

Anne Frank 80 Years: A Memorial Tour in Current Images

Ronald Wilfred Jansen

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This colorful photo-essay traces Anne Frank's legacy through sites where she lived.

In *Anne Frank 80 Years: A Memorial Tour in Current Images*, historian and photographer Ronald Wilfred Jansen travels through Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland to document every site with connections to the Frank family. The images are pedestrian at times, and the book is light on commentary, but the author notices clever details, and his approach is admirably thorough.

After volunteering at German concentration camp sites from 1994 to 1996, Jansen first visited the Annex, the Franks' hiding place, in 2001. Struck by "the contrast between the present silence in the former concentration camps and the past suffering of the prisoners," he quested to find "remnants of [Frank's] past life and surroundings lingering into the present." Starting with her birthplace in Frankfurt, he traveled to each place Frank lived or studied and took exhaustive photographs. The highlights include Amsterdam and Auschwitz.

In 2014 Jansen published *Anne Frank: Silent Witnesses, Reminders of a Jewish Girl's Life*, in which he reported on Frank's connections to various locations and spoke with the people who knew her. This volume is like a companion piece. However, perhaps because most information was covered by the previous book, there is little context or commentary provided in the captions here. Furthermore, this would not serve well as a travel guide for Frank landmark visitors because it fails to include maps or transportation details.

It would be best to view this as a photo-essay rather than a practical guide. Indeed, Jansen's vision can be pleasingly artistic. Satellite dishes piercing the mist at former Camp Westerbork and monochrome shadows at Otto Frank's workplace are particularly arty selections. The photo tour through Auschwitz is utterly arresting. Jansen also has an eye for details, such as house numbers, signs, statues, wallpaper, or trees that have grown up in intervening decades.

Yet, the photos are all too often no better than standard tourist snaps, more documentary than artistic. Some seem irrelevant to Frank's life, like generic images of Frankfurt's modern architecture or the coast of the Netherlands. Moreover, the page layout, with turquoise and yellow backgrounds clashing with loud, oversize red or green photo boxes, does the photographs no favors.

The most interesting spreads are those contrasting historic and contemporary photographs of the same place, especially when the black-and-white images include Frank herself. A better strategy might focus on such then-and-now comparisons. In addition, the book requires careful editing to smooth awkward translations, such as "historics" for historians and "fellow hidiers."

It could be difficult for this book to stand alone. For existing enthusiasts, though, it will be a helpful addition to the library of contemporary Anne Frank reflections.

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