

Annette Behrens

(in matters of) Karl

as part of the *A New Display: Visual Storytelling at a Crossroads* exhibition

Curator: Iris Sikking

In 2007, a photo album was anonymously gifted to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., its contents stirring worldwide media attention. The album contains hundreds of images depicting the everyday life of high-ranking German officers and administrators during World War II. The men and women shown in the images were Nazis working in the Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps in Poland. Nowadays the album is referred to as the “Höcker Album,” after its owner, Karl-Friedrich Höcker.

When Annette Behrens saw the photographs for the first time, she was particularly intrigued by the images taken at the Solahütte, a cottage used for recreational means. The pictures show men and women relaxing, making music, and eating blueberries. In 2008 Behrens travelled to Poland to visit the Solahütte and to find out more about Karl. Over the years to come, the quest to unveil more about his identity brought her to archives in Poland, Germany, and the United States.

Accessing information, as easy as it seems nowadays, became a stumbling block time after time. Information was spread between different archives, Karl’s family did not want to cooperate, and, due to the inevitable passage of time, information and facts had slowly disappeared.

(in matters of) Karl (2015) is a project about the photo album itself, and about the historic information carried within the images. The different layers are held together by Behrens’s own story of the journey she took to create this work and confront her own German heritage.

Annette Behrens (1979) is a visual artist interested in different forms of categorization and in one-dimensional viewpoints. Using photography, video, and text, she works on long-term documentary projects. By approaching her subjects from various perspectives, she produces layered installations and/or publications.