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***Lightning talk: Establishing significance for woodblock prints made in the immediate post-WWII period – Walter PreissierHolzschnitt: Collaborating with the Jewish Holocaust Centre to address modes of intergenerational knowledge transfer***

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**ABSTRACT**

Melbourne's primarily Polish Jewish community established the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) in 1984. It was built from a grassroots approach to knowledge transmission and pedagogy, with the aim that an event like the Jewish Holocaust would 'never again' be permitted to happen. Holocaust survivors inhabit the museum space, working as survivor guides who daily tell and retell their stories. This is the main mode of intergenerational knowledge transmission employed by the Centre. Nonetheless, it faces the gradual and inevitable loss of these survivors. This will require the institution to rely more heavily on the material culture to continue it in its didactic approach to museology and continued research aims. As such, this presented an opportunity for a conservation student to collaborate with the Centre over several months, to examine and discuss preservation outcomes that would provide a value-add to the institution and extend access to their significant collection.

This paper focuses on a case study of a set of twelve woodblock prints by artist and Holocaust survivor Walter Preisser, produced in the immediate post-World War Two period, demonstrating how and why conservation can engage with material culture of trauma. It argues that the conservation profession must have a future forward trajectory, which is based on conservation practice as an activity of knowledge generation that works best when taken into community. For this project, Preisser's prints have been researched and documented following the guidelines set forward in the Collection Council of Australia's publication *Significance 2.0*, to establish a nuanced understanding of the significance of the works and provide a rationale for a preservation plan and future use. The prints were utilised as a primary source for knowledge generation, an act of preservation centered on understanding the context in which the objects were produced. In doing so, this also called

for an exploration of ethical considerations conservators are faced with in practice when working with smaller and diverse community groups. The result is a two-way learning framework, wherein the agenda of the Centre has directly informed the way in which preservation outcomes have been approached. Conservators daily make decisions about preservation that shape how and why an object will exist into the future, and how future generations will engage and respond. This case study demonstrates and affirms that the future trajectory of the conservation profession has a social orientation and function centred on knowledge generation and transmission, which is based in both theory and practice.



**'Prisoner who had died was thrown out of railway carriage.'** – Walter Preisser, Schleswig-Holstein, Occupied Europe, circa 1945.