been a member since the 1980s. He started pursuing photography more seriously after the year 2000. He specialises in black and white film photography, using a camera obscura (a pinhole camera) to take photos from his signature 'mouse's eye view'. He also uses vintage cameras of all formats to experiment with unconventional techniques (cross process). His enlarging technique is, for the most part, traditional, relying on gelatin silver bromide paper. He has, however, further explored the photographic medium and his photographic creativity through old printing techniques (cyanotype, Van Dyke brown, etc.). Vogrič has participated in various exhibitions and competitions and has contributed photographs for several published books (*Poslikave Toneta Kralja v cerkvi v Pevmi*, 2004; *Od Timave do Idrije*, 2005;

*Drobtinice iz goriških šeg in navad*, 2007; *Gorica, vodnik po mestu*, 2008). His photography is featured in a poetry collection by Claudia Voncina *Mosaico – Mozaik* (2006) and on the cover of a book titled *Emozioni* by the same author (2017), as well as on a wall calendar and the calendar section of the 2018 almanac published by the Gorizia Hermagoras Society.

### Contemporary Photographic Activity

2007–2020: *Worldwide Pinhole Photography Day* ([www.pinholeday.org](http://www.pinholeday.org))

2009, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2019: *Stenopeica*, MUSINF Senigallia

2020: *Stoletne priče*, Fotogalerija Stolp, Maribor (*Festival fotografije Maribor*); *Zeropixel festival: Musica*, Trieste/Trst

2019: *DarkRoom*, Galerija 75, San Floriano/Steberjan; *Fotografia Zeropixel 6: Eureka!* and *Camera Obscura – Hommage a Leonardo*, Trieste/Trst; *Fotografario 2019 CRAF*, Spilimbergo

2018: *Un topo in viaggio*, Castellanza (*Festival fotografico europeo*) and Trieste/Trst (*Silenzi urbani – Trieste Photo Days*); *Solkansko polje*, Galerija Gong, Solkan; *'Fotografia stenopeica' art colony*, BoCS Art Cosenza; *To ni za ljudstvo!*, Galerija Ars, Gorizia/Gorica

2017: *Konzentrationslager Dachau*, Synagogue, Gorizia/Gorica

2016: *Miška na potovanju*, Fotograd FIAP Negova

2015: *1915–2015*, Taverna al Museo, Gorizia/Gorica; *Un topolino parigino a Cormòns*, Caffè Massimiliano, Cormòns/Krmin

2014: *Vojna: sledi, spomini, podobe*, Kraška hiša, Rupingrande/Repen (Province of Trieste)

2013: *Miška obišče Edo*, Eda center, Nova Gorica; *Po starem*, Rotunda of the Slovene National Theatre Nova Gorica; *I primi 100 anni del ponte di Avons*, Tolmezzo

2012: *Palmanova di ombra e di luce*, Palmanova; *Miška po Ljubljani*, Šolt, Ljubljana; *Tolmezzo stenopeica*,



**Marko Vogrič**

**Grandfather Franc, Gorizia – Dachau.  
A Photo Letter from the Camp**

**Photographic exhibition**

Center judovske kulturne  
dediščine Sinagoga Maribor  
**21 January – 30 April 2021**

Text by: **Marjetka Bedrač**

Translation: **Mateja Žuraj**

Proofreading: **Adele Gray**

Photographs: **Marko Vogrič**

Published by: **Center judovske kulturne  
dediščine Sinagoga Maribor**

Design and lay-out: **drugaOblika.com**

Printed by: **Design Studio**

Print run: **50 copies**

The exhibition and the leaflet were  
prepared as part of the 'Shoah - Let  
Us Remember 2021' project.

The 'Shoah - Let Us Remember  
2021' project was funded by the  
Municipality of Maribor and the  
Embassy of the State of Israel.

© **Center judovske kulturne  
dediščine Sinagoga Maribor 2021**

All rights reserved.

**Free copy**

**CENTER JUDOVSKE KULTURNE  
DEDIŠČINE SINAGOGA MARIBOR**

Židovska ulica 4, 2000 Maribor, Slovenija

**T:** +386 (0)2 252 78 36

**M:** +386 (0)31 680 294

**E:** info@sinagogamaribor.si

**W:** www.sinagogamaribor.si

**FB:** @Sinagoga.Maribor

Tolmezzo; 6. *Vedere Oltre*, Motta di  
Livenza

2011: *Un topolino per il Carso*, L'angolo  
di Maritani, Monfalcone/Tržič;  
*Miška v Gorici*, Kinemax, Gorizia/  
Gorica; *Il quando di adesso*, Art  
Open Space, Gorizia/Gorica; *V žar-  
ku zajete podobe*, Town Hall Gallery,  
Kranj; *Mechanobotanica*, Kulturni  
dom Gorica/Gorizia (13. *Fotosrečanje  
Skupina75*); *Pr Čuotavih*, Lokanda  
Devetak, San Michele del Carso/Vrh  
sv. Mihaela

2010: *CameraObscura&Co.*, At Thirty-  
Seven, Fiumicello; *Miška po Krasu*,  
restaurant Savron, Devincina/  
Devinščina (Province of Trieste);  
*Solkansko polje*, Hiša kulture, Šmartno  
(12. *Fotosrečanje Skupina75*); *Dal foro  
stenopeico al pixel digitale*, Foyergalerie  
Universität Alpe Adria, Klagenfurt

2009: *Un topolino per Gorizia*, Caffè  
Trieste, Ronchi/Ronke (festival  
*Triestèfotografia*)

**Info – Contact Details**

[mvogric@gmail.com](mailto:mvogric@gmail.com);

[www.skupina75.it](http://www.skupina75.it);

YouTube channel: markovogric;

Flickr: MarkoVog