

FORBIDDEN FILMS: SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM TO SCREEN PRO-EUTHENASIA PROPAGANDA

22.09.15: Under Nazism, members of the German Medical Profession and public enabled the systematic murder of hundreds of the state's mentally ill and physically disabled. Framed as a euthanasia initiative, the T4 program had a mandate to kill anyone deemed to have a "life unworthy of living."

For the first time in Australia, the Sydney Jewish Museum will screen *Ich Klage An (I Accuse)*, the film that helped manufacture consent for this state controlled, organised program of mass killing.

"This chapter in history highlights the danger in the state determining what is 'legal' and 'ethical' for medical practitioners" says Michael Roberston, Associate Professor of Mental Health Ethics who has spearheaded the campaign to screen the film at the Museum.

"Whether it is laws prohibiting practitioners from disclosing information about conditions in detention centres or legislation around genetically modified embryos, the physician's ability to provide the best possible care for their patients is constantly being challenged by their relationship with the state."

The film, which is still banned in Germany today, was commissioned in 1941 at the request of Dr Karl Brandt, Hitler's personal physician and Reich Commissar for Health and Sanitation. It follows Professor Heyt, a successful scientist who faces a difficult decision after his wife is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

The film made a deep impression on the cinema going audiences, presenting them with a persuasive argument for the laws that enabled the state to end the life of people living in futile medical situations.

Yotam Weiner, Education Manager at the Sydney Jewish Museum says "we debated the merits of screening Nazi propaganda at the Museum, weighing the sensitivities of Survivors and the dangers of glorifying Nazi era films with the merits of educational debate and discussion."

"At its core, both the film and the 'euthanasia' program showcase the inability of its creators to tolerate or accommodate anyone outside a narrowly defined norm based on racial purity and productive performance. The theme of tolerance and understanding are therefore as relevant now as they were seventy years ago."

The film screening will be followed by a panel discussion, featuring academics including Miles Little, the founding director of the University of Sydney Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine (VELIM) and Emeritus Professor Ron McCallum AO, 2011 Senior Australian of the Year, and the first totally blind person to have been appointed to a full professorship in any field at any University in Australia or New Zealand.

Ich Klage An will screen at the Sydney Jewish Museum on Wednesday 07th October at 7:00pm. Tickets can be purchased at www.sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au for \$15.

An audio description of the film will be available, which will include all subtitles.

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Notes for journalists:

- Associate Professor Michael Robertson will be available for interview. Michael is an [academic psychiatrist](#) at the [Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine](#) (VELiM) at the University of Sydney and a Visiting Professorial Fellow at the Sydney Jewish Museum. He is currently leading a research team that is investigating the contemporary relevance of the experience of the psychiatric profession under National Socialism.
- Also available for interview are Norman Seligman, CEO of the Sydney Jewish Museum and Yotam Weiner, Education Manager at the Sydney Jewish Museum.
- Additional tensions between Medical Profession and State including: the ongoing debate between healthcare professionals advocating for patients, and bureaucrats conscious of budgets and changing political agendas & Politicians/Health departments being hesitant to take on evidence based decisions which support better longer term health outcomes (as government planning is short term because of the election cycle.)