

The Excavated Nametag of David Juda van der Velde

Hannah Wilson

- 1 What is evoked when one encounters a child's nametag, exhumed from the soil of a former Nazi death camp? For Holocaust archaeologists, such moments collapse temporal distance, raising pressing affective and ethical questions about the persistence of the past within the material present. The small, corroded tag bearing the initials "D. J. V/D" (David Juda van der Velde), uncovered during excavations at the former Sobibor camp in Eastern Poland, is more than forensic evidence—it is an object of mourning, memory, and familial history. As a recovered relic from a site of mass murder, it stands as a tangible invocation of a life extinguished and a family shattered. At the same time, it offers a foundation for collaborative knowledge production among archaeologists, scholars, curators, and—most importantly for this author—descendants, enabling reparative forms of memory work.¹ Yet, the question of ownership also reveals tensions between private remembrance and public commemoration, illuminating the contested values ascribed to such objects in the context of Holocaust heritage. When such objects enter museum narratives, they bring the emotional labor and spiritual attachments of families with them, complicating what Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra describe as the "afterlives" of things displaced by war.² Museums, in this light, become not just pedagogical institutions but vessels for co-scripting "sacred" memory. David Juda van der Velde's nametag reveals how personally identifiable artifacts prompt a rethinking of what it means to remember through material objects. It also demonstrates how forensic fragments can function as "testimonial objects" that not only act as loci of memory and affect, but also facilitate collaborative acts of memory-making and ritual care, especially for the relatives of Holocaust victims. As Jakub Bronec observes, "Members of Jewish post-war society did not only remember the destiny of their nation and families through the memorial plaques and monuments . . . sometimes, much less formal family artifacts can shape and preserve memories more powerfully than an elaborate official commemoration arranged by the state."³ Moreover, examining the significance of such artifacts through the lens of microhistory—to understand aspects of Nazi persecution policy from the perspective of individuals "below"—underscores the enduring devastation of the Holocaust, which shattered not only families, but entire communities and national identities.⁴

The Forensic Turn at Sobibor Death Camp

- 2 Sobibor is a place most associated with death, destruction, and anonymity. Located in the Lublin region of eastern Poland, surrounded by towering trees and peaceful forests, lies the remains of a once fully functioning death camp. Here at least 180,000 Jewish victims lost their lives during Aktion Reinhard: the code name for the plan to murder approximately two million Jews in this part of German-Occupied Poland. Remarkably, through an armed uprising led by Polish and Soviet prisoners of war on October 14, 1943, approximately 58 survivors lived to testify to the horrors of this place, with several having escaped from their work units earlier.⁵ Unlike other concentration camps where

meticulous bureaucratic registration was the order of business, these camps served to “process” the dead at speed, with many of the victims still unknown, unless deportation lists were recorded. This was the case for many of the Dutch transports who arrived at the camp in 1943.

- 3 After the prisoners’ escape, the camp was partially razed to the ground, and eventually dismantled entirely in the post-war period, minus one building which remains to this day. Like other “non-sites” of memory, Sobibor remained neglected and overgrown; bones and ash littered the ground. Roma Sendyka has defined “non-sites” of memory as part of a “contaminated landscape” where, like so many other unmarked sites across Eastern Europe, the victims were “buried somewhere in the fields, nameless graves were levelled to the ground and made alike the surroundings so no one would find them. So, they would melt into the landscape . . . there is nothing, no monuments, no plaque, no cross . . .”⁶ Even still, the memorials established in the 1960s were limited in their commemoration: Jewish victimhood was marginalized, and human remains were left unprotected from natural elements or local engagement.⁷ Following a wider pattern of increased Holocaust memory and efforts from survivors in the United States, revisions were made and a small museum established in 1993, (which, due to a lack of funding, closed in 2011). This nonetheless set the precedent for more recent developments on site beginning in 2013, in the form of a large-scale, internationally-funded memorial redesign and larger, permanent museum space, under the branch of the State Museum at Majdanek. This was completed in October 2023.
- 4 It can be argued, however, that the most impactful development at Sobibor has been, and continues to be, the forensic research that has taken place on site for over more than a decade. The largest phase of excavations, beginning in 2007, occurred under the management of Israeli archaeologist Yoram Haimi, Polish archaeologist Wojciech Mazurek, and Dutch archaeologist Ivar Schute. I joined the team as a volunteer researcher in 2014 and returned over several years in this capacity—an experience that inspired my academic research into the material memory of the camp and its victims. While I contributed physically to the excavations through digging and sifting soil, I have continued to return to the site for other reasons as well, including accompanying family members of victims and survivors for private commemorations and conducting interviews with them. I adopt the term “co-witness,” as coined by Irene Kacandes, to describe my position—one that entails ethical, attentive advocacy aimed at preserving and transmitting the voices of trauma survivors (or the deceased), not by speaking for them, but by respectfully amplifying and standing alongside their narratives.⁸ Thus, I am a co-witness not only to the archaeological excavations at Sobibor, but also to the ways in which material culture shapes and sustains familial memory.
- 5 The many years of archaeological research have resulted in the discovery of several former camp features: unmarked mass graves, but also tens of thousands of artifacts. These were objects that had belonged to Jews from across Europe, some of whom were instructed to bring small amounts of luggage with them to be “resettled” in the East.⁹ At Sobibor, these possessions were confiscated before their murder; monetary valuables and jewelry were plundered and turned into profit for the Third Reich, and even gold



Fig. 1 A gold wedding band and Star of David pendant uncovered at Sobibor during excavations in 2014. Photography courtesy of Yoram Haimi.

teeth were forcibly removed from the victims after their death.¹⁰ The excavations revealed numerous categories of preserved items, ranging from practical, “ordinary” objects such as combs and toothbrushes, to gold wedding bands inscribed with Hebrew (Fig. 1). Through the recovery of these objects, the memory of Sobibor and its victims could begin to be restored, having been diminished throughout the years of neglect and marginalization of Jewish suffering. Approximately 700 of these items are now on display in the permanent exhibition of the newly established Museum and Memorial in Sobibor, which retains ownership of all archaeological finds.¹¹

- 6 Although the provenance of these items can sometimes be traced through brand names or individual markers, only a handful reveal the stories of their specific owners. This may seem unremarkable given the thousands of personal items displayed in Holocaust museums worldwide, but at Sobibor the vast majority of victims remain anonymous. In addition, no biographical artifacts have been uncovered at the other Reinhard camps, including during the extensive excavations at Treblinka.¹²
- 7 Of the Sobibor finds, over a dozen items bear either the name, birthday, or address of the victim to whom they once belonged. Most of these items can be traced back to victims brought to Poland from the Netherlands, which thus called for a more focused analysis by Dutch archaeologist, Ivar Schute. Alongside Haimi and Mazurek, Schute became instrumental in conducting research into the Dutch victims’ identities and pre-war biographies. Through a collaborative effort involving additional archives and stakeholders, myself included, this research has since led to the location of living

relatives linked to these biographical finds, some of whom had no idea about their deceased relative until they were informed about the discovery. In my own research, I have described the impact of these excavated objects as a kind of “punctum” for the descendants, often resulting in new or additional discoveries pertaining to their own, Holocaust heritage.¹³ Since 2020, several of these so-called “special finds” have entered the new museum’s permanent display case alongside the hundreds of other excavated artifacts, whilst the others remain in storage in the archives at Majdanek.¹⁴ Despite the museumization of these finds, however, important memory work continues to be conducted into the identity of these victims’ and their familial histories, including that of David Juda van der Velde, whose name tag is the focal point of this essay. Ultimately, additional archival and historical data allows for the piecing together of fragmented, ancestral pasts. To quote Jeffery Wallen and Aubrey Pomerance, such objects become a “stand-in and a necessarily inadequate representation of all that has been lost.”¹⁵

- 8 During November 2014, following the large-scale excavation of the gas chamber area, half a metal nametag (most likely made from aluminum) was unearthed around the former Sonderkommando barracks, at a depth of 10-20 cm (Fig. 2). This area, known as “Lager III” during Sobibor’s operation, housed a small number of prisoners who were tasked with removing bodies from the gas chambers and burying the dead. These inmates were also forced to search the bodies for gold teeth, hidden valuables, or money. The location of this nametag, then, is particularly interesting: it is possible that



Fig. 2 The excavated nametag of David Juda van der Velde. Photograph courtesy of Yoram Haimi.

a member of the Sonderkommando noticed it on the owner's body, realized it had identifiable qualities and kept it. As Schute notes: "At some point, these forced laborers must have found the nametag between the corpses, taken it and buried it under their barracks. And that is where the archaeologists excavated it 71 years later."¹⁶ Though this observation is speculative and its location may be the result of diggers looting at the site in the post-war period, several testimonies of Sobibor survivors describe prisoners burying valuables or precious items. Unfortunately, none of the workers from Lager III survived the war or the camp uprising in October 1943.

- 9 The small tag, though broken in two and with a hole through the top left-hand corner, had writing which resembled a name, street, town, and a birthdate. Four of the other finds during the excavations at Sobibor were of a similar quality, all belonging to child victims, including Lea Judith de la Penha, David "Deddie" Zak (Fig. 3), and Annie Kapper.
- 10 Although each bears slightly different aesthetic qualities, Schute concluded that they "all look a bit primitive, as if they were made by parents. The reason these children carried name tags must have been the fear of losing their children in the crowd. There are one or two holes in all four . . . The name tags will be worn on a chain around the neck."¹⁷ Adding to Schute's observations on the practicality of the object, these tags can also be understood as a tangible sign of love, care, and concern in a time of chaos, fear, and uncertainty. Schute was able to reconstruct the full text of David's broken name tag via research in the Dutch archives of the Jewish Historical Museum. The complete tag would have read: D.J. V/D Velde, Pres. Brandstraat 5II, Amsterdam, GEB. 21-11-1932.



Fig. 3 Name tag of Dutch victim David "Deddie" Zak, 2013. Courtesy of Ivar Schute.

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|---|---|
| <p>No. 1</p> <p>Op twee April - - - - - negentienhonder drie en veertig is in Sobibor in Polen - - - - - overleden: van der Velde, David Juda, - - - - - geboren een en twintig November negentienhonder twee en dertig - - - - - in Amsterdam, - - - - - wonende in Amsterdam, zoon van: van der Velde, Maurits en: Vieijra, Naatje, - - - - -</p> <p>De aangifte van dit overlijden is aan mij, Ambtenaar van de Burgerlijke Stand van Amsterdam, schriftelijk gedaan vanwege de Minister van Justitie. Waaraan akte, welke door mij is ingeschreven op heden, twintig Januari negentienhonder vijf.</p> <p><i>Donsky</i></p> | <p>No. 1</p> <p>Op twee April - - - - - negentienhonder drie en veertig is in Sobibor in Polen - - - - - overleden: van der Velde, Maurits, - - - - - geboren vier December achttienhonder negen en negentig - - - - - in Amsterdam, - - - - - wonende in Amsterdam, laatstelijk gehuwd met Vieijra, Naatje, zoon van: van der Velde, Juda en: Pienetel, Elisabeth, - - - - -</p> <p>De aangifte van dit overlijden is aan mij, Ambtenaar van de Burgerlijke Stand van Amsterdam, schriftelijk gedaan vanwege de Minister van Justitie. Waaraan akte, welke door mij is ingeschreven op heden, twintig Januari negentienhonder vijf.</p> <p><i>Donsky</i></p> |
| <p>No. 1</p> <p>Op zes en twintig Maart - - - - - negentienhonder drie en veertig is in Sobibor in Polen - - - - - overleden: Vieijra, Keetje, - - - - - geboren een en twintig Juli achttienhonder drie en negentig - - - - - in Amsterdam, - - - - - wonende in Amsterdam, dochter van: Vieijra, David en: de Brave, Vrouwte, - - - - -</p> <p>De aangifte van dit overlijden is aan mij, Ambtenaar van de Burgerlijke Stand van Amsterdam, schriftelijk gedaan vanwege de Minister van Justitie. Waaraan akte, welke door mij is ingeschreven op heden, twintig Januari negentienhonder vijf.</p> <p><i>Donsky</i></p> | |

Fig. 4 The Notification of Deaths for David and Maurits van der Velde, Civil Registrar of Amsterdam, 7318_A11558, Postwar (1940s), Source: Amsterdam City Archives.

and beyond were concentrated before they were deported to the east. David and his family were taken to Westerbork transit camp on March 27, 1942 where they were held for a few days in the prisoner barracks before their transport by rail to Sobibor on March 30, 1943. This was the fifth of a total of nineteen trains which left from Westerbork to Sobibor that year for which original records of the deportees exists, with David's name listed.²⁰ Of the 1,255 men, women, and children on board that train there were no survivors.²¹ Upon arrival, David, Maurits, and Naatje, were killed immediately in the gas chambers (Fig. 4).

Piecing Together the Fragments of Familial History

- 13 Some years after the discovery of David's nametag, I visited the home of Sybil Van der Velde in London, the wife of Holocaust survivor Juda Van der Velde. Juda, affectionately known as "Joe," was born in 1925, had survived several concentration camps, including Westerbork, Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald, before his passing in 1997, aged 72. In genealogical research conducted by Schute, Juda was identified as David's first cousin: his father, Hartog, was Maurits van der Velde's brother. According to the records provided to me by the family, Juda had lived on Hofmeyrstraat in Amsterdam, just a five-minute walking distance from his cousin. In an interview with the USC Shoah Foundation, conducted in 1995, only two years before his death, Juda provided warm recollections of his family life and a closeness with both sets of grandparents, including those he shared with David.²² He describes the "close-knit" structure of the family, who all lived close to one another, so much so that he often babysat for his younger cousins.²³ Given their closeness in both location and ancestry, it is likely that Juda and his family would have visited the home of his aunt and uncle; perhaps Juda had acted as a kind of sibling to David, who had no brothers or sisters of his own.
- 14 He also recalled that he and his siblings even stayed with their aunts and uncles (though it is not stated which) after their parents' arrests, suggesting that the immediate family supported one another. In an unpublished interview transcript from the 1990s, he also mentions the strength of his relationship with the two relatives (including his aunt Rachel and her partner) who had also survived the Holocaust, before moving to the UK to live with his great aunt in 1950.²⁴ Ultimately, of the 63 extended members of the Van der Velde family in the Netherlands, only three remained by the end of the war (Fig. 5). During the fifties, Juda and Sybil also made a trip to Israel to discover the exact circumstances of their deaths. Juda's parents, Hartog and Johnna and two of his siblings, Greta and Solomon, arrived at Sobibor on May 7, 1943, just over a month after David. His grandfather and Juda's namesake, Juda, was also murdered there on April 23, 1943. Juda's sister Elizabeth perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau; Juda had voluntarily turned himself in to be deported with her first to Westerbork, before their transportation to Poland, fulfilling a promise to his parents to look after her as long as her could.²⁵ Although Juda did not live to see the discovery of his cousin's nametag, Sybil assured me that he would have been thrilled to have uncovered another piece of his family history.
- 15 I learned that Juda Van der Velde had lived with the ghosts of his former life. Juda met and married Sybil, had children—including a son named David—and worked in retail



Fig. 5 The only remaining family photograph of Juda van der Velde and relatives on his mother's side, none of whom survived the war, Amsterdam, 1939. Courtesy of the Van der Velde family.

until war-related injuries rendered him disabled, but the nightmares of his Holocaust experienced lasted throughout his life. Initially, he even believed that his survival was a punishment to see what life was like to live without a family.²⁶

- 16 News of the nametag has since connected me with other living relatives of David's in North America. Sheryl Kool (United States) and her brother, Rick Kool (Canada), are David's second cousins, once removed. David's paternal grandmother, Elizabeth, and Rick and Sheryl's great-grandfather, Salomon, were brother and sister. Both were stunned by the finding; the fate of this side of the family was not discussed at all by their grandmother (whose aunt was David's mother), with information filtered through only in fragments across the generations and through genealogy searches.²⁷ Furthermore, they did not know about Juda or Sybil, and thus I was able to provide them with further information about this line of the family. As Sheryl reflected in our interview: "It's so weird that there is this whole family that we didn't even know existed, and they're related to us. I mean, we thought we knew all the pieces, but clearly we don't!"²⁸ They expressed the powerful, emotional response to the finding of David's tag and learning about this side of the family, concluding that to have a specific name and a physical symbol of his life makes him more of a real person, and helps to put together more pieces of the family puzzle.²⁹

- 17 Building upon Schute's exhaustive efforts in identifying the victims, this particular example highlights how collaborative research with stakeholders involved in the forensic investigations—alongside my discussions with relatives and my role as a “co-witness” to the excavations—has facilitated a vital form of reparative memory work. To quote Rick Kool, “David’s name tag has reminded me of the grief that my grandmother and so many others, who by luck or intent managed to avoid the fate of their murdered family members, must have carried with them to the end of their days.”³⁰ This process of enabling fragments of familial heritage to be pieced back together can be applied to similar case studies. How this memory work is ultimately utilized raises important questions, however, about the role of private memories in public discourse, and vice versa. How do deeply personal artifacts of Holocaust victims facilitate meaning making for visitors to sites like Sobibor, and how is this shaped by curatorial decisions? Should these items remain with the families, and if not, does this have a detrimental impact on the possibility for healing and reconciliation?

Between Private and Public Memory

- 18 The nametag of David Juda Van der Velde is a stark reminder that traces of the past have a significant impact in the present. In my discussion with the Kools, Rick used the term “reverberations” to suggest that the legacy of the Second World War is far from over, even if many of the lived witnesses are no longer with us to share their stories.³¹ Certainly, this has been the case for Sobibor: a site which has taken longer than most of the former Nazi camps to receive a permanent museum and memorial, and whose victims remain mostly anonymous, leaving voids of memory within families that can only be rectified through forensic intervention and archival research. For the families for whom a biographical object has been found, the impact or “punctum” (to return to my earlier phrasing) has been unprecedented. As Sarah de Nardi observes, “Objects become charged with memory and emotion when they are all that remain of a person who has died. These belongings can act as substitutes for the person, embodying their presence, especially in cases where no body has been recovered, or where burial is far away. . . objects become affective conduits . . . tangible traces through which descendants can feel their ancestors, enact grief, or build relationships with the past that feel intimate and enduring.”³² Indeed, for many—especially those who lost extensive family during the Holocaust—owning such an item is a profound privilege, given the widespread confiscation of Jewish property and the looting or destruction of personal belongings. For the relatives of those who died at Sobibor, however, ownership of these items is not a possibility due to Polish heritage laws; the State Museum at Majdanek retains a “black and white” approach that they belong in Poland, and on display where possible.³³ This, I suggest, has limited the extent to which these finds can influence the kind of reparative memory processes involved in our collaborative efforts. In fact, the tag of David Juda van der Velde is currently not on display and is still being stored off-site for conservation—though it is likely to be added to the exhibition in the near future. When I asked Sybil Van der Velde about this issue, she reflected, “I think he [Juda] would have been most upset not to have it. Personally, I would like my children to have it, but if the museum wanted us to have it, they would have given us it already. It’s a shame we can’t see it first-hand, but maybe my children will go to see it.”³⁴ Indeed, one can only imagine what this discovery would have meant to Juda, given the extent

of his loss during the Holocaust. In light of such violent ruptures, familial objects gain even more emotional “value,” as de Nardi notes: “A simple wartime object may hold the power to maintain a person’s social presence long after death, especially when there is no grave to visit, no place to mark remembrance. The object becomes the site of memory . . . Material mementoes offer alternative ways of narrating war, resisting official accounts by foregrounding personal loss, familial bonds, and private pain.”³⁵ As an example of the significance objects can have as sites of memory, Juda even kept his own striped trousers from Auschwitz-Birkenau in a plastic grocery bag in the bedroom, which Sybil showed me during my visit. In my interviews with the relatives of victims for whom an identifiable object has been found, one of the most concerning issues is the fact that these items remain at the site of their ancestors’ murder, rather than their national homeland. Lea David, in her discussion of legal claims to objects at Auschwitz-Birkenau shares a similar concern: “The question of who is positioned to claim the ‘right to memory’ is a crucial one. This is not only an ethical question but one that reflects the real power of those (institutions) that have managed to claim this power as the guardians of memory.”³⁶

- 19 If relatives of victims might value these objects for their connections to lost family members, these biographical items are also invaluable for the Museum and Memorial in Sobibor as part of their permanent collection. Łukasz Kukawski, the Deputy Head of the Museum and Head of Visitor and Education Section informed me that “The ID tags with the names of David, ‘Deddie’ Zak, or Lea Judith, they are returning a dignity, [they] restore the identity for them. It is so important to the history of the death camps, such as Sobibor, where the records were not kept.”³⁷ Undeniably, personalized or individual objects in Holocaust museums are a crucial pedagogical and commemorative tool, widely utilized to connect the audience to the scale and magnitude of the event.³⁸ This is becoming increasingly important in the post-witness era, as museums move away from displaying huge piles of artifacts, to focus on intimate items that tell a familial or personal narrative.³⁹ As Wallen and Pomerance write, “Objects of material culture in a museum transport us from one era to another, from public display back to the life of the individual, the home, the family, or the group in which these items were embedded.”⁴⁰ Yet, the developers of the permanent exhibition at Sobibor chose to situate these personal artifacts within the primary exhibition display, alongside hundreds of other excavated items. While each is accompanied by a caption and, where available, a photograph of the victim, the contextual information provided remains minimal—with no description of the location of discovery, and little to no familial history included. Consequently, although these objects possess the potential to attract the viewer’s attention amidst the otherwise anonymous assemblage, their capacity to convey personal narratives or enable deeper epistemic engagement is significantly constrained. Instead, as curated and presented by the museum, the object becomes part of the larger story: a fragmentary trace within the broader “collective memory” of the victims at Sobibor.

- 20 In sum, these issues remind us that the relationship between private and public memory of the Holocaust is far from straightforward. While microhistory seeks to find answers to the “big historical questions,” it also shifts the research focus to the personal

responses or actions of individuals to shed light on the intimate spaces of conflict and genocide.⁴¹ By taking a microhistorical approach to material culture of the Holocaust, not only can we gain greater knowledge about the Nazi genocide, but perhaps we can begin to restore the memory and lives of its victims. Even so, the meanings assigned to testimonial objects that are the foci of microhistories become multilayered, changing according to time and ownership and the private acts of commemoration performed by those who chose to remember the victims. As Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk contend, “personal objects are endowed with various qualities—sentimental, mnemonic, economic, evidentiary, and aesthetic—as they move between contexts and are exposed to a host of meanings, ownership claims, and regimes of worth.”⁴²

- 21 The story of this particular find embodies the devastation and loss of Dutch families and communities at Sobibor, and of children in particular. And it does this work in a setting where the chance of survival was much lower than at many camps. Within the wider context of the Holocaust, then, David’s nametag can be considered as “forensic evidence” of his murder, while also becoming a kind of family “heirloom” that has inspired his relatives to conduct further research into their own histories—even if they cannot directly access or own the original object. The tag represents and makes material the loss of so many members of David’s family for whom there are no traces. These familial and social bonds are reflective of wider contexts of the Shoah, and its lasting impact on subsequent generations, and research into similar objects and efforts to “co-witness” with families of victims offers the opportunity for other families to feel the reverberations of past. Ultimately, it is objects such as these that return the victims’ humanity and turn them from faceless numbers back into “real people,” in a way that other sources pertaining to the Holocaust cannot.

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Citation Guide

1. Hannah Wilson, “The Excavated Nametag of David Juda van der Velde,” Essay, *MAVCOR Journal* 9, no. 2 (2025), 10.22332/mav.obj.2025.6.

Wilson, Hannah. “The Excavated Nametag of David Juda van der Velde.” Essay. *MAVCOR Journal* 9, no. 2 (2025), 10.22332/mav.obj.2025.6.

Notes

1. Marianne Hirsch defines the aims of “reparative memory” as not just to remember trauma but to create space for healing, care, and justice. See: Marianne Hirsch, “Reparative Memory in Practice,” *Humanities for Humans: Clear Thinking on Challenging Issues*, ed. Irene Kacandes (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2025), 141–160.

2. “Introduction. The Things They Carried: War, Mobility, and Material Culture,” Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra, *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 1-22.
3. Jakub Bronec, “Transmission of Collective Memory and Jewish Identity in Post-War Jewish Generations through War Souvenirs,” *Heritage* 2, no. 3 (2019): 1787.
4. Frédéric Bonnesoeur, Hannah Wilson, and Christin Zühlke, “Introduction,” in *New Microhistorical Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust*, eds. Frédéric Bonnesoeur, Hannah Wilson, and Christin Zühlke (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), 1–26.
5. Researchers have disputed the exact number of survivors who lived beyond 1945, but generally this figure remains between 50 and 60.
6. Roma Sendyka, “The Difficult Heritage of Non-Sites of Memory: Contested Places, Contaminated Landscapes,” *Traces Journal* 3 (2017): 4.
7. Hannah Wilson, “‘Let My Cry Have No Place, Let It Cry through Everything’: The Material Memory of Sobibor Death Camp,” PhD Diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2023.
8. Irene Kacandes, ed., *On Being Adjacent to Historical Violence* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).
9. Dutch Jews, for example, were provided specific lists of items to bring. One such list is now on display in the National Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam, which opened in 2024.
10. Paweł Piotr Reszka, *Pluczki: Poszukiwacze żydowskiego Złota* (Warsaw: Agora Publishing House, 2019).
11. Those items not in display remain in the archives of the State Museum at Majdanek, who are responsible for the Museum and Memorial in Sobibor. These are retained under the Polish Act of February 20, 2015 on Found Property: Ustawa z dnia 20 lutego 2015 r. o rzeczach znalezionych, Rozdział 1, Przepisy ogólne, *Dziennik Ustaw* 2015, poz. 397, ISAP – Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych.
12. Caroline Sturdy Colls, *Holocaust Archaeologies: Approaches and Future Directions* (New York: Springer Publishing, 2015).
13. Referring to photographs specifically, Roland Barthes describes the “punctum” as the personal, emotional detail that “pierces” or “wounds” the viewer—something unintended by the photographer that strikes a deeply subjective chord. See: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (France: Hill and Wang, 1980); Wilson, “Let My Cry Have No Place,” 133.
14. Tomasz Kranz, ed., SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor, *German Death Camp: 1942–1943: Permanent Exhibition Catalogue* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2020).

15. Jeffrey Wallen and Aubrey Pomerance, "Circuitous Journeys: The Migration of Objects and the Trusteeship of Memory," in *Objects of War*, ed. Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 249.
16. Ivar Schute, *The Archaeological Excavation of the Former Nazi Death Camp of Sobibór, Campaign November 2015. Personal Items: An Overview* (Netherlands: SOWE: Fundacja 'Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie,' 2015), 10.
17. Ivar Schute, *In de schaduw van een nachtvinder: een archeoloog op zoek naar sporen van de Holocaust* (Netherlands: Prometheus, 2020), 56.
18. Excerpt of the population register of David Juda van der Velde, Amsterdam City Archives, copy provided by Ivar Schute.
19. Jan Stoutenbeck and Paul Vigeveno, *Jewish Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum, 2014), 205–207.
20. Unlike many other transports of Jews to Sobibor from across Europe, the survival of Dutch transport lists for Sobibor is a result of the bureaucratic nature of both the Nazi and Dutch administrative systems, the preservation of Westerbork records, and dedicated post-war archival efforts.
21. "The Nineteen Transports," Stichting Sobibor, accessed May 31, 2024, <https://www.sobibor.org/en/the-nineteen-transports/>.
22. Juda Van Der Velde, interview by Bernice Krantz, USC Shoah Foundation, November 16, 1995, accessed via Holocaust Testimony UK, <https://www.holocausttestimony.org.uk/interviewees/juda-van-der-velde>.
23. Ibid.
24. "Mithras Mr. van der Velde," interview transcript with Maurice Hatton, February 19, 1990, Mithras Films, Cambridge London, courtesy of Van der Velde family archive.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Author's interview transcript with Richard and Sheryl Kool, January 7, 2024.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Written reflections on the discovery, provided to me by Rick Kool, January 2024.
31. Author's interview transcript with Richard and Sheryl Kool, January 7, 2024.
32. Sarah de Nardi, "Embodied Approach to Second World War Story Telling Mementoes," *Journal of Material Culture* 19, no. 4 (2014): 428–430.
33. See Hannah Wilson, "Forensic Restitution and the Ownership of Memory at Sobibor

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34. Author’s interview transcript with Sybil van der Velde, October 22, 2018.

35. De Nardi, “Embodied Approach,” 431–432.

36. Lea David, “Whose Right to Memory? The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Legal Disputes,” *Law and Critique*, May 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-025-09416-w>.

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39. Wilson, “Let My Cry Have No Place.”

40. Wallen and Pomerance, “Circuitous Journeys,” 249.

41. Frédéric Bonnesoeur, Hannah Wilson, and Christin Zühlke, eds., “Introduction,” in *New Microhistorical Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH), 1–26.

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