

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MONUMENTS

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE
CENTER FOR JEWISH ART, HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
MILLER CENTER/FELDENKREIS PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF JEWISH MONUMENTS



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
THE SUE AND LEONARD MILLER
CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY
JUDAIC STUDIES



THE GEORGE FELDENKREIS
PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



How to Photograph a Holocaust Memorial Monument

For this project, we are relying on digital photography. These guidelines assume the use of digital cameras. Since most HMM descriptions are written from photos, it is important that every aspect of a site and monument appear clearly in a photo, and that all inscriptions are photographed so that they can be transcribed.

Equipment:

Good equipment will help make good photos, but these days most Android and iPhones have excellent cameras, and these can usually be enough to get the necessary views. Whether using a SLR, mirrorless digital camera, or a phone, we recommend shooting at a high resolution as ARW and JPG files. The higher the resolution, the easier it will be to expand and crop details if needed or to use the photo for print publication if ever needed.

If shooting a lot of photos on a single day, be sure to have a chip large enough to store high resolution images. If you are not shooting at higher resolution, you should take more photos, and closer details.

We recommend having lenses to take close-up and wide-angle views, and a telephoto lens.

Be sure to travel with a battery charger, but also with extra charged batteries. There is nothing worse than being at a remote site with work to do, but not battery power!

Preparing the Site:

Upon arriving, photograph the HMM and site as they actually appear – that might mean with trash, with wreaths, with memorial stones, with other offerings, with people sitting on the monument or children climbing.

Then, try to prepare the HMM for “cleaner” documentation. Pick up trash, remove anything like wreaths that obscure the full view, and ask those using the HMM to temporarily move elsewhere. After photography is done, be sure to return wreaths, stones and other appropriate offering to their places.

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Lighting:

Most digital cameras have good light sensors, so it is possible to shoot in most light conditions using the automatic setting, or to adjust exposure in post-production. Still, we recommend early morning and late afternoon for some of the best sunlight and contrast, but overcast skies are also good for shooting, especially HMMs with lots of inscriptions.

Bright sun can cause several problems – reflections off polished stone, difficulty in getting enough contrast to read inscriptions, and washed-out color. When shooting in bright sunlight pay special attention to the angle of each shot, and use sunshades, or even your hand to cut glare. **Try to minimize your own reflection in polished stone.** For shallow inscriptions that might be hard to read, it is useful to shoot directly and with raking shots from the sides.

For interior HMMs, most digital cameras and phones will adjust to provide light, sometimes with the automatic setting, or sometimes with interior or nighttime settings. In very dark interiors, we recommend the use of a monopod or tripods to steady the camera for long exposures, especially to avoid blurring of inscriptions. In such cases you can also use a camera flash.

If shooting a stained-glass window use a telephoto lens from a distance for the best detail and color. For wider context shots, allow less exposure for the glass to shine. If you have tripod, shoot the exact same shot of wall and windows with several manually set exposures.

What to Photograph:

Begin by photographing the broad context of the HMM, and then photograph its parts (if it is multi-part) collectively, and then individually. Always start from the large aspects of the HMM and move to the small.

It is important to take photos that show the context of the HMM, its entire design, and its important details. Start with distance views – what do you see when approaching the HMM? If it is on highway, in a cemetery, on a wall, or in a public square, there should be photos that show this clearly. You're your back to the monument itself, you can also take reverse view to show the HMM's setting.

At the HMM, photos should be taken from all sides. Walk around the HMM and take side and angle shots. If the HMM has a clear front, be sure to also photograph the sides and rear. If the HMM consists of many discreet parts, wide angle views should show the relationship of these parts to each other. If there are many parts, it might be necessary to walk around each part to photograph all sides and capture all views. Get a few full frame shots of the entire monument with a 50, 80 or longer lens.

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What are important details?

- Close-up shots should be taken of every inscription, symbol, and enough parts to clearly indicate the materials from which the HMM is made.
- Sometimes inscriptions and symbols are on horizontal surfaces that can only be seen or read clearly from above.
- If the HMM is tall and details are high, use a telephoto lens or zoom lens in to get details. **Look carefully for artists' signatures and makers' marks.**
- On sculpture these are often on the lower part, perhaps in the rear, and on architectural or stele type monuments, these may be on the base or rear of the main inscribed stone.
- If the HMM has many inscribed plaques photograph each individually and take wide shots to show how each panel relates to the next. For big monuments with many panels with thousands of names, try to photograph each panel in the same way, so they create a series of similar images.

Backup and Storage:

If using a chip be sure to download your photos as soon as possible to second storage source, or upload to the cloud. With an Android or iPhone, be sure your camera is set for automatic uploads of photos.

We recommend storing your photos in digital files as soon as possible by site and monument and creating labeled file folders with the name of the place and the name of the photographer.