



ETCHED IN MEMORY

The Graphic Art of the Holocaust
Prints from the Collection of Arthur Gilbert

January 13 - March 10, 2013

For Yone Burgby

Singer Gallery
Mizel Arts & Culture Center at the JCC

ETCHED IN MEMORY

The Graphic Art of the Holocaust Prints from the Collection of Arthur Gilbert

When I first contacted David Crown, it was because I had come across his twenty-six intriguing and passionate etchings on the Internet. I wanted to organize an art exhibit at a venue in Denver as an act of remembrance of the millions of Jews and others who died at the hands of Nazi killers, and Dr. Crown's etchings were compelling, authentic, and masterfully rendered.

In my research, I learned that David Crown was the President of the Mezzotint Society (mezzotints along with etchings, engravings and aquatints are mediums of intaglio printmaking). He had retired after a long career as a physician, after which he began a new career as a painter and printmaker. Dr. Crown responded to my email inquiry immediately. He informed me he would not sell me any of the pieces I requested, but instead charged me with the task of finding a suitable charity to which I would donate the money I would have used to purchase his artwork. In exchange, he would donate his art to my efforts to bring Holocaust-inspired art to the public. I was shocked and, at the same time, challenged by his suggestion. I knew that any charity I chose had to be Holocaust-related so I began searching for organizations that supported Holocaust survivors. I came upon a charity known as The Mitzvah Project, run by well-known actor and TV producer Zane Buzby (who had appeared in *This is Spinal Tap* and *Up in Smoke* – arguably the most well-known drug film ever produced). As I soon discovered in my communications with Ms. Buzby, she spends a great deal of time raising funds and personally travelling to Europe to bring those funds to elderly Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe. This seemed to me like an incredibly worthwhile endeavor to support and Dr. Crown agreed.

So here we were - three people who had never met but who were now united in this common enterprise due to an event etched in our collective memory and our vows to never forget. Our procedure was that I would send a check to Dr. Crown in Florida, he would mail it to Ms. Buzby in California, and then he would send prints from his Holocaust series to me in Denver for this show. Dr. Crown told me he does not want to make money from his suite of prints (over which he labored for many years) but instead, just wants his work to be seen by the public; Zane Buzby simply wants to help those who suffered beyond all understanding; and I, Arthur Gilbert, have a need to exhibit these works of art as a testament to the suffering of millions and the simple joy of being alive. All three of us mesh our desires in this exhibition.

In my search for Holocaust lithographs, woodcuts, and etchings over the last several years, I have discovered that many of these extraordinary works of art were tucked away in bookstores and galleries where they did not sell. This is particularly true in American galleries where reminders of the Holocaust clash with our “sunny-side-up” philosophy (which I share). After all, where would one display a Holocaust print? Over the bed next to Picasso's famous bouquet of flowers? On the mantle next to photos of the family on a picnic? In the dining room next to a cheery, sentimental Norman Rockwell? Because of Americans' desire to surround themselves with pleasing images rather than dark or disturbing ones, I was able, with much persistence and research, to put together my collection at a relatively modest expense. The marvelous Jacob Landau suite came from a storage facility in Miami where the owner of the bookstore to which they were consigned spent over a week looking for them. The late Mary Costanza's eight lithographs *Kaddish for Six Million*, were purchased from her husband in Pennsylvania. The very large etchings by Mauricio Lasansky from his *Kaddish Suite* of eight were sold to me by a well-known gallery owner in Washington, DC whose gallery, I suspect, had housed them for 40 odd years. The Samuel Bak lithographs and some pieces by Jack Levine and others, were discovered in my eBay searches. As an auction hunter, I found the Leopoldo Mendez piece in Denver, and several works by Sigmund Laufer were found in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where they were most certainly out of place in

the colorful Cape Cod art offered several times a year at the Provincetown Art Association auctions. To top off the exhibit, I made contact through one of my colleagues with Martin Mendelsberg, whose wonderfully inventive images grace this show. When Mr. Mendelsberg and I met at a coffee shop, one of the first things he said to me was “I did these prints because I had to.” I understand. I have no choice but to present these amazing prints to you, the viewer.

I have put this show together for one reason. As time passes and the remaining Holocaust survivors pass on, I am haunted by the fear of forgetting. I want to share with you three stories of how to remember. My father’s original family name was “Majofis.” The name was changed to “Goldberg” when the family immigrated to the United States from Lithuania three generations ago. Then my father, who was “riding the rails” during the Depression and probably decided that a hobo named Goldberg was not a good idea, changed the name to “Gilbert.” A few years ago I went to a Holocaust memorial dedicated to the French Jews in the 4th Arrondissement in Paris. There I found the name Nasel Majofis inscribed on the stone wall. Nasel Majofis was born in 1897 and died in Auschwitz in 1942 when he was rounded up with other Eastern European Jews in one of the most disgraceful episodes in French history. He was from Lithuania. Nasel Majofis is my adopted memory. I do not know what he looked like and I have no idea if we are actually related. It doesn’t matter because, in my mind, he is my relative who died in a death camp.

A second story involves my wife, Kathy Eudeikis. She is not Jewish but her point of contact with the Holocaust occurred when we visited Auschwitz together in the late 1980s. We were walking through the prison, on the walls of which were thousands of old photographs. At one point, she gasped and ran out of the building. What had happened to cause this reaction? On the wall was the photograph of a young girl named Kristina (who is sometimes referred to as the “Angel of Auschwitz”) who perished there in 1943. She looked just like Kathy. It could have been a relative. It could have been her. I took a picture of the photo of Kristina, with her sad and terrified visage, and then took a picture of Kathy when we arrived in Budapest. Those photos together are among my prized possessions.

Finally, a tale about my sister, Marian. On a trip to Paris, Kathy and I visited a show organized by Karl Larzasfeld. Mr. Larzasfeld had spent his life recovering photos and memorializing the people who were sent from Paris to Auschwitz. One of the pictures on the wall was of a young girl named Leni Affenkraut. She and her family had fled from Leipzig to Paris to escape from the Nazis. Leni was 14 years old and she was on one of the convoys that left from Drancy on her last voyage. I asked my wife to walk around the room and see if she could find a familiar face. “It’s your sister,” she said when she found the photo.

It is in this sense that we are all Holocaust survivors. The artists who created the dark and fearsome work in this show (with the exception of Leo Haas and a few others) were not survivors in the literal sense, but they had to memorialize through their artistic visions a sense of common humanity and common sorrow, a link to the years when innocent people died for no reason. It is my hope that this exhibit will allow you to join us in understanding this terrible story and to remember that genocide is still with us in our time..

Some time ago I approached Simon Zalkind, Director of the Singer Gallery and introduced him to my collection. He was familiar with many of the artists and was clearly knowledgeable regarding the complex and often fraught relationship between the Holocaust and the visual arts. I’m grateful to him and to the Singer Gallery for recognizing the timeless and timely importance of these searing works of art and for enabling me to realize my aspiration to share them with a larger audience.

Arthur N. Gilbert
Professor
Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver



Above: David Crown, *Einsatzgruppen*, 1985, etching and aquatint
Cover: Leopoldo Mendez, *Deportacion a la Muerta*, 1942, linocut

Singer Gallery

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. • Sunday, 1–4 p.m. (Closed Saturday)

The Singer Gallery is recognized as one of a handful of visual arts institutions in the greater Denver area to present consistent programming of substance, originality and vision. The Singer Gallery has a distinct voice within the region's art-world and the excellence of our offerings is widely acknowledged both critically and popularly.

Mizel Arts and
Culture Center
macc
at the JCC

Mizel Arts and Culture Center
350 S. Dahlia St., Denver, CO
www.maccjcc.org • (303) 316-6360