

BRÍGHT

“When we stop talking
about what has happened,
it's as if these things never happened.”

Dušan Stefančič
Survivor



SURVIVING GUSEN

A DOCUMENTARY BY GERALD HARRINGER
AND JOHANNES PRÖLL

An aerial photograph of a landscape. The left side is dominated by a dense field of tall, textured plants, possibly reeds or grasses, in shades of dark green and brown. On the right side, a railway track with wooden sleepers and metal rails runs vertically. The ground between the field and the track is a mix of dirt and sparse vegetation. The overall tone is somber and desaturated.

The hope is,

that today's younger generation understands, that poverty and hate are the things that need to be fought.“

DUŠAN STEFANČIČ, SURVIVOR

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

Interviews Historical Texts

used in the film

Karl Littner

Life Hanging on a Spider Web- From Auschwitz-Zasole to Gusen II
ed. Rudolf A. Haunschmied (2011)

Edmund Merl

Besatzungszeit im Mühlviertel (1980)

Franz Steinmaßl

Das Hakenkreuz im Hügelland (1988)

Protocol Gendarmerieposten

Rainbach (January 29, 1945)

Letter from Johann Blöchl

Lasberg on 13 May 1898 (10. 2002)

Interview with Martha Gammer

St. Georgen, 2013

Mauthausen Memorial

mauthausen-memorial.org

Slawomir Iwanowski

Mauthausen-Gusen. Auf dem Pfad der Erinnerung (2015)

Bezirkshauptmannschaft Perg

Expert reports - tunnel-system in St. Georgen/Gusen "Bergkristall" (2015)

Interview Bernhard Mühleleder

www.meinbezirk.at (2015)

Rudi Haunschmied

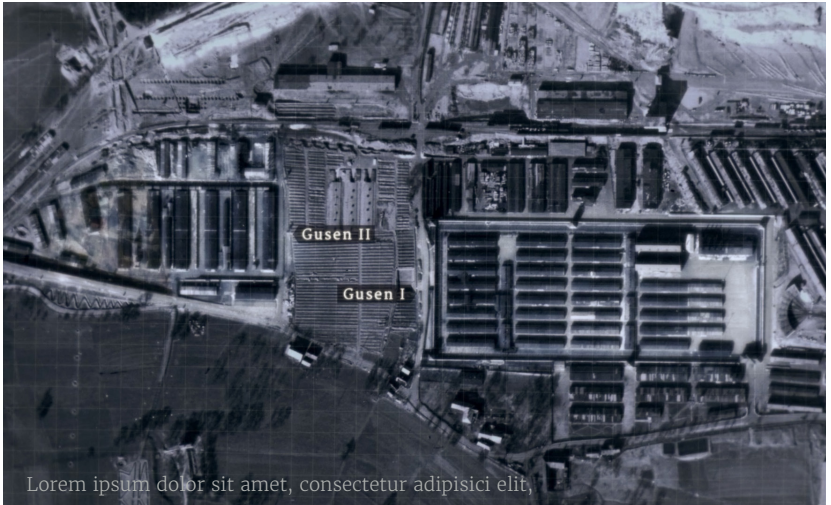
Freies Radio Freistadt (2015)

Parish Chronicle Pregarten (1945)



GUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP COMPLEX

The Gusen concentration camp complex – also known as the “invisible camp” – is one of the darkest chapters in Austrian history. Gusen I, II & III were larger than the Mauthausen concentration camp. Together, these camps formed the Mauthausen–Gusen complex. From 1939 to 1945, at least 71,000 people were deported to Gusen, more than half of whom died in the camps. In 1944 and 1945 there were up to twice as many prisoners and significantly more victims in Gusen than in his notorious Mauthausen twin camp. The average life expectancy of the inmates in the Gusen II camp was only 4 months. Jewish prisoners in particular had little chance of surviving.



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Surviving Gusen pays tribute to three survivors of a camp complex, of which the Gusen II concentration camp in particular is described as the hell of all hells. In the film, however, we see idyllic landscapes, covered with a delicate blanket of snow or tall grass, a neat settlement of single-family houses at the former camp site. Only the reports of the contemporary witnesses, in original sound or with the voices of Maria Hofstätter and Peter Simonischek, act like dissecting knives, exposing so-

meting from which we would prefer to avert our gaze. But sometimes something like hope comes to the surface when we hear that often only small help was enough to enable someone to survive.



SURVIVORS IN THE FILM

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

Karl Littner was born on January 15, 1924 in Auschwitz, the city that became synonymous with the mass murder of European Jews. He miraculously lived through and survived the hell of numerous camps, including Gusen II. Karl Littner's new life began on 5 May 1945 with the liberation from Nazi terror. But it was a difficult road back to normal life. His journey took him

with his German wife Miriam from Straubing in Bavaria to Tel Aviv, from there to Chicago and finally to Los Angeles. Karl Littner died on January 15, 2014, on his 90th birthday. We conducted the interview with Karl Littner in Los Angeles in July 2013.



KARL LITTNER

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

“After several freezing days outside, the remaining group of depleted survivors was thrown into overloaded open coal wagons. We travelled two harrowing weeks without food, drink, or sanitary arrangements. Many of us died before we reached our destination.”



0
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

DUŠAN STEFANČIČ

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,



Dušan Stefančič in conversation with Alexander van der Bellen, President of Austria.



Lorum ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.



“I was convinced that I would not lose my life in the camp and that Germany would never win the war. That was my advantage. I have never lost courage.”

Dušan Stefančič was born in Slovenia in 1927 and experienced the invasion of the German Wehrmacht at the age of 14. He was arrested as a schoolboy for running errands for the Slovenian resistance and deported to the Dachau concentration camp, from there to the Natzweiler concentration camp in Alsace and on to the “Sainte-Marie-aux-Mînes” subcamp, from there to Gusen I and finally Gusen II. After liberation, he completed his high school

diploma, was employed by the film studio Triglav-Film as an industrial mechanic, began to study law, and then worked at Ljubljanska Banka, among others. Then he spent eight years in India in Chennai and New Delhi. To this day, he spends his retirement in Ljubljana and Gornji Grad. In May 2017, the interview took place on the former towbar line and the conversation between Dušan Stefančič and President Van der Bellen at the Memorial Gusen.



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

STANISLAW LESZCZYNSKI

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

*“IF CAMPS WERE HELL,
THEN GUSEN WAS THE LAST ABYSS
OF HELL.”*



Stanislaw Leszczynski was born on May 29, 1922 in Lodz, Poland. Because of his parents' resistance activities, he was arrested together with his siblings and mother, taken to Auschwitz and transferred from there to Mauthausen together with his younger brother, and shortly afterwards to Gusen I, before he too was liberated on May 5, 1945. Leszczynski attended the liberation ceremonies in Mauthausen and St. Georgen a.d. Gusen every year and worked as a radiologist in a Polish

hospital until his old age. Stanislaw Leszczynski was vice president of the CIM, the Comité International de Mauthausen. He died in Poland in 2017 at the age of 94. We conducted the interview with Stanislaw Leszczynski in April 2013 in Gallneukirchen, Upper Austria.

THE FILMMAKERS

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

The two Austrian filmmakers and SURVIVING GUSEN co-directors Johannes Pröll (left) and Gerald Harringer (right) live not far from the former concentration camps Gusen. Over several years (since 2012) they interviewed survivors and promised them: that what happened in Gusen will never be forgotten.



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

Johannes Pröll – production, director

“In 2013, I met Karl Littner, a survivor of the Gusen II concentration camp, at his home in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, he has since died. Now that the last witnesses are dead, I see it all the more as our task to keep alive the memory of events in the time of the Nazi terror in Austria, especially in Linz and the surrounding area, where the Mauthausen and Gusen camps showed a particularly gruesome face of National Socialism.”

Gerald Harringer – book, director

“The visual and acoustic narrative of SURVIVING GUSEN is also intended to consciously touch our emotional perception, knowing that many of these real events from 1945 want to evade a rational description through words. The perspectives on the locations and crime scenes shown are partly abstract and distant, the tone room-filling, close and present. In the dystopian stories, reminiscent of Dante’s Inferno, which run through the film in a collage-like way, there are always hopeful elements that tell something about being human. Without these small gestures of help and humanity, survival would be worthless and pointless– in the final analysis.





Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,

SCRIPT **GERALD HARRINGER**

DIRECTED BY **GERALD HARRINGER, JOHANNES PRÖLL**

CAMERA **FRITZ STEIPE, RAFFAEL PORTUGAL**

EDITING **WERNER BEHAM**

MUSIC & SOUNDDSIGN **WOLFGANG DORNINGER**

VFX **JOHANNES PLATZL** GRADING **CHRISTIAN DIETL**

NARRATOR **MARIA HOFSTÄTTER, PETER SIMONISCHEK**

CAMERA OPERATOR AUSTRIA **HEINZ SAMBS, JOHANNA AUER**

CAMERA/DRONE OPERATOR USA **BRIAN DAVIS, DREW COBB**

PRODUCTION **JOHANNES PRÖLL, LUIS WOHLMUTHER, VANESSA KERN**



NATIONAL FUND
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA FOR VICTIMS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

ZukunftsFonds
der Republik Österreich

