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THOUGHTS ON THE CREATION OF THE ARTWORK *HOLOCAUST
PORTRAITS: VICTIMS: PERPETRATORS, WITNESSES*

Holocaust Portraits: Victims, Perpetrators, Witnesses, is a PowerPoint video presentation of images of people victimized by their experiences during the Holocaust. My goal in creating this artwork was to focus on my belief that all those swept up in the horror of the Holocaust in fact became victims of this tragedy. This artwork, focusing as it does on individuals caught up by the Holocaust, takes a different but parallel approach to the broader effort of understanding the Holocaust and, by extension, how genocide becomes an acceptable option for furthering political and religious goals. The collection of images seeks to show that in our efforts to strengthen democracy, fight racism, and secure human rights for all people in the world, we must continually re-focus on the need to make our shared humanity our primary concern.

It is not enough to create memorials to honor those who suffered: the number of the dead is too great for comprehension.

VICTIM: someone who is put to death, tortured or subjected to suffering

The victims whose images appear in *Holocaust Portraits* express horror, dismay, fear, helplessness, resignation, defiance and pathos. They are young, middle-aged and old, men, women and children. They share an ordinary innocent humanity. Their blank stares, faces contorted in pain and broken bodies lay bare the consequences of unfettered cruelty. It is their body language that reveals the physical

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effects of the Holocaust, and its immeasurable impact on their minds may be briefly glimpsed in their cold eyes.

PERPETRATOR: someone who carries out or performs a task

The perpetrators selected for portrayal in *Holocaust Portraits* were bureaucrats, nursing staff, scientists, housekeepers, doctors, guards, soldiers and Nazi officials. Some were directly responsible for murders; all assisted the executioners. They appear complacent, angry, confident, nervous, indignant, unrepentant and, largely, unremarkable.

Witnesses: those who see or hear something on which they can provide evidence

The witnesses are seen in *Holocaust Portraits* as ordinary people, bystanders whose inaction caused them to become enablers. They appear outwardly passive and ignorant of what was being done in their name. I see their faces as wearing a bland mask of self-protection to hide an inner guilt.

ALL THOSE WHO EXPERIENCED THE HOLOCAUST BECAME ITS VICTIMS

Visual reality is fundamentally different from a verbal description of reality. Through their different ways of assimilating meaning, words and images communicate different types of content and elicit different types of emotional reactions. Nowhere is this truth more obvious than in dealing with the contrast between factual data on the Holocaust and its graphic visual reality. One example of this should be sufficient. Reading and reviewing the engineering documents dealing with the construction of the crematoria at Auschwitz, or the detailed descriptions of how to stack bodies for open-air burning, cannot compare in emotional intensity with seeing the images of victims' bodies being pushed one at a time into an oven, or viewing a scene of bodies piled like cordwood ready to be burned.

Thousands of books and publications on the history of the Holocaust provide the factual information which reveals the relentless disintegration of the political, social and cultural structure that was Europe, and the resulting impact on world Jewry. You can read the laws that prevented Jews from living with Gentiles, obtaining employment, inter-marrying, traveling and, finally, simply living. You can read the number of transports, the number of those murdered by month, by day and by hour. But the pages and pages of statistics recording the deaths of millions of people become impersonal symbols of devotion to a bureaucratic routine, expressions of the power of a process which resulted in mass murder. For me the historical data fail to provide a link between the reader and the victims as human beings.

My path towards understanding the individual humanity of the victims consists of documentary photographs, original artworks and personal monographs. When I see photographs of people walking past the broken windows on the morning after Kristallnacht, I imagine myself walking with them and wonder what they thinking. What was it like to be a Jew in Germany and feel the fear and impending terror of growing social and political chaos? When I see the faces of some of the millions of people on the ramp at Auschwitz Birkenau, which I have visited, I am moved by their seeming calm, and I try to imagine whether or how they tried to understand what was happening to them. The inevitable conclusion after reading many personal survivor accounts of these experiences is that they simply could not have realized what was about to happen to them. Rumors about the death factories had circulated among the Jewish communities and major ghettos in Poland and elsewhere. But given the long history of Jewish life's survival through the centuries of antisemitism in Europe, it must have been psychologically impossible to grasp such a vast and total breakdown of the social order.

There are photographs of rioters on the streets of Lvov (Lviv) and Kovno (Kaunas) as they beat and murdered Jews. There are photographs of "ordinary" citizens forcing Jews to clean the streets of Vienna on their hands and knees with scrubbing brushes. These photographs are frightening, as they illustrate the fragility of the rule of law and social order. They also raise questions about what was unleashed in the minds of the perpetrators which enabled them to take part willingly in the mass killings of women and children. How did the women who worked at Bergen-Belsen or Ravensbrück separate the reality of what they did to other women who were prisoners in the camps from their ordinary family-centered lives beyond the guard towers and the barbed wire fences? When the numbing effects of alcohol wore off, how did the members of the Einsatzgruppen deal with the thousands of individual murders they committed day by day, week after week? And conversely, how do victims of uncontrolled violence mentally shut off their minds so that they can survive physical and mental torture? How long does this process of denial last? What of them does it destroy? Is there a poison that lives on in the minds of both the perpetrators and the victims who did not die?

In response to more historically-oriented research, and to what I experienced after making several visits to Holocaust-related sites and research centers in Europe, I created a series of images that confront the viewer with various Holocaust atrocities, hoping that the shock of seeing these horrific graphic images will elicit sympathy, a desire to learn more and a commitment to work against any forces which might try to repeat this terrible tragedy.

As well as looking at the results of what was done to the victims, I also looked intensely at the faces of the perpetrators. I was seeking evidence of what

they might have felt about their participation in acts of humiliation and murder. I found examples of faces distorted in anger, expressing hostility and hatred, but the expressions of bystanders and witnesses usually seemed unfeeling, commonplace and ordinary. I turned from reacting as a dispassionate observer studying details to a more personal reaction of disgust and pessimism. I found that making drawings and paintings of tortured bodies was an act which required me to separate my artistic identity from the factual contents of the image, while at the same time retaining for the viewer a focus on its emotional meaning. The artwork conveyed a political message about the evils of racism, antisemitism and humanity's disdain of human life when seeking power. But I realized that if my work was to provide more than a voyeuristic view of tragic acts, I needed to call attention to a wider issue than the consequences of physical violence. As I looked at the faces of the "ordinary" people who became perpetrators or passive witnesses to acts of moral and physical degradation, a basic fact became clear to me: I realized that the work I was creating should lead those who viewed it to conclude that when human beings have no respect for the fragility of human life, they are vulnerable to losing their own morality and sanity.

How did murder become just a job?

Today we can read explanations of the breakdown of social and cultural morality during the Holocaust, but I find them incomplete. Sociological or psychological attempts to understand how or why people dehumanize other human beings can explain intellectually the conditions under which these circumstances arise, but I believe that an unbridgeable distance prevents those who read the statistics or psychological generalizations from seeing either the victim or the perpetrator as real people. I think it is fair to say that for those who study the history of the Holocaust, the perpetrators and victims become pawns in an overwhelming process, and that for the most part they lose their individual identities as people confronted with real choices. Consequently they are viewed as part of a society that was compelled to give up what I believe is a fundamental aspect of our essence as human beings: our ability, individually and collectively, to make choices that affect the quality of our lives. When Holocaust victims, perpetrators and witnesses are seen as they really are, human beings like other human beings, no more no less, it is easier for the viewer to relate them to the world in which he lives. The viewer of today who understands their common humanity can more easily relate to the situations that Lawrence Langer called "choiceless choices". As I see it, due to the loss of political and social morality, it was psychologically as difficult for perpetrators to choose not to kill, or for witnesses to choose not to object to killings, as for victims to choose not to rebel. In all these situations, any action is perceived as a losing option. Those who became murderers and those

who enabled the process of dehumanizing the "others" during the Holocaust must have made many incremental choices that allowed the process to begin and go on for as long as it did. One aspect of this situation which is a warning for us today is that at an early stage, when it was possible to make choices that affirmed the common humanity of all people, those choices were never made. When it became too late the results were choiceless choices, and murder became tolerable.

What can be seen in their faces?

Holocaust Portraits is an effort to add what might be called a first-person presence to the massive amounts of existing Holocaust factual data. I assumed that by portraying selected individuals who were perpetrators, victims and witnesses I could enhance a contemporary viewer's awareness of their shared humanity

Holocaust Portraits consists of digitally manipulated images of my paintings and drawings and documentary photographs which I have also digitally altered. Some of the esthetic editing decisions are obvious, but others are not. Even those images that appear to be straight documentary photographs have been significantly changed from their original source appearance. Adjustments have been made through cropping and changes in scale, focus, texture, color, value, and composition. The primary goal which inspired all my esthetic decisions was to strengthen an emotional link between the viewer and the image, through the repetition of those signifiers which all humans use when they attempt to "read" the feelings and intentions of others. These signifying details include overall facial physiognomy, expressions, specific features such as the eyes, the shape of the mouths, and body language such as the tilt of the head or the posture. What concentrating on these elements may definitively reveal about personality is debatable, but this presentation is first and foremost an artistic statement, so I do not feel compelled to attempt a scientific justification for my selections, or to justify my exaggerations. If the viewer "sees" something in the faces or in the depiction of an emotionally charged event which provides a link to the human condition, the work has fulfilled its aim.

Holocaust Portraits: Victims, Perpetrators, Witnesses

The following is a description of many of the individual images in the presentation. I want to give the reader a sense of the visual content, pacing, and decision-making process involved in my selection of the images. Going back to my earlier comment on the differences between written and visual information, I should let the reader know that a copy of the visual presentation can be obtained from the artist. The entire presentation comprises 173 frames, 14 of which contain some

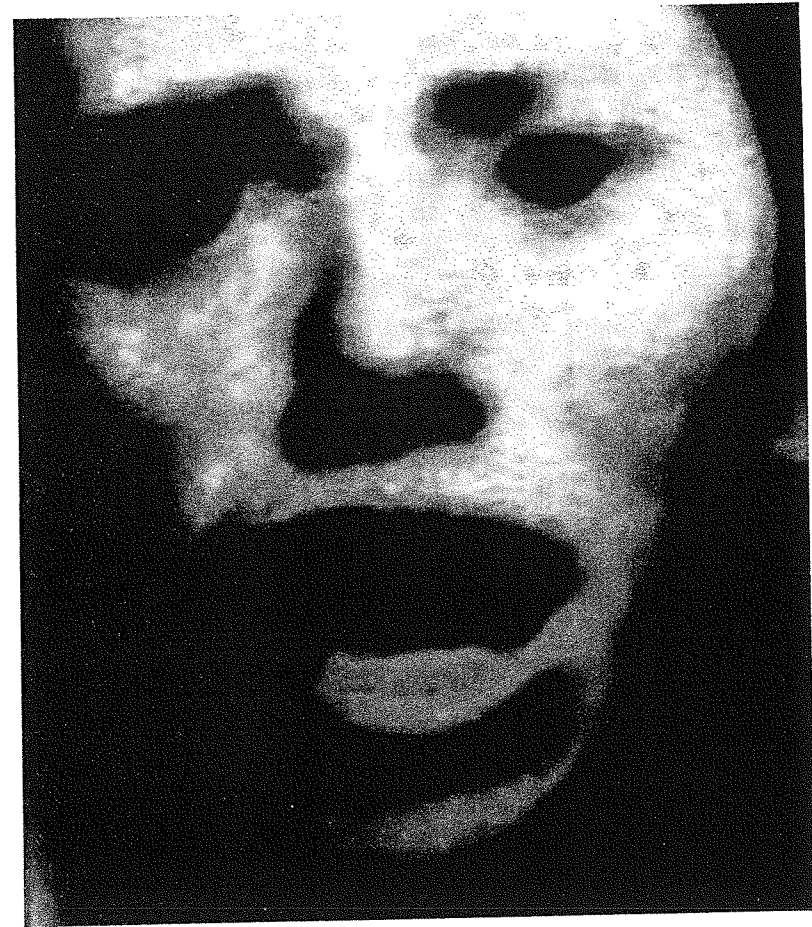
text. Images are grouped to create a visual and intellectual connection between individuals and events. There is a rough chronological timeline of 1938-1946. Two quotations, one by Theodore Heschel and the other from the Pirkei Avot, express Jewish theological and philosophical views relating to the Holocaust. Other textual material includes factual information about specific individuals and some personal thoughts of the author.

After a very short prologue, the first image is a photograph of a young Jewish girl who was stripped and beaten by a mob on a public street in Lvov. She is screaming. Her mouth is open wide. Her eyes stare out at us in fear and panic. She reaches out to the viewer, seeking safety or for help of any kind. Another woman sits next to her on the pavement, attempting to adjust the victim's torn clothing. The original photograph was in black and white. I have enhanced the contrast and colored the entire image yellow/sepia. I used the picture of this violated girl as the first image in a series of variations because of its shock value. It is confrontational and disquieting. It immediately raises questions regarding what is happening to her. The look of pain and anguish on her face is unmistakable, and her pleading for help informs the viewer that he will be caught up in this artwork, rather than just a passive observer.

This image is followed by a text advising viewers that the images in the presentation are from documentary sources and some will be very graphic, and then by a greatly enlarged abstract image of eyes. Eyes are traditionally used as a vehicle for representing what is in a person's mind. They will be a recurring theme in *Holocaust Portraits*. In this image the viewer sees only someone's black eyes. They are very large, out of focus and surrounded by abstract areas of greens, yellows and pinks.

The dilemma of evil is how to address its manifestations, not to assign responsibility for its existence

There follows a sequence of four images of the same Jewish girl. The original black and white photo source is now black and an intense yellow orange. In the first image we see her face and outstretched hand, in the next frame just her eyes. The next two images are of her face in one frame. One is of the full face, the other a greatly enlarged section of the same image, focusing on her open mouth and pained eyes. I used this image in this way to make a deliberate reference to the Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros's *Echo of a Scream*.



The last image in this sequence is just her open mouth. I use this approach of juxtaposing different-sized sections of the same image in sequence to create the feeling that time has moved on, and to imitate the sensation we experience when look repeatedly at something in an effort to understand better what we are seeing or what has been happening.

Next are two more images of another female victim of mob violence. The first is a long shot of a woman in a public place, wearing only underwear and running away from her attackers. The second is a close-up of just her face. The image has been distorted and, as in the preceding works, colored an intense bright yellow. This colored frame is followed by one in black and white of a perpetrator, Otto Ohlendorf, who commanded Einsatzgruppe D (1941-1942). I selected Ohlendorf's black and white mug-shot to follow the female victim because of his direct, icy and menacing expression. Not much was needed to convey the impres-

sion that this man was indeed a cold, calculating killer, but I did enhance the value contrast and flatten the surface texture of his face. Ohlendorf was responsible for the killing of 90,000 people, most if not all Jews. At his trial in 1947 he was unrepentant, claiming that the murder of all Jewish men, women and children was a military necessity.



Otto Ohlendorf, Commanding Officer of Einsatzgruppe D, 1941-1942.

Following Ohlendorf's image are five views of atrocities committed by the mobile killing units in Eastern Europe, an image from Auschwitz and two images from Bergen-Belsen. One of the images in the first group is based on a frequently reproduced photograph of a German soldier using his rifle to shoot a woman holding a child as she runs from away from him. She is no more than six feet (two meters) away from him. Many years ago I researched this image in an effort to find the most accurate version of it. I found it was reproduced in so many different formats that I could not be certain what was actually in the original. When I eventually did locate what I think is the most definitive image, I discovered that there are two other soldiers involved in shooting this woman, making three in all. In some reproductions the two extra soldiers do not appear; in others they are barely visible on the left side of the picture. In response to this information I created an artwork which greatly exaggerated the presence of the two extra executioners. For me the similarity between the intent of this image and Francisco Goya's painting *The Executions of May 3, 1814* was important. Anyone familiar with Goya's work will grasp the relationship to and similar intent of this new version of a recurring tragedy. For the *Holocaust Portraits* I created a four-part presentation of this scene. It is divided into a sequence read left to right. The first image shows the barrels of two rifles coming into view on the left edge of the frame; in the second we see a single central image of a soldier holding a rifle pointing to the right edge of the frame; in the third we see what the soldier was aiming at - a woman running away from the soldier, clasping to her breast a small child. In the final image we see the entire event full-screen. As mentioned above, the actual content of the original documentary source of this shocking, fairly well-known image was hard to pin down, as it is reproduced in many different versions. Many include only the one soldier and the mother and child. Some only show a single soldier. I was very surprised when I discovered a reproduction that included the blurred but easily discernible presence of the two additional rifles. Additionally, after careful analysis of other versions, I realized that there is at least one dead body on the ground, lying slightly to the left of the feet of the central standing soldier. In my version I cleared up what I think are ambiguities in the various source reproductions and intensified the value contrasts. I also hoped my work would enhance the already present pathos as we witness this murder of a mother and child. To achieve this subliminal content, I used in the background simplified abstract forms and warm pastel pink and yellow colors, which we naturally associate with maternal security and childhood.

The next images present two views of adult victims about to be murdered. The first is of two nude men standing at the edge of a pit. Standing behind them is a man in military uniform holding a rifle. The nude men are about to be shot. I selected this image from a photograph that includes many other figures: several other soldiers, other victims, an older man and a young boy, all of

whom are being led to the edge of a pit which will soon become their grave. In my work the viewer's attention is focused on just the two nude men, so as to concentrate on the sense of humiliation and degradation that was such a fundamental part of the process of dehumanization and murder of the Jews. Before I recreated a digital version for this project, this work was made using black and white pastels.

The second work in this pairing of opposites also started as a black and white pastel drawing, but this one is of two nude women walking to their impending death at Auschwitz Birkenau. In both works the forms have been simplified almost to the point of abstraction. There are no visible details. As mentioned above, the image of the killing of the two Jewish men is cut from a larger photograph that contains many other individuals. The photographic source for the image of the two women is one of seven photographs secretly taken at Auschwitz and smuggled out by the Polish underground. It too has been cropped from a larger group of about 20 figures. As in the drawing of the two nude men, I selected just this aspect of two nude women to concentrate attention on their humiliation and their humanity.

As I have suggested above, I am sometimes struck by the visual relationships between works of art of historical importance and the situations in which I find myself when composing my own artworks. When viewing or making art that confronts atrocity, the work of Francisco Goya almost inevitably comes to mind, but I have found many other examples of aesthetic cross-references. For example, when I was creating the drawing and subsequent painting of the two women at Auschwitz, I felt a relationship between this composition and that of Masaccio's *Expulsion from Paradise*. In the *Expulsion* Adam and Eve walk side by side as they are banished from Paradise. They seem to bow slightly, in response to the compelling power of the angel above them directing them away. Eve displays a sense of innocent modesty as she tries to cover her sexual organs. Shame for what they have done and fear of what is to come are conveyed by Adam's hands covering his face and Eve's expression of pain and torment. In the artwork I created of the two women walking to their death at Auschwitz, I try to show a similar feeling of lost innocence and hope to that expressed in the *Expulsion*. The two women walk side by side, their heads bent down and forward, their bodies slightly bent from the waist, but their legs carry them relentlessly onward. One holds her arms up across her breasts as if to protect herself from cold and harm. The figures' heads are shrouded in darkness, their bodies brightly lit; the background consists of sharp and swirling abstract forms that push them forward toward the inevitable.

After focus on individuals in the previous works, the next images use as their source photographs the mass graves at Bergen-Belsen. The first work is a detail of a section of a large painting of hundreds of bodies. The forms are so entangled as to be almost unrecognizable as complete human forms. The resulting mass of

simplified black and white figure forms appears as a stark abstract arrangement of body parts. In the second work I selected two realistic close-ups of bodies. They are positioned so that one rectangular image overlaps the other, creating the feeling of a rectangle within a rectangle. The background rectangle contains forms that are further away from us; those of the inside rectangle are larger and appear nearer to us. The changing scale of each image creates a zoom-in effect. The entire work was then given a blue cast to suggest the coldness of death.

These images of individuals and mass graves serve as a prelude to the following images of the administrative staff of Belsen, which are followed by more images of the atrocities for which the staff were responsible. The first is a portrait of the "Beast of Belsen" SS Hauptsturmführer Josef Kramer, who was the second Commandant of Belsen. He is followed by his associate the SS-Aufseherin Irma Grese, a senior supervisor at Belsen and formerly called the "Belle of Auschwitz". The black and white source images of Kramer and Grese were taken after their capture by the British, while they were awaiting trial as war criminals. Each artwork developed from these mug-shot sources was given a surface texture that minimizes some detail. In addition I increased the light and dark contrast, especially around their eyes. Irma Grese's portrait has been softened somewhat by tinting it a warm red brown, burnt sienna. I wanted to imply a contradiction between her attractive appearance and the reality of her sadistic behavior. These two individuals were largely responsible for the horrible conditions that existed at Belsen. Kramer looks very much like a common criminal or street thug. Grese, who was only 22 at the time, wears an expression of cold, self-righteous defiance. During the last decade a cult of personality has developed around Grese among right-wing extremists in Germany. Her apparent physical attractiveness and claims of her sexual perversions may explain the prurient interest in her. Revisionist historians on several Holocaust denial websites promote her innocence and, in an ironic twist, blame Jews for her victimhood. I used her image as a deliberate effort to bring up the issue of false appearances. Irma Grese's "good looks" call to mind the truism about the danger of first impressions based on looks alone.

The next group of images is presented both realistically and in abstract. There is an abstract close-up of Irma Grese's eyes, followed by two images of the head of a male corpse. One image of the corpse's head is presented in various values of dark and light blue; the other is its opposite or negative in values of yellow to black. These two works are followed by a complex abstract image of bodies in mass graves at Belsen. In this juxtaposition of abstract images of eyes, heads and bodies, I was seeking to show a connection between the means and the act of seeing, and what might have been seen. This pairing of eyes and the consequences of the actions they witness is a theme to which I return numerous times throughout the project.

These images are followed by a sequence of artworks depicting female corpses, which visually restate the themes presented in the prior group which focused on male subjects. These seven works act as a transition from the images of the staff of Belsen the results of their administration to images of lower-ranking male and female staff at the camp who were their enablers. When I was researching this project, I became aware of the few photographic examples generally available of the women who were directly involved in implementing the processes and procedures necessary to carry out the Holocaust. The documentary material housed at the Imperial War Museum in London detailing the liberation of Belsen was most helpful in presenting this unusual evidence of female complicity.

One artwork that resulted from this information is a group portrait of two women and an unknown victim. The work is set up with three equally-sized rectangular portraits. The two outside images are of Rosel Schieber and Frieda Walter, both of whom worked at Belsen and were convicted as war criminals. What struck me about these women was their ordinary appearance. They look sullen and deflated. Their mouths are tightly closed. Schieber looks away from the viewer in an almost indifferent way; Walter looks straight ahead. The close-up of the face of a female victim sits in the middle. The "unknown victim" has been colored so that the light areas are a greenish yellow, the dark ones black. Schieber and Walter are in black and white. The "unknown victim" looks directly at the viewer with her mouth slightly open. She appears to be asking for something. I wanted to create a subliminal message relating to the contrast between two women who are alive but appear spiritually dead, and one who is nearing death but wants to live.

The theme of individuals and their responsibility for horrific acts continues in the next group of five works, but these works briefly illustrate the Nazis' depraved scientific interest.

In 1942 Heinrich Himmler authorized the Anatomical Institute in Strasbourg to become a repository of Jewish skulls, skeletons and body parts, for the purpose of scientifically developing a means to prove the superiority of the Aryan race. Jews were sent from Auschwitz to France and gassed at the Natzweiler-Struthof camp near Strasbourg. Their corpses were then taken to Strasbourg, where they were dissected and their skeletal remains made ready for classification.

The first artwork in this series is in black and white. It is very realistic. It shows a white tiled room, with two vats side by side that resemble chest-type freezers. The lid of the vat closer to us is slightly open; the one further from the viewer is raised at an angle of 45°. Barely visible, sticking up from inside the second vat, are two human feet. The next work is presented in strongly contrasting colors of red and black. It shows the ironically named Dr. August Hirt, Director of the Strasbourg Anatomical Institute, performing an autopsy. The fact that Dr. Hirt's hairstyle and mustache are copied from Hitler's adds to the gruesomeness of the

scene. Additional images follow, inspired by documentary photographs from the Anatomical Institute of corpses being made ready for classification.

The next 49 works return to and explore the theme of seeing acts of atrocity and recognizing what is being seen. I present images of the faces of murder victims, the eyes of witnesses, the faces of children and portraits of prison guards. The contrasts are graphic and disquieting.

The first two images in this series are of a male victim killed in the Lodz Ghetto. His face is very badly beaten. The next work reuses the same image, but enlarges it and adds color and references to splattered blood. These are followed by two simplified images of eyes, which are greatly enlarged and fill the entire frame. As indicated earlier I want a recurring presence of eyes to suggest that we must look at the atrocities of the Holocaust. We cannot turn away. By refusing the most visceral kind of knowledge, we escape from its reality.

The next work is a winter scene in black and white of two victims hanging by the neck from trees. It is followed by a green-toned picture of the smiling face of an SS officer. We see him from an angle slightly above eye level, about even with his head. His eyes are hidden in dark shadows. His very wide smile droops at the edges, and the deep creases in his cheeks add an overall sinister, menacing quality to this image.

This frame is followed by another scene of an outdoor hanging. Two victims are being led past a raised gallows from which hang nine nooses. A crowd of spectators looks on. Next is the face of a female in warm reds, yellows and browns. I want the viewer to believe she is a witness to the preceding image. The visual format now changes to a central narrow rectangular area for the image, surrounded by black space. We see a black and white image of the hanging. At least nine bodies hang from the same gallows. All you see are their heads and the ropes. This narrow rectangular image is followed by a full-frame enlargement of just the eyes of the woman witness shown two images previously.

It should be clear that I frequently use this technique of moving from broad images with a complex content to simpler, more focused images, from images with no color to images with limited but carefully chosen color, and from realistic to abstracted images.

The sequence that follows introduces images of children, images of three perpetrators, an image of women and children and the portrait of a woman accused of war crimes who was acquitted. The source for the first work in this group comes from a photograph of women and children waiting outside near a grove of trees prior to their execution at Auschwitz. The next image isolates and enlarges one child from the larger image. This compelling portrait of a small girl with her hands held in front of her body as if in prayer has been softly colored a warm red. She is surrounded by larger areas of black space. I decided to create a single image of this young child because the scene is particularly poignant, given what the

viewer has already seen and knows; that this beautiful, innocent child is about to die. The next image in black and white is of three war criminals from Belsen. The contrast between these grim-faced men and the young child is especially stark. The male war criminals are followed by another group picture of women and children. I placed this image at this point in the sequence to shift the viewer's attention back to images of vulnerable women and children at Auschwitz. At a later point in the presentation I reuse an image of one of the children in this photograph.

The problem of assigning degrees of individual guilt is brought out through the portrait of the young woman acquitted of crimes. Although she was employed at Belsen, there was insufficient evidence to define her role there as criminal. Her face has a youthful fullness, and her eyes, though dark, appear to me as hollow rather than hateful. I want her image to remain embedded at the back of the viewer's mind and result in an echo when later we see images of emaciated victims.

Holocaust Portraits continues this presentation of contrasting images of groups of children and young and old women with full portraits of female death camp guards and close-ups of their eyes. These are followed by images of dead bodies and more perpetrators. I wanted this section of the artwork to have a relentless sense of bleak contrasting realities.

In the next sequence, as a contrast to the preceding more individually-oriented works, there is a complete change of rhythm. This group of related images is a mini-narrative. It tells of the roundup of Jews and their transport to and arrival at Auschwitz. It starts with the arrival of six SS officers and their dog at the open door of what may have been a garage. The viewer looks at this scene from inside the garage. In the middle of the group stands an SS officer holding the leash of a large German Shepherd. On the left side of the large open doorway, in shadow, stand two adults; on the right side are four children. In the next four images we see the selection process and roundup of victims. I focus on the action of a soldier who is organizing the line-up and a small child standing next to him. The following image, from the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw, shows 24 victims, men, women and children, facing the ghetto wall with their hands held high above their heads. In the next five scenes we are at Auschwitz. We see children walking toward the gas chambers, an old bearded patriarch, groups of men, the enlarged forearm of a victim with a number tattooed on it, and groups of women.

I then return to the presentation of single individuals, with a portrait of a young girl named Settela Steinbeck. We see her face as she peers out from the open door of the cattle car that transported her from Westerbork to Auschwitz in May 1944. The image of this young girl is frequently reproduced as a still photograph but the original documentary source for this work is a short film. I used the still image as the basis for both a drawing and a large painting before I was aware of the film. It came as a great surprise to me after working on my artistic versions of this poignant face to see her when she was alive. The spiritual and emotion

bond I felt with her then has not diminished. She is sometimes identified as a Jew, but there is more compelling evidence that she was a Dutch Gypsy. In any event, we know she was murdered at Auschwitz on May 14, 1944. For the *Holocaust Portrait* project I created two works: a black and white version and a negative version in light and dark red to black in which the light dark values are reversed, creating what appears to be a death mask.

The mood changes in the next group of 17 images, as they focus on the juxtaposition of atrocity images with portraits of witnesses and perpetrators. They include portraits of more child victims, new artwork versions based on the famous sequence of photographs of the killing of women at Liepaja in Latvia, and specific individuals who were clearly involved in major war crimes. The group begins with three images of SS Captain Amon Göth (1908-1946), Commandant of Plaszow concentration camp, who became known to the general public because his criminal activities were featured in the film *Schindler's List*. For sport, Göth would shoot randomly at camp prisoners from the balcony of his residence. The first image of Göth, in black and white, shows him casually standing outside on the balcony. He is wearing a white undershirt, holding a cigarette to his lips with his left hand and grasping a rifle just above the stock with his right hand. The barrel of his weapon rests lightly on his right shoulder. In the next work, a benign snapshot photo, Göth is smiling at us, presenting a face that is anything but that of a killer. This is followed by his official front and side profile mug-shots. He looks blankly out at us with none of the indifference to life that he must have felt as he played in his human shooting gallery or the self-confidence evident in his casual photo. I followed the frames of Göth with one showing hundreds of Jews awaiting transportation to Auschwitz. This is followed by another image in black and white, with tinges of olive green, of executioners, six proud and happy SS staff of Mauthausen. They are obviously well-fed and stand smiling, hatless, shoulder to shoulder, their arms linked, wearing their neat dress uniforms and shinning high-top riding boots. In contrast, the next image, in color, is of twelve unsmiling emaciated nude males who were survivors of Mauthausen. I simplified the modeling on their pathetically skinny bodies so that the shapes of bones and shrunken body cavities are more striking. The overall color in this work has been pushed toward a more jaundice-yellow/red range.

The next image is from a drawing I made based on a documentary source of partially burned bodies lying on the ground at Majdanek. Though somewhat abstract, the content of this image is easily understood. In the following frame of SS officers at Hinzwert, a sub-camp of Buchenwald (1940-41), we return to the casual group portrait of six uniformed staff. They stand at ease in full uniform; hats included, and grin confidently for the camera. As in the prior sequence, I have contrasted this portrait of service comrades with two more images of skeleton-like survivors of Mauthausen.

The project continues to explore numerous contrasts between images that represent official power and the consequences for millions of victims of the diabolical implementation of that power. Of particular note are three portraits of doctors who were involved in medical experiments. In their outward appearance these two men and one woman look like perfectly normal ordinary people. There are no visual clues that might suggest they were anything but fine human beings, but it is chilling to read the list of crimes they were accused of committing.

The last third of *Holocaust Portraits* includes portraits of major Nazi officials, presented in ways that suggest aspects of their personalities or the role they played in the government. For example, the official photograph of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) is presented nine times in one frame. The observant viewer will notice that in this otherwise black and white photograph, the pupils of his eyes have been tinted red. Herman Göring is presented with a demonic stare. Adolf Hitler is shown being greeted by his enthusiastic admirers; however, we see only a portion of the side of his head in the lower right of the frame. In this work he is not the center of attention. The concept I wanted to express in this, the project's only image of Hitler; the person who is considered most responsible for the Holocaust, was that the Holocaust could not have occurred without the complicity and assistance of thousands of others.

The visual images of the project conclude with a series of frames that present four events. The first is of German women reburial Jewish victims of the Flossenbürg death march (April 22-25 1945). The second is of German civilians from Ludwigslust forced to honor and bury victims from Wöbbelin concentration camp (May 7, 1945). The third is of German civilians viewing a mass grave at Wenzelnberg (April 30, 1945). The last images are of mourners for the pogrom victims at Kielce (1946).

My rationale for ending the project with these images is to restate visually a basic theme of this artwork, that the Holocaust made all its participants victims. Throughout their lives the German women reburial murdered Flossenbürg Jews, the citizens of Ludwigslust forced to acknowledge the dead from Wöbbelin, and the German civilians who viewed the mass grave at Wenzelnberg, will carry the weight of knowing that by their silence they were complicit in these tragedies, and that their actions helped create the climate that allowed the murders of these innocent human beings.

The last images are of the mourners for the victims of the pogrom which took place at Kielce in 1946, after the war was officially over. It is a painful reminder that the tragic effects of antisemitism, intolerance, and racism did not end with the signing of surrender documents or the reading of verdicts at war crimes trials. Understanding why, how and owing to whom the Holocaust

occurred is an essential part of understanding past political and moral misjudgments, as we seek today to strengthen democracy, fight racism, and secure human rights for all people in the world.

I end the entire project with two quotations. The first is:

"There has never been so much guilt and distress, agony and terror. At no time has the earth been so soaked with blood. We do not know how to solve the problem of evil, but we are not exempt from dealing with evil."

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972)

It is followed by:

"It is not for you to complete the work, but neither are you free to withdraw from it."

Pirkei Avot, the Jewish Book of Ethics



Mourner of the pogrom at Kielce Poland, 1946

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible through the assistance of the staff at the Imperial War Museum, London, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C. The Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, and Ohio Wesleyan University Delaware Ohio.

Numerous books, periodicals and articles have been consulted in the development of my Holocaust related artwork over a 15 year period. Many have served as

background references so it is difficult if not impossible for me to assign specific factual content to a particular source.

In the final editing of *Holocaust Portraits Victims Perpetrators and Witnesses* I frequently referred to the following:

"The Pictorial History of the Holocaust", Y. Arad, (Yad Vashem, Macmillan)

"The Holocaust Chronicle" (Publications International)

"The Lodz Ghetto", Adelson & Lapidès (Penguin)

"Auschwitz", Kazimeierz Smolen (Panstwowe Muzeum Oswiecim-Brzezinka)

"Warszawskie Getto" (Wydawnictwo Interpress)

"The World Must Know", Michael Berenbaum (Little Brown & Company)

EPILOGUE

Today the specter of antisemitism and ethnic racism, the twin evils that were the underpinnings of the economic and political forces that resulted in the Holocaust, have re-emerged as tools used by those who want to justify their fight against modernism, their denial of worldwide human rights and the existence of the State of Israel. Given these renewed threats, understanding why and how the Holocaust occurred is essential if we are to prevent new genocides. Studying the historical record is critical, and analyzing political and moral misjudgments of the past is vitally important as a way of defining one's personal perspective more clearly. Additionally, being alert to what Dr. Franklin Littell has defined as the "early warning" signs of regimes predisposed to or preparing for genocide can give needed advance time for action to prevent such catastrophes. But first and foremost, we must recognize our common humanity.