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Antanas Sutkus

Pro Memoria

Main description

Born in 1939, Antanas Sutkus learnt of the mass killing of the Jews already during World War II from his grandparents. He felt bitterly opposed to the humiliation and human destruction that occurred in his homeland Lithuania, experiencing shame and guilt for the atrocities committed behind the Vilijampole ghetto gates and the Ninth Fort. During the "Sonderaktion 1005" between 1942 and '44, German occupation forces tried to vanish the relics of the victims. In 1988 Sutkus began photographing the Kaunas Jews who had escaped death in concentration camps; *Pro Memoria* presents a selection of these portraits, and evidences the relationships Sutkus forged with his sitters.

As far back as the time of Grand Duke Gediminas (1275–1341), who invited tradesmen and artisans to Lithuania from various European states, the Jews had been offered protection and support there. Over the next 600 years they took root in Lithuania through their accomplishments and prayers, printing workshops and synagogues, libraries and gymnasiums, song and legends. This vibrant branch of Lithuania's cultural history was then violently destroyed when 200,000 Jews were murdered and thrown into pits on forest edges, quarries and death camps. This book is a tribute to these people, and an expression of attempts at understanding, penitence, purification and rebirth.

Biography

Born in Kluoniškiai, Lithuania, in 1939, Antanas Sutkus earned a degree in journalism in Vilnius and worked for daily newspapers before co-founding the Lithuanian Photographers' Association in 1969, which he headed for many years. Sutkus was president of the Union of Lithuanian Art Photographers upon its establishment in 1996 and has been its honorary president since 2009. He is the recipient of the Lithuanian National Culture and Arts Award and the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas, an Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation Grant and the 2017 Erich Salomon Award of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Photographie. Sutkus has exhibited extensively, including his 2018 retrospective at the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius held on the hundredth anniversary of the Republic of Lithuania. Steidl has published Sutkus' *Planet Lithuania* in 2018.

Bibliography

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