INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSEOLOGY AND HERITAGE 2025

Industrial Heritage in the Museums - case studies from the Great Northern Coalfield (UK) and Upper Silesia (Poland)



TRANSFORM 4EUROPE

26 August, 2025

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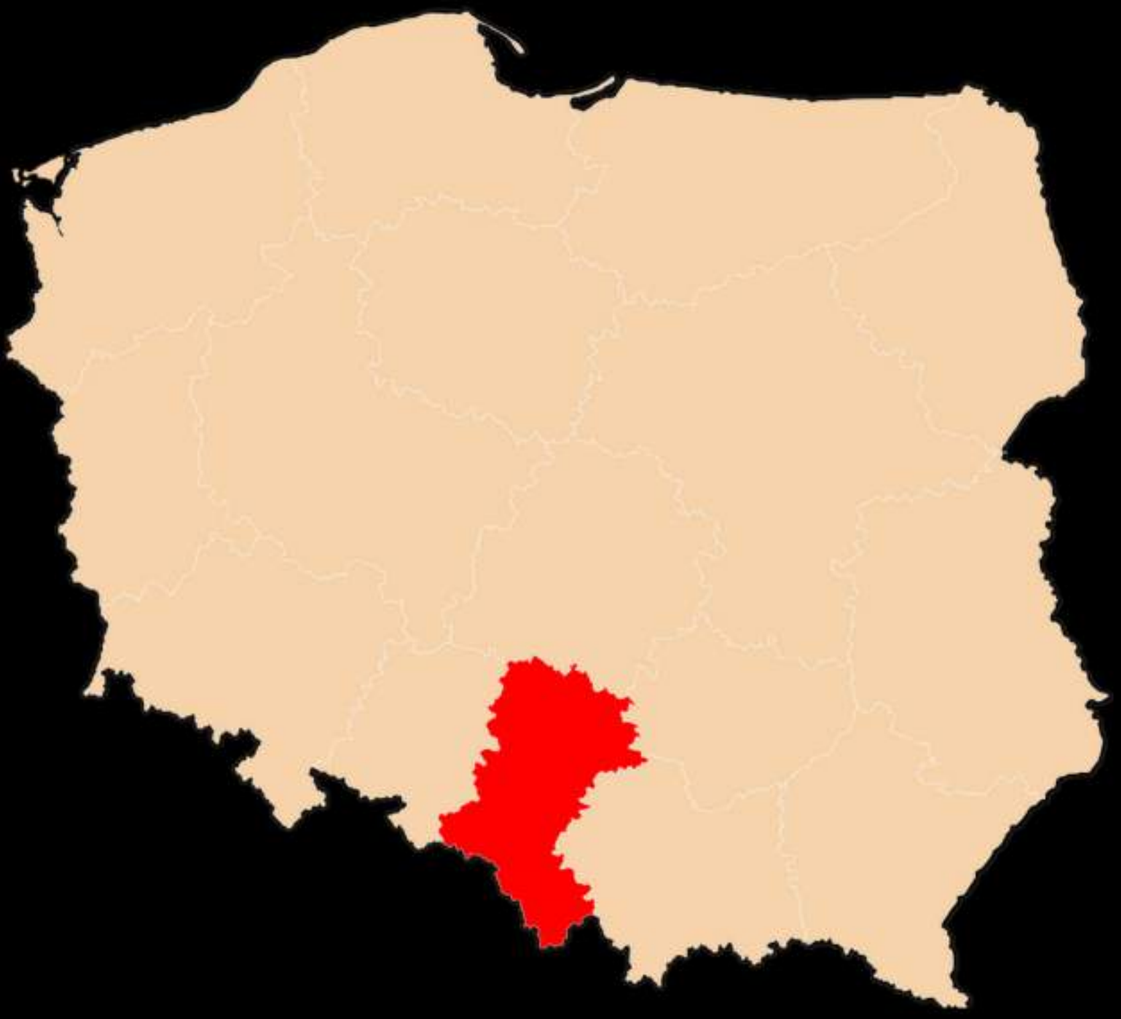
UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA
IN KATOWICE

Contents

- Understanding Industrial Heritage in de-industrialized regions
- Great Northern Coalfield and Upper Silesia - two coal mining regions - a brief history
- Industrial Heritage as dissonant heritage? Between “castration of the landscape” and “smokestack nostalgia”
- Industrial Heritage in the Museums- case studies
- Coal Mining Art as a part of Industrial Heritage
- Contemporary Art and Industrial Heritage

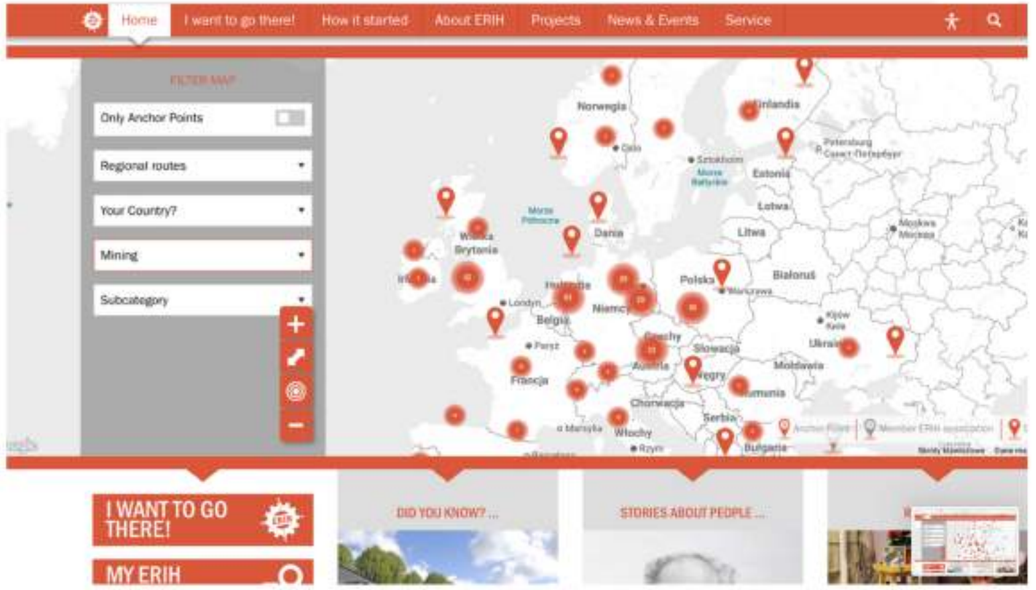


Łukasz Surowiec, Tato nie płacz, mural, Katowice 2015.




British Coalfields
19th century
0 km 100
0 mi 50
CLYDE
LOTHIAN
TWEED
GREAT NORTHERN
AYRSHIRE
CUMBERLAND
INGLETON
LANCASHIRE
SOUTH YORKSHIRE
FLINT
NORTH WALES
NORTH STAFFS.
LEICESTER
BROOKDALE
CLEE HILLS
SOUTH STAFFORD-SHIRE
NORTH WARWICK-SHIRE
SOUTH WALES
FOREST OF DEAN
BRISTOL

- WOODHORN MUSEUM
- BEAMISH - The Living Museum of the North
- SILESIAN MUSEUM IN KATOWICE
- ZINC ROLLING MILL IN KATOWICE
- NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM, WAKEFIELD



EUROPEAN ROUTE OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE



The Industrial Monuments Route of the Silesian Voivodeship



Józef Rockstroh (1934-2018) Na Górnym Śląsku, 1977

SILESIAN MINING ART

GWAREK 58 Group

Source: Silesian Museum in Katowice

According to the TICCIH (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage), industrial heritage “consists of the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value. These remains consist of buildings and machinery, workshops, mills and factories, mines and sites for processing and refining, warehouses and stores, places where energy is generated, transmitted and used, transport and all its infrastructure, as well as places used for social activities related to industry such as housing, religious worship or education”.

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE. A MULTIFACETED APPROACH, ED. FLORENTINA-CRISTINA MERCIU, BUCUREŞTI : EDITURA UNIVERSITARĂ, 2024,P. 7.

The ‘authorized heritage discourse’ privileges monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgement, social consensus and nation building. It is a self-referential discourse, which has a particular set of consequences.

LAURAJANE SMITH, USES OF HERITAGE, ROUTLEDGE: LONDON 2006.

Coal shaped the humans who used it far more than humans shaped coal.



TIMOTHY JAMES LECAIN
AGAINST THE ANTHROPOCENE
A NEO-MATERIALIST PERSPECTIVE,
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR HISTORY, CULTURE AND MODERNITY
2015, VOL. 3, NO. 1

IRudolf Riedel, Gwarek, 1978, Source: Coal Mining Museum in Zabrze

Industrial Heritage - key issues



Both history and heritage make a selective use of the past for current puroposes and transform it through interpretation (p.6)

- Industrial Heritage as dissonant heritage (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996)? Ambivalence

  → cognitive dissonance, a state of psychic tension caused by the simultaneous holding of mutually inconsistent attitudes or the existence of a lack of consonance between attitudes and behavior (p.20)

- Narratives of progress, technology as the main focus in the Museums (terminology)

- "Smokestack nostalgia" (Cowie and Heathcott 2003) romanticization of industry, "ruin porn" (Strangelman 2013)

  → "we have to strip industrial work of its broad-shouldered, social-realist patina and see it for what it was: tough work that people did because it paid well and it was located in their communities" (Cowie and Heathcott, 2003)

- Generational change

- Gender in Industrial Museums

- Contamination as heritage

1.XVIII-XIX century - rapid industrialization of Upper Silesia (optimism)
2. PRL PERIOD - Ambiguity towards industrial heritage, propaganda
3. After 1989 - symbol of backwardness, deindustrialization and decommunization

4.Now - new mythologization of industrial heritage?
(around 19 coal mines still operating in Poland)

Inclusion of industrial heritage in the Development Strategy of the Silesian Voivodeship

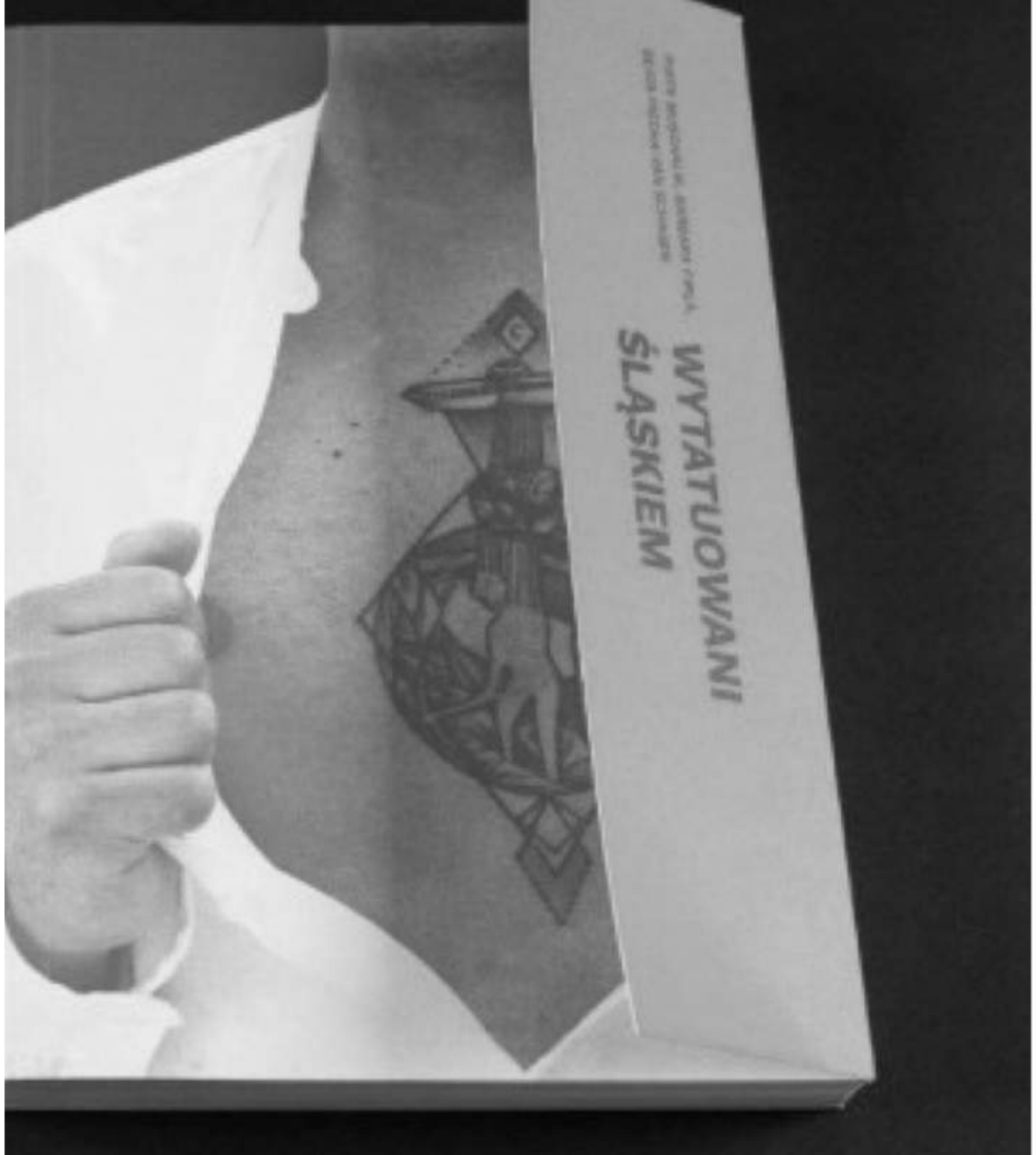


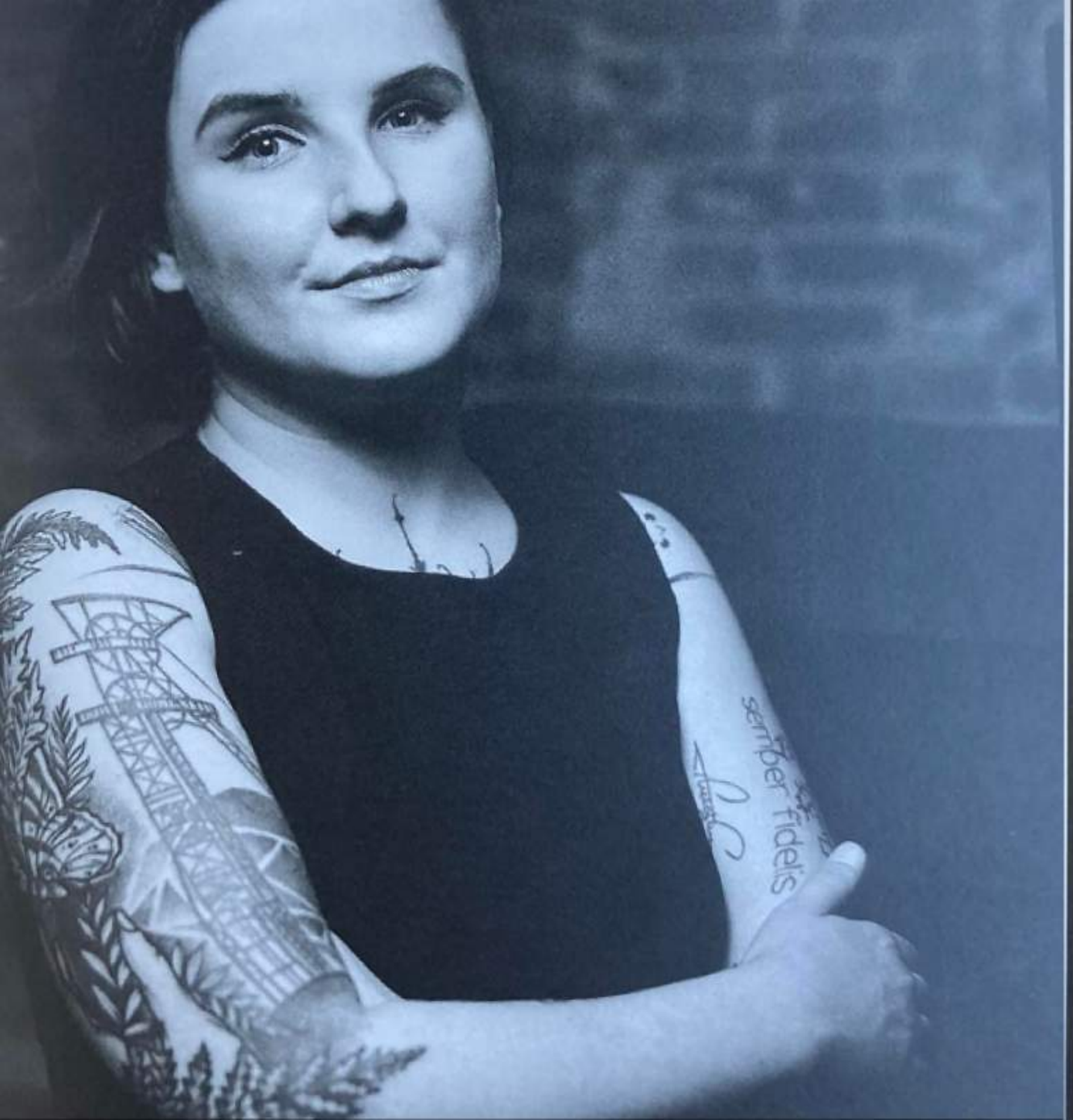
T-SHIRT DESIGN WITH COAL MINES, GRYFNIE WWW.GRYNIE>COM

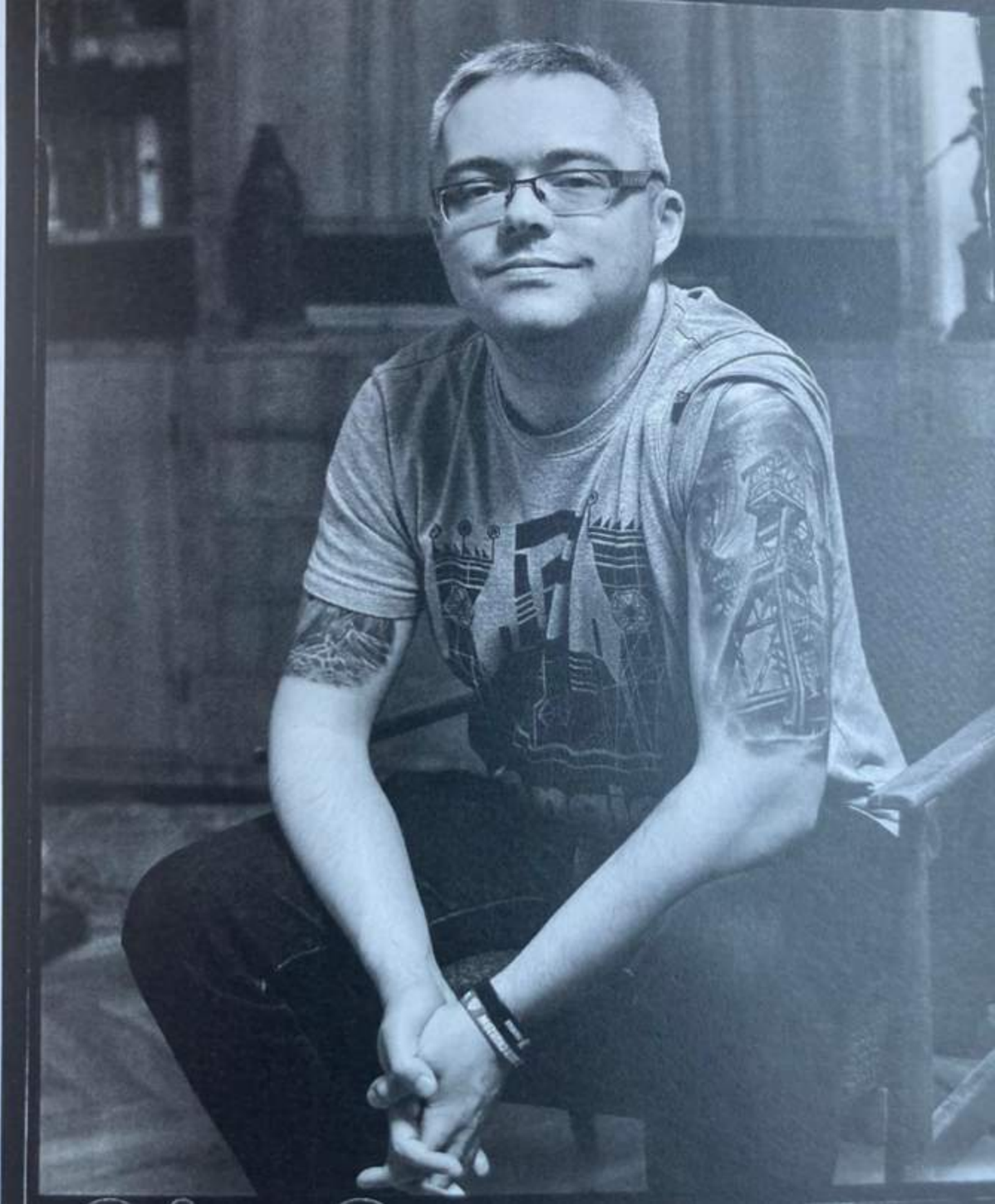
1.Industrial Revolution - Optimism, progress
2. VICTORIAN ERA - (1837-1901) child labour (1842 The Coal Mines Act), extreme working conditions, disasters
3. 1947 - nationalization, optimism
4. North East England - decline from around 1960's - pit closures, lower demand for coal
5.1984-1985 - Miner's Strike - traumatic experience, miners as villains ("enemy within"), stories about community
6. After the Strike: "Mourning Period", "erasure", "cultural cleansing" (Hall) - destruction of postindustrial objects
2005- closure of Ellington colliery
7. Social need for museification of the remains of industry

(Post) industrial heritage

Wytatuowani Śląskiem (Tattooed by Silesia) Piotr Muschalik, Barbara Firla, Beata Plecha van Schagen Katowice 2021




semper fidelis





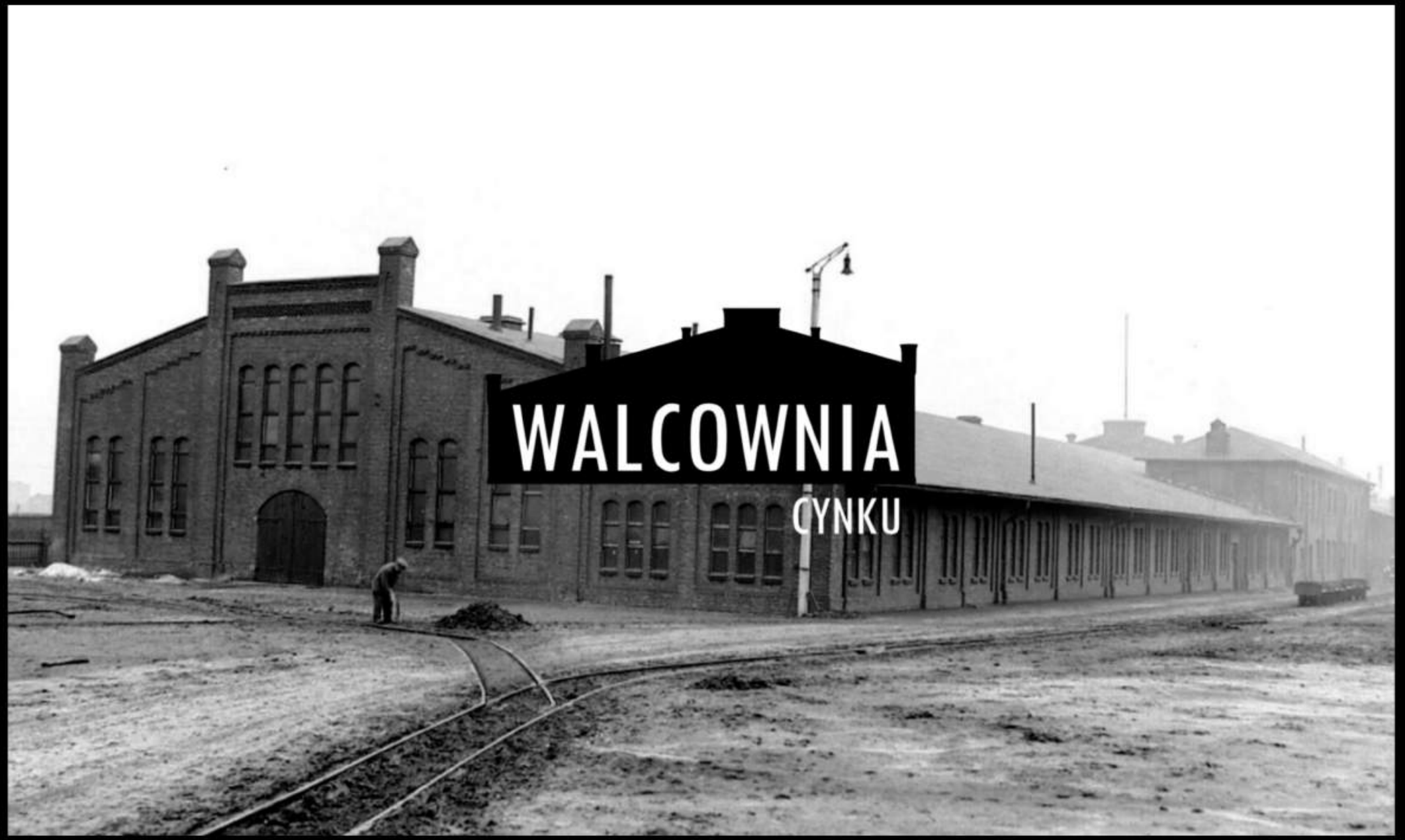
MAREK IDZIASZEK, DZIELNICA ŚMIECIARZY, 1995, SOURCE: MUZEUM ŚLĄSKIE W KATOWICACH

Voivodship Silesia is an example of a region in which the industrial past has left a permanent mark on spatial forms, social relations, institutions, cultural patterns, as well as collective identifications and individual biographies.

M.GNIECIAK, KRAJOBRAZY PAMIĘCI - RAMA TEORETYCZNA, IN: ZAPOMNIANE MIEJSCA, ZAPOMNIANI LUDZIE. RESTRUKTURYZACJA EKONOMICZNA A ZMIANA KULTUROWA, RED. K. WÓDZ, KATOWICE 2013

Zinc Rolling Mill

Katowice


WALCOWNIA
CYNKU





Contamination as Heritage

JOHN BAETEN, CONTAMINATION AS ARTIFACT: A CRITICAL INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE APPROACH, IN: GEOGRAPHIES OF POST-INDUSTRIAL PLACE, MEMORY, AND HERITAGE, EDITED BY MARK ALAN RHODES II, WILLIAM R. PRICE AND AMY WALKER, 2021.

By utilizing a theoretical approach that values waste and contamination as culturally significant artifacts, heritage managers can use wastescapes as examples to address contemporary concerns related to human uses and abuses of the environment.

contamination as artifact - a materialist perspective that extends the spatiotemporal framework in which post-industrial sites are framed and expands the focus of industrial heritage scholarship that has been overwhelmingly centered on technological and economic nostalgia

While many industrial heritage organizations have drawn on labor history and recognize the conflicted relationship between workers and management, **the recognition of the equally conflicted relationship between industry and environment has been universally under-represented.**

Contextualizing contamination as material recognizes the environmental legacies of industrialization, such as polluted soils or contaminated water, as byproducts of human labor and extends the sociocultural lens to encompass the wastescape. Furthermore, this approach expands the spatiotemporal framework in which post-mining sites are often situated, generally positioned spatially as local occurrences and temporally with a defined beginning and end. **This theoretical perspective can affect not only how we interpret a post-mining landscape but also how we designate its spatial and temporal bounds. In doing so, we can begin to ask more complex epistemological questions about our post-industrial heritage such as, where do wastescapes begin, and when do they end?**

Contamination as Heritage

- **So as the industrial heritage of these sites is composed in part by the built environment of disused industrial infrastructures, so too are these sites haunted by the legacies of contamination and environmental degradation.**

C.THOMPSON, INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN AN ERA OF CLIMATE CATASTROPHE: CONTAMINATION AS HERITAGE, IN: GEOGRAPHIES OF POST-INDUSTRIAL PLACE, MEMORY, AND HERITAGE, EDITED BY MARK ALAN RHODES II, WILLIAM R. PRICE AND AMY WALKER, 2021, 174.

Michał Łuczak

Extraction
2018 - Ongoing













(...)

there are children on the streets and sidewalks in this city

amphetamine paths

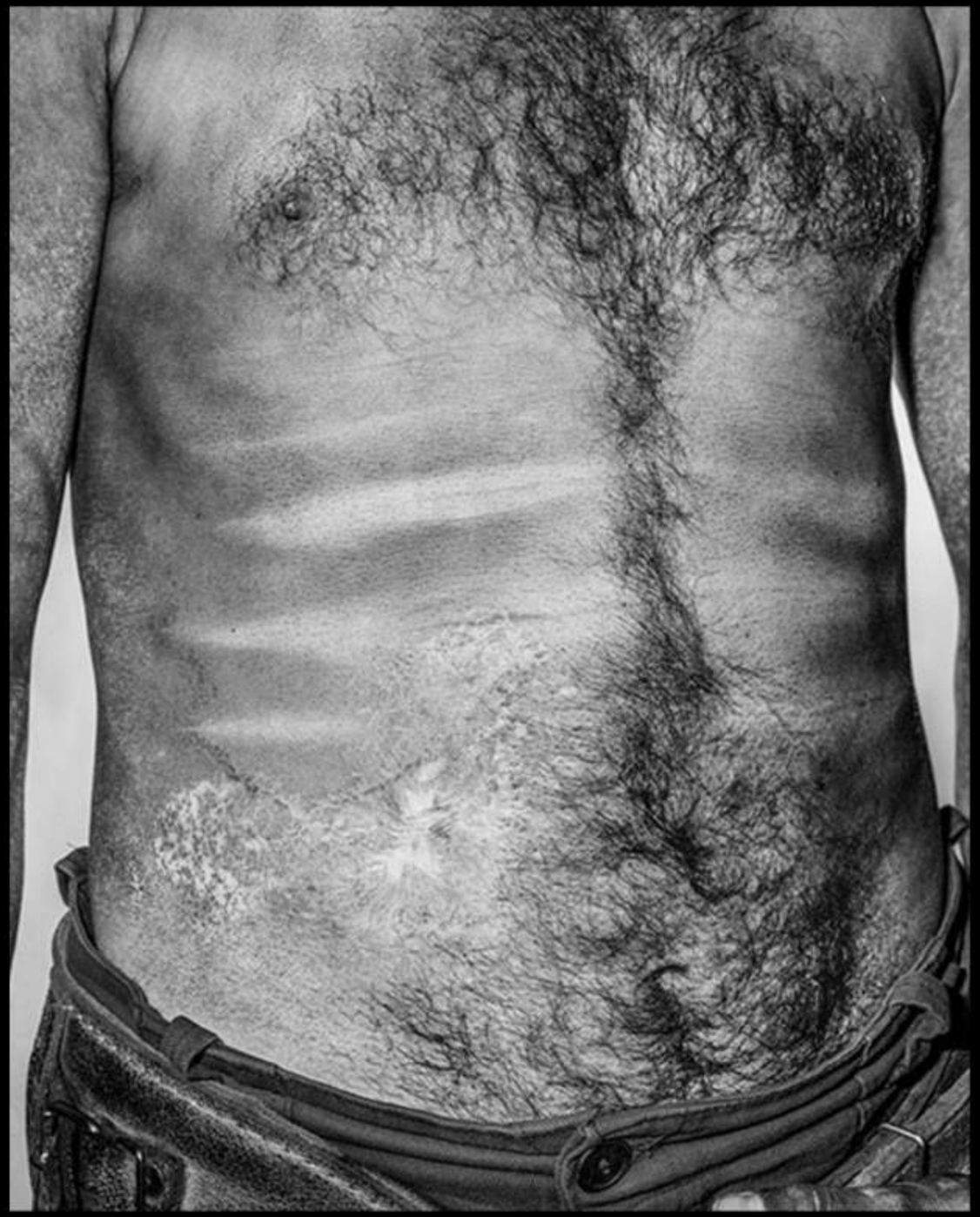
there are leafless trees, bare branches intertwined like synapses

there are chimneys – pillars holding up the sky

man-eating mines and the interior of the earth hanging in the air

JAKUB PSZONIAK - DWAJŚCIACOŚ, HTTPS://WWW.BIUROLITERACKIE.PL/BIBLIOTEKA/UTWORY/SZKODY-GORNICZE/









Woodhorn Museum

Ashington



Woodhorn Museum

- Woodhorn Colliery opened for production in 1898 (to 1981). Many of its buildings and structures have survived, including the two pithead towers with their pairs of winding wheels and the No 1 and No 2 winding engine houses

- The museum at Woodhorn Colliery, Ashington, opened in 1989, and the later development of the site to include the Northumberland archives, in 2006, linked the visitor attraction with a research centre

- Strikes, mining disasters and community hardship are depicted clearly and there is a genuine concern to avoid romanticising the past (Vall 2017)

- “Whilst the displays are very representative, it is hard to escape the fact that little use has been made of the original preserved buildings in comparison to the new visitor centre. Considerable investment appears to have been drawn by key collections of banners and folk art, compared with the lack of investment in other sites that have as many preserved buildings but fewer or less aesthetically pleasing collections” (Chris Scott, 2009)

- the museum initiative started by local council cultural officers, reflected a strong local desire to create a prominent historical monument to mining

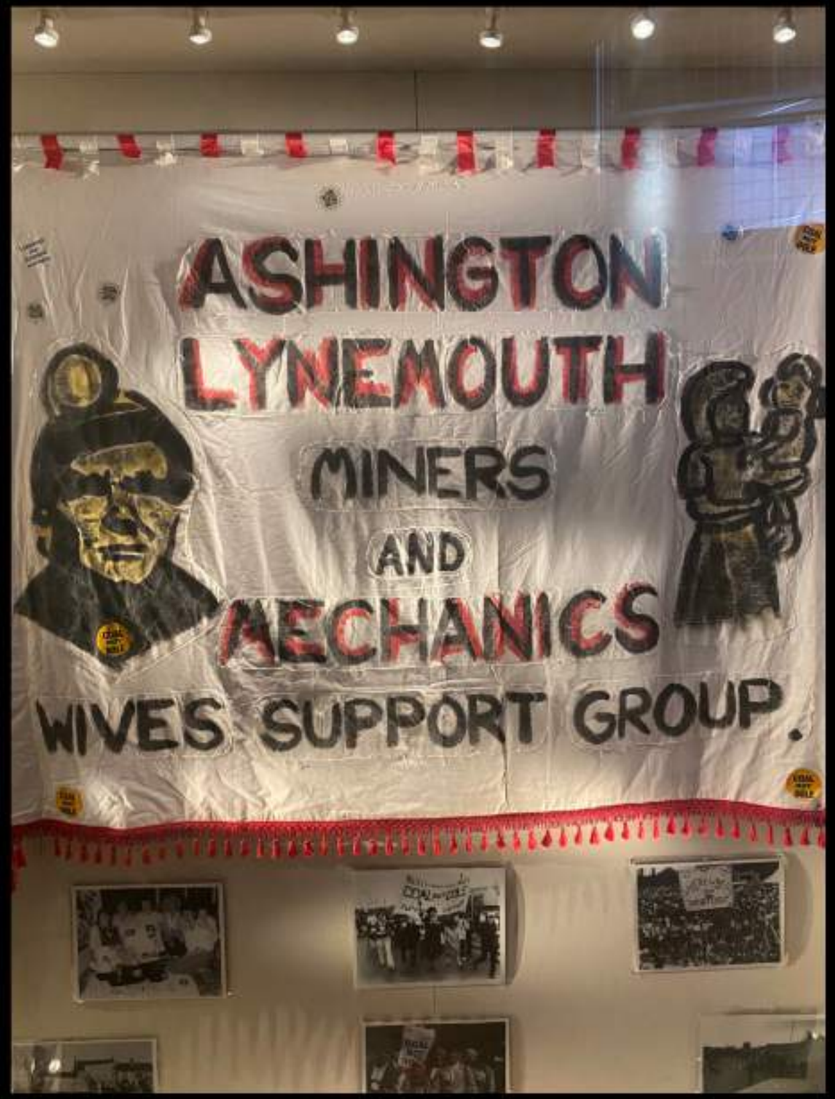




Cutter Building designed by Tony Kettle, 2006


I have to rely on charity to obtain
WITH CHRISTMAS APP
I DESPAIR AT HOW
DAUGHTERS ANY PRE
I am a single person and receive no paymen
I would be most grateful
ment toward th
my two daught
COAL NOT DOLE


PITS AND PERVERTS
LESBIANS & GAY MEN
SUPPORT
THE
MINERS
1984-1985

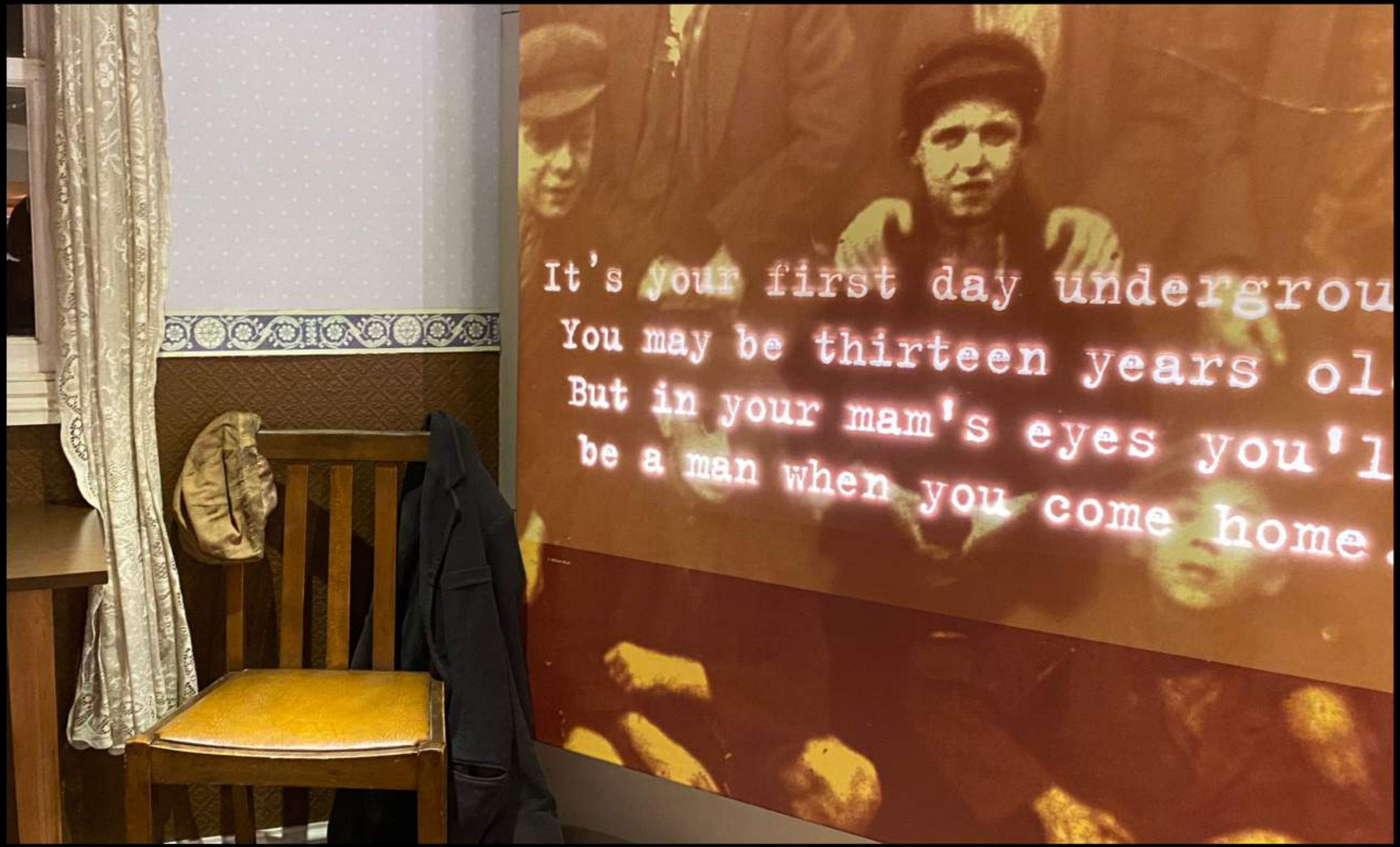

ASHINGTON
LYNEMOUTH
MINERS
AND
MECHANICS
WIVES SUPPORT GROUP.


Close The Door On Past Dreariness
NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS


1939




It's your first da
You may be thirtee
But in your mam's
be a man when you


It's your first day undergrou
You may be thirteen years ol
But in your mam's eyes you'l
be a man when you come home


"Here I found an outlet for other things than earning a living. There is a feeling of being my own boss for a change and with it comes a sense of freedom."

Coal Mining Art as a Part of Industrial Heritage in Coal Mining Regions

- 20th Century Coal Mining Art Groups - Ashington Group, Spennymoor Settlement, Gwarek'58, Jankwska Group
- Narratives from the inside of the industry
- Tangible and intangible elements of heritage
- Social and Industrial Archive?
- Stereotypes and mystifications about coal mining art



Teofil Ociepka, Skarbnik, Source: Sielsian Museum in Katowice



Oliver Kilbourn, My Life as a Pitman, c. 1975, Source: Woodhorn Museum



George Blessed, Whippets, c.1939, Source: Woodhorn Museum



Fred Laider, The Dead Pony, c. 1948, Source: Woodhorn Museum

Beamish Musem The Living Museum of the North

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Collection of in situ and reassembled buildings,
including Pockerley Manor house, railway/waggonway,
home farm, town, railway station, and a colliery village reconstructed around an extant drift mine. The site covers over 300 acres, and each element or display is separated by green fields and connected by tramlines or period buses. Each display is designed to represent an aspect of North-East social history at a particular time - 1820s, 1900s, 1940s and 1950.

My reasons . . . were threefold: to rescue a representative collection of objects illustrating a way of life in the region, which was rapidly disappearing; to present this in an exciting and relatively novel way which would enthuse visitors; and through all this to help the people of the North east to appreciate the history of their forebears and their past way of life and work were worth remembering and something to be proud of. . . . My third reason: to inculcate pride in their own region . . . I felt I could justify a pride in many aspects of the region's past and hence help to improve its future.

Frank Atkinson - founder of the Beamish Museum

Beamish

- The North of England open-air museum was established at Beamish in the early 1970
- bottom-up' collection policy
- many locals are now unable afford the entrance fee
- the method adopted at Beamish is the use of costumed interpretative staff who deliver third-person interpretation of the environment in which they are working.
- Museum's deviation from strict topographical and spatial authenticity attracted prominent critical appraisal - "theme park"
- 2025 - Beamish awarded as UK's Museum of the Year
- Museum's deviation from strict topographical and spatial authenticity attracted prominent critical appraisal
- "Atkinson's ambition to represent and engage the culture and lives of ordinary people in museums in ways that departed from orthodox museum curation."

"Beamish, deal directly or indirectly with working class social history, and it is interesting to note that Beamish in particular came under specific criticism within the heritage industry critique for offering a sanitized and inauthentic view of the past." (Vall, 2017)


NO SMOKING ALLOWED
ON THESE PREMISES





Beamish - critique

Bennett (1988: 73–4) is concerned that popular memory is restyled and rewritten at Beamish to create a sentimentalized past where class, organized labour and gender issues are depoliticized or obscured.

Walsh, is concerned that the museum relies heavily on the 'promotion of selective memory or nostalgia' (1992: 98). While he notes that this is not necessarily problematic if those doing the remembering have first-hand memories of the period, and thus the ability to critically contextualize what they are seeing, he is con- cerned about the 'second-hand' nostalgia of the children and grandchildren whose memories of this period have been simply passed on, and thus may become de-contextualized and depoliticized nostalgia.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Beamish had been heavily criticized for sanitizing the past, belittled as a form of entertainment, for privileging 'things' for their own sake and depoliticizing history
Hewison (1987: 95), for instance, notes that 'there is no need for personal nostalgia' at
Beamish as 'the displays do it for you'. Walsh notes that the absence of interpretive signage means that visitors are left to simply admire the object for itself (1992: 98)

LAURAJANE SMITH, USES OF HERITAGE, ROUTLEDGE: LONDON 2006.

Visitor is not an empty vessel

One of the key observations that emerges from this survey is that many visitors to these industrial museums engaged actively and critically with the performativity of their visit and the sense of place they both found and constructed at the museums. While, for many, family was the focus of their remembering and the links being forged or maintained, these links were contextualized within a critically conscious awareness of class identity and collective experiences. Although at Beamish and the NCMM family memories were often the focus of individual remembering, these memories were narrated and underscored by collective class memories, and remembering of what it meant and currently means to be English working class.

What is also significant is that this remembering, and the meanings and values it engaged with, negotiated and rehearsed, was itself then actively deployed and used by many respondents to critically evaluate and reflect on both past and present social and economic inequities and experiences. The identities constructed and maintained by the performativity of the visit were actively used and interlinked with attempts to make sense of and contextualize contemporary life and work.

The doing of the visit and the being at the sites, even at places like Beamish where material had been moved to its location rather than being in situ, were important in providing a 'theatre of memory' where remembering and commemoration could not only be done, but also be marked as legitimate and of significance and validity.

LAURAJANE SMITH, USES OF HERITAGE, ROUTLEDGE: LONDON 2006.


SWEETS
Watson's
TOFFEES
SUNDERLAND CORPORATION TRANSPORT
PLEASE DEPOSIT
USED TICKETS
IN THIS BOX


by Sir DEREK EZRA
Chairman of the National Coal Board
of the re-opening
of the
DRIFT











Silesian Museum in Katowice

Silesian Museum in Katowice

- Museum was not established as a Museum of the Industry
- Established in 1929
- In 2015 - new placement - former KATOWICE COAL MINE - need to incorporate history of Industry in the Museum
- Main Exhibitions: History of Upper Silesia, Polish Art - XIX century to Contemporary Art, Silesian Non-Professional Art, Theatre Scenography, Gothic Art, Exhibition for families: On the Trail of Tomek Wilmoski
- Politically based critique of the permament exhibition
- Outdated exhibition?

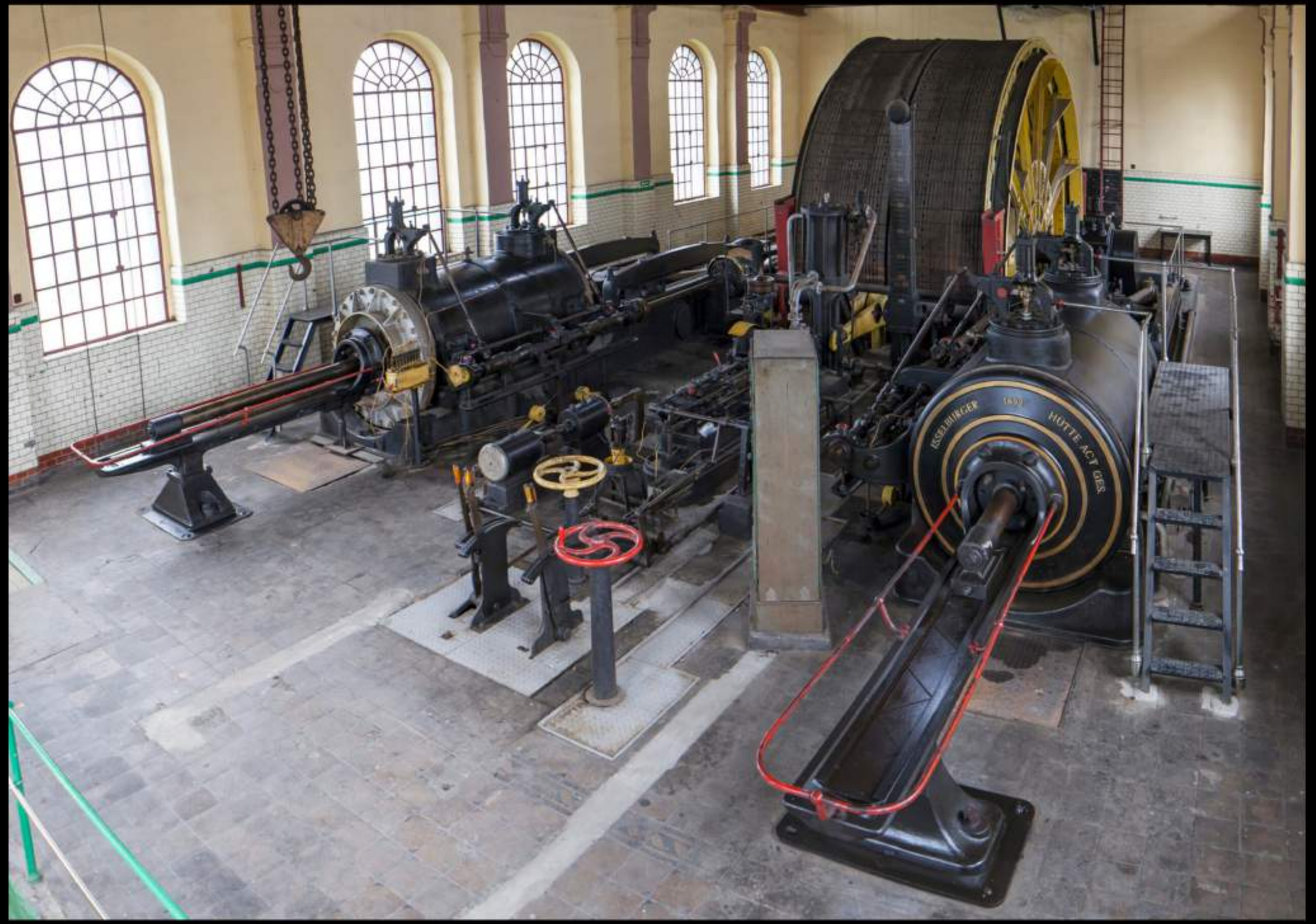




Silesian Museum in Katowice Project: Karol Schayer 1936-1939 Destroyed 1941-1944



KWK KATOWICE COAL MINE, 1823-1999
(FERDINANDGRUBE)


HUTTE AG



SILESIAN MUSEUM IN KATOWICE, Riegler Riewe Architekten, 2015






KOPALNIA KATOWICE
KATOWICKI HOLDING WĘGLOWY SA
KOPALNIA WĘGLA KAMIENNEGO
„KATOWICE"
Solidarność
Solidarność
Solidarność





PRZEKLEŃSTWO CZARNEGO ZŁOTA

Wzrost wydobycia węgla kamiennego i intensywna produkcja przyczyniły się do dewastacji środowiska naturalnego. Proces rozpoczął się w XIX wieku, a w 2. połowie następnego stulecia przybrał już rozmiary zagrażające zdrowiu i życiu mieszkańców regionu. Wysokie wskaźniki produkcji zaczęto cenić wyżej niż dobro ludzi. Duże miasta i osiedla leżące na obrzeżach zakładów przemysłowych znalazły się na krawędzi katastrofy ekologicznej.





Przypadek Alojzego Pionka

Der Fall von Alojzy Pionek

The Case of Alojzy Pionek

NAJWIĘKSZE KATASTROFY W GÓRNOŚLĄSKIM GÓRNICTWIE

Die größten Grubenunglücksfälle in Oberschlesien
The greatest disasters in Upper-Silesian mining







Gallery of Non-Professional Sielsian Art





Coal Mining Artists Groups:

Gwarek 58 Group
Janowska Group





TEOFIL OCIEPKA, KRÓWKA Z SATURNA, 1956, SOURCE: ARTINFO.PL



TEOFIL OCIEPKA, KOPALNIA, N.D, SOURCE: MUZEUM ŻUP KRAKOWSKICH

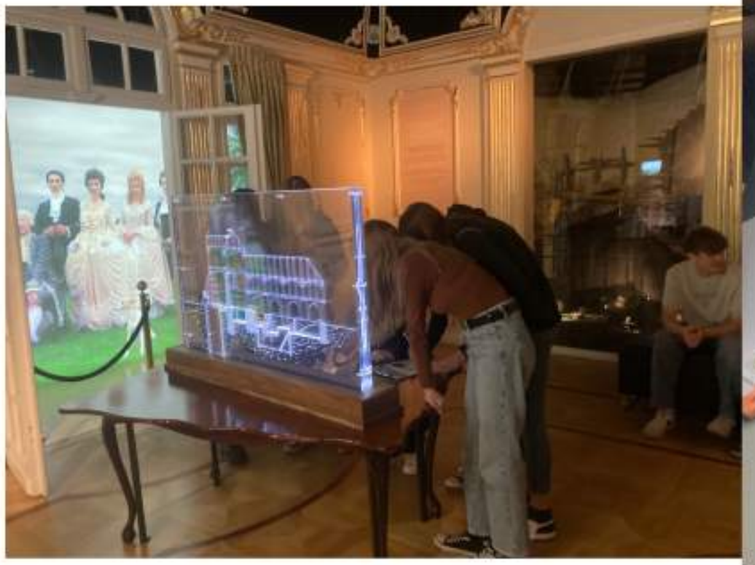
Janowska Group

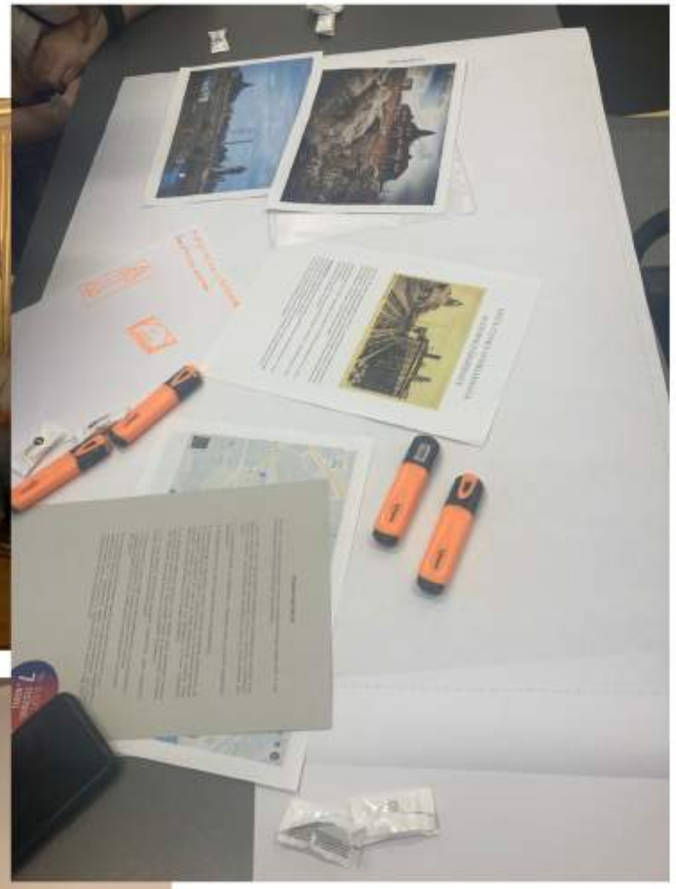


ERWIN SÓWKA, MECHANIZM, 1979, MUZEUM HISTORII KATOWIC

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Re_Thinking Industry. Revitalization in Theory and Practice









The Industrial Monuments Route of the Silesian Voivodeship

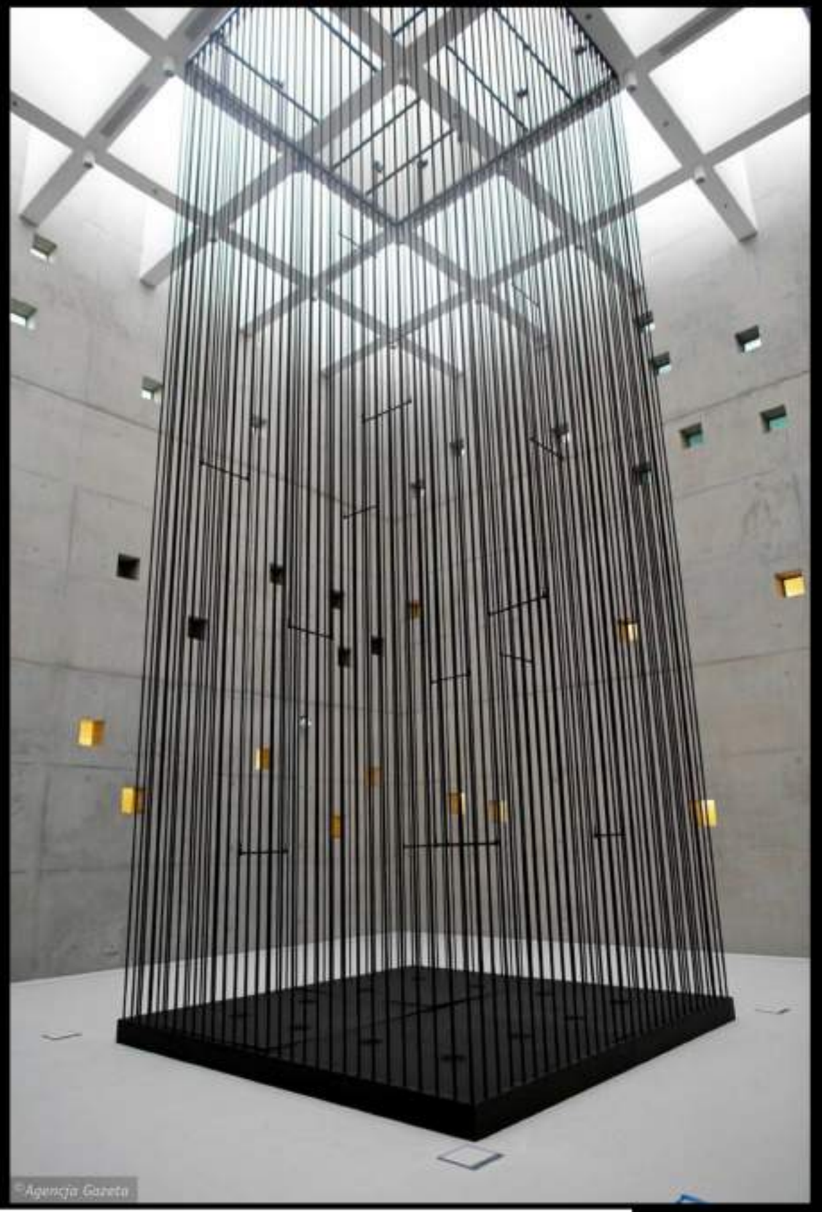






Carole Benzaken

Mi'ma'amakim, 2016



CAROLE BENZAKEN (1964), Mi'ma'amakim, 2016

Mirosław Bałka

„[(.,.:.?!–...)]”

2019


©Agencja Gazeta

Diana Lelonek

On coal and ice 2021


12
Diana Lelonek
O WĘGLU I LODZIE
OTWARCIE: 17.03.2021, 17.00 - 20.00
WYSTAWA: 17.03 - 16.05.2021
GALERIA 12, Cieszyn Rynek 12
CCM



DIANA LELONEK. MELTING GALLERY, 2019



DIANA LELONEK. SAINT BARBARA'S DAY, 2020

The study of coal is a way of exploring the past and predicting something of the future. For coal is a global commodity, and there is no part of the world that remains uninfluenced by it. Even if you could live in a country that neither mined nor burnt coal, global warming and the deleterious atmospheric consequences of burning coal would sooner or later affect you.

D. PRICE, COAL CULTURES: PICTURING MINING LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES, LONDON 2018.

Coal has always cursed the land in which it lies. When men begin to wrest it from the earth it leaves a legacy of foul streams, hideous slag heaps and polluted air. It peoples this transformed land with blind and crippled men and with widows and orphans. It is an extractive industry which takes all away and restores nothing. It mars but never beautifies. It corrupts but never purifies.

(Harry Caudill 1962)

QUOTED IN: D. PRICE, COAL CULTURES: PICTURING MINING LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES, LONDON 2018.

Conclusion

Post-industrial landscape is more than just physical surroundings - but a set of material and social practices together with their symbolic representation

Thinking about the Role of Art and Design in helping us to understand complexity of industrial heritage

Creating Industrial exhibitions that go beyond the narrative of technological progress

Creating Industrial exhibitions that represent environmental and human costs of the industry

Creating Industrial exhibitions that represent under-represented narratives - women, queer, migrant

Using the narrative about Industry to reflect on contemporary climate crisis and its social and environmental consequences

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSEOLOGY AND HERITAGE 2025

Thank You

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