

Curating Restriction and Liberation: Iron Curtain Memory in the Czech Borderlands

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Abstract: This presentation shows how Czech border exhibitions curate experiences of restriction and liberation through space, objects, narratives, and visitor movement. Moving beyond iconic sites such as Berlin, it focuses on five memorial and museum sites along the Czech-Austrian and Czech-German borders, where preserved fences, watchtowers, border guard buildings, anti-tank barriers, and artistic memorials transform former spaces of surveillance and immobility into sites of public remembrance. Through comparative exhibition analysis, the study explores how material remains and interpretive strategies represent border violence, escape, repression, and the transition to freedom. Particular attention is given to spatial choreography: visitors encounter, approach, walk alongside, or move through landscapes once designed to prevent movement. The analysis argues that these exhibitions construct contrasting configurations of memory, connecting local experiences of authoritarian restriction to broader European narratives of division, liberation, and democratic values. The transformation of the Iron Curtain into a transnational cycling route further demonstrates how spaces designed to restrict movement are now reimagined through mobility, encounter, and remembrance.

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IE CAS CONFERENCE ROOM

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