

Voices of the *For real?* project

Ruth Winkelmann in conversation with Katalin Krasznahorkai at the opening ceremony of the *For real?* exhibition in Potsdam, 2023:

"The first time I stood in a classroom and wanted to talk about something, I couldn't say a word. I cried more than I talked, and the teacher put his arms around me because I wasn't able to sit up straight and speak about my experiences. I managed to say something, but all of it with weeping and wailing. The first time I simply wasn't able to talk about it the right way. It took three years before I could make it through an entire event.

...
But I managed to get through that too. Today I can cope very well, because my readings let me reach people I otherwise wouldn't have been able to reach."

From the tour team's journal:

"An older man came by early in the morning and yelled, 'That topic again? Fuhgetaboutit!' That seemed cynical, but also reinforced the reason for the exhibition, because the whole point of the project is to make sure the topic will not be forgotten!"

From the tour team's journal:

"Visitor, 50: 'I cycled 40 kilometers through the Thuringian Forest to see this project. I heard about it on TV. Maybe I'll head back now, can just about make it. [The project] is really very moving. And it's important that you're doing it!'"

Charlotte Knobloch in her book *In Deutschland angekommen – Erinnerungen* (Arriving in Germany – Memories), Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munich, 2012:

"Survivors, I think, play a crucial role in how we learn about the future from the past. So many times, I've watched pupils and other young people listen very closely and ask intelligent questions when I tell them what I experienced under the Nazis. I'm tangible, more real than a history book. It doesn't matter how well you prepare educational material, it can't replace immediate experience, meeting with someone, the chance to listen and ask questions to those who were actually there and lived through it. The number of survivors who can speak first-hand about their terrible experiences is dwindling. It's all the more important, therefore, to encourage them to speak while they're still here with us, and to document what happened to them.

...
The 'why' question has yet to be answered."

From the anonymous evaluation questionnaires

"Eye-to-eye and so close – that's indescribable."

Kurt Hillmann during the recording session at Volucap, 2023:

"Maybe three important things. The first is knowledge. Gaining knowledge is the most important of all, in my view. Not just professional knowledge but also understanding society. The second is to think contextually, not along rigid lines. And the third is that young people are not responsible for what happened. But they do bear a huge responsibility of a different sort, to prevent something like that from ever happening again. That is no small task, especially when I observe what's happening today."

Email to the *For real?* team dated 26 May 2025:

"Hello,

Your mobile exhibition is out in front of the main train station here in Erfurt, and we're very pleased to see it.

I have a cold so shouldn't be in the truck, but would like to describe the following situation:

My husband was waiting outside the station, along with his quite well-groomed dog.

Your exhibition bus was just pulling in to park. A passerby, a man of about 40, started cursing loudly and saying we should "finally leave this behind" instead of wasting taxpayers' money on it. My husband asked him if he wanted to deny the Holocaust. The man went on cursing. Another passerby told my husband he should wash his dog.

Scenes like that are commonplace in this country.

Which makes it all the more important that you're touring the eastern states of Germany with your exhibition.

We'd like to thank you very much.

I've read the very well-designed flyer.

Keep it up!! Please!!

With best wishes from beautiful Thuringia, where many kind and well-informed people live!"