



WAR. Light Within/After the Darkness
Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery

WAR:

Light Within/After the Darkness

Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery

Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario—
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Christian Bernard Singer 1962–

Hélène Brunet Neumann

Chari Cohen

Laura Donefer

Mary McKenzie

Tina Poplawski

Oded and Pamela Ravek

Claire Weissman Wilks

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Dedicated to

Anne Fromstein-Singer, Yetta Kramer-Fromstein
and to all of the relatives who remained in Europe
and were murdered in the Holocaust.

Foreword

WAR: Light Within/ After the Darkness is dedicated to my grandmother, Anne (Fromstein) Singer, and to the stories that she handed down about my great-grandmother, Yetta (Kramer) Fromstein. They were stories about love and privation, told through a lens of naivety and innocence. Destitute and speaking mainly Yiddish, my great-grandmother left her entire family behind and crossed the Atlantic with her young children in the early part of the century to reunite with her husband in Toronto. When the Second World War broke out, she began receiving letters from her relatives who begged her for help to escape Nazi persecution and come to Canada.

As it turned out, these letters had come from Kosów (now Kosiv), a small town that was home to 4,000 Jews. Kosów had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before WWI, became part of Poland between the wars, then became part of Ukraine after the Russian Army withdrew from the town in June, 1941. In his article, *Extermination of the Jews of Galicia*¹ Robin O’Neil describes how, between October 1941 and November 1942, the Nazis shot nearly all of the Jews of Kosów, shoving them into mass graves. The local Ukrainian population willingly collaborated in this genocide by hunting for Jews, robbing them, demolishing their homes, digging mass graves and carrying out their own killings. The remaining Jews were shipped to extermination camps. Only a few managed to flee to Romania or Slovakia.

The letters, and the fact that no one ever heard from those relatives again, provide the basis of inspiration for this exhibition. In developing an exhibition based on the Holocaust, I wanted to avoid gratuitous sentimentality and instead approach the subject from a place of strength rather than victimization. The horrors of genocide serving as backdrop, I wanted to celebrate the notion of resistance and survival, and how, even in the most desperate moments, hope can still exist, and so even, can beauty.

It was a great honour to work with the seven artists in this exhibition who created ambitious, thoughtful and poignant new works

that specifically explored the theme of resistance and survival. I have always been fascinated by the way in which artists see the world and reflect the human condition back to viewers. This is especially true in these works by Hélène Brunet Neumann, Chari Cohen, Laura Donefer, Mary McKenzie, Tina Poplawski, Oded and Pamela Ravek and Claire Weissman Wilks. I also offer my sincere gratitude to Anna Mendel, from whom we borrowed very dear and personal artefacts while allowing us to share her own story of survival.

Bringing such a labour of love would not have been possible without the generous support of our many sponsors, donors and partners. We gratefully acknowledge operational funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Waterloo. We sincerely thank the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass who made this catalogue possible. Laura Donefer's installation was made possible by a Project Grant from the Ontario Arts Council and we gratefully acknowledge Anna and Joe Mendel, Eva Seidner, Susan Glass and Arni Thornsteinson who provided additional funds to ensure that her work was able to reach its full scale. Tina Poplawski also received a Project Grant and an Exhibition Assistance Grant from the Ontario Arts Council. As well, Chari Cohen and Mary McKenzie each received Exhibition Assistance Grants from the Ontario Arts Council.

We sincerely wish to thank Pamela Bierstock and Joyce and Gordon Strauss for fully funding a lecture by Eli Rubenstein entitled, *Tales of Courage from the Kingdom of the Night*. Held on October 10, 2013 at the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, Mr. Rubenstein also moderated a panel discussion between Holocaust survivors, Max Eisen and Sally Wasserman, and exhibiting artists, Chari Cohen and Laura Donefer.

*Christian Bernard Singer,
Curator*

Notes

1 O'Neil, Robin. *Extermination of the Jews of Galicia*. Material based on O'Neil's Ph.D Dissertation on Genocide in Galicia, Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department at University College London. London: University College London, 1996.

War:

Light Within/After the Darkness

World War II promised to be the last Great War but when it was all over, unimaginable atrocities were revealed and their reverberations are still being felt to this day. The Holocaust was of such an inconceivable horror and magnitude that the world vowed never to let such a thing happen again. Although the universal acceptance of international laws defining and forbidding genocide was achieved with the birth of the United Nations in 1948, genocides have since occurred in Bosnia, Cambodia, Laos, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Congo and Rwanda—just to name a few.

WAR: Light Within/After the Darkness explores multiple narratives about the Holocaust, an unprecedented period of darkness in world history, through contemporary artworks that turn on notions of resistance, survival, hope and beauty. Poignantly powerful, yet inspiring and beautiful, the works by Canadian artists H el ene Brunet-Neumann, Chari Cohen, Laura Donefer, Mary McKenzie, Tina Poplawski, Oded and Pamela Ravek and Claire Weissman Wilks evoke the realities faced by Jews and other innocent populations during the Second World War.

Located in the Donald and Pamela Bierstock Gallery is Laura Donefer's installation, *Todesm arche Revisited: In Honour of Those Who Perished During the Death Marches*. Donefer began developing this work after her father, who was researching his family background at the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, came across a touring living memorial created by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.¹ He was visibly upset when he showed her photocopies of the information he had gathered concerning members of his family who had been murdered by the Nazis. He had found documents that specified his relatives' places of birth and circumstances of their deaths—including the exact date and method. Donefer says "The lines reading: *deported to Auschwitz and gassed,*

chilled my very core, because this was the first time that it became truly apparent that many of my family had been murdered. This was never talked about when I was growing up. It was as if a knife pierced my heart.”²²

Laura Donefer’s installation of cast glass and cement footprints, some of which were taken from actual Holocaust survivors, tells the story of the forced death marches. As the Second World War was ending and the Allies closed in, the Nazis attempted to erase the traces of their war crimes. Although death marches occurred throughout the time they held power, this activity was never greater until before the end of the war. They emptied entire concentration camps, forcing starved and ill prisoners to march barefoot, sometimes for hundreds of kilometres, to other camps or killing centres within Germany. As prisoners marched for days, they walked past the dead bodies of those who died from exhaustion and starvation—or from having been shot for resting momentarily. Yad Vashem estimates that over 200,000 people either died during the marches or were murdered upon arrival.

8 Blackened cement footprints, heavy with the burden of terrible suffering, lead like a path towards a circle of illuminated glass footprints, affirming the glowing life force within. “My project came to me one night in a dream. I had been reading about the forced death marches, the thousands upon thousands of starving concentration camp prisoners bullied into walking—sometimes running—so that they would drop dead before the Allies came to liberate them. Falling by the wayside, and left behind like so much garbage, no one to even know their names, the only thing left behind being their footprints. Many were barefoot, and that would be their last imprint on the earth. I envisioned glass footprints of all sizes, from large to child size, symbolizing all who were lost in the war.”²³ The installation becomes all the more disturbing and layered when viewers realise that the Bierstock Gallery was actually designed to evoke the inner structure of a ceramic kiln. Yet, this intimate round room also has the aura of a highly charged sacred space that intensifies contemplative experience. Here, Donefer’s work becomes at once narrative, memorial and a reverential celebration of the living.

The Miracle of the Three Sisters by Oded and Pamela Ravek is both a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust and a tribute to Oded’s mother, Livia, and her two sisters, Magda and Cibi, who miraculously

survived the horrors of Auschwitz and went on to lead fruitful lives. The three young sisters were brutally seized from the safety of their home in Vranov, Czechoslovakia and shipped to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the infamous Nazi extermination camp in Poland. When Livia and Cibi were taken in 1942, Cibi told Livia during transport that, “we will eat stones and we will eat nails, but we will live.” Magda, who had been ill in hospital, was with their aunt and cousins in Humenné, Slovakia. She was captured and taken to Auschwitz just before the end of the war where the sisters were reunited. The Nazis stripped the sisters of their identity and their humanity through years of hard labour, illness, torture, and overwhelming loss. But despite the evil and cruelty, their love for each other remained untainted by the hatred that brought them to the camps. The strength from that love kept them alive, each sister relying on the other to be the reason to live through another day. The three sisters used that bond to create new lives in the new State of Israel. They married, raised children, enjoy grandchildren and great-grandchildren, each knowing that their very existence represents a defiant victory against the Nazis.

With its double pedestal base, dramatic central column and crowning star feature, the cast, fused and hot-worked glass sculpture with clear dichroic inclusions has all of the elements of an architectonic monument. The work memorialises the 6,000,000 Jews murdered by the Nazis (scattered roses with thorns on first tier) and the 1,500,000 children under the age of 13, the age of Bar Mitzvah when they join the world of adults (12 roses on second tier without thorns). The roughly cast numbers on the front and sides of the second tier represent the actual numbers that were tattooed on the sisters’ arms. The intentional coarseness of these numbers provides a sharp contrast with the meticulous finishing and polishing of the rest of the sculpture, further suggesting the barbarous and dispassionate ‘branding’ of these women. The three triangles that make up the Star of David evoke the Jewish Diaspora⁴ come together in Israel, their spiritual land and home. It is a story told in clear glass like a declaration of hope rising from the ashes, made bare and transparent for all to see.

Tina Poplawski’s installation in the Mutual Group Tower Gallery, references the emotional reverberations caused by the enforced displacement of people from their homes by violent military assaults. The NKVD executed her grandfather, who was an officer in the Polish Military,⁵ and all of his known relatives were sent to the Gulags. Like

the Nazis, the NKVD was responsible for mass extrajudicial executions, mass deportations of entire nationalities and operated its own system of forced labour camps. In fact, for years after the War, they continued to operate these camps, some of which had originally been constructed by the Nazis. However, unlike the Nazis, the Russians still remain unaccountable for their war crimes. Of the 1,500,000 Poles arrested, only 100,000 were eventually given amnesty, among them her family. Emaciated, starving, suffering from disease and stripped of all their worldly possessions, they wandered peripatetically over 5 continents as Polish refugees—labelled derogatorily as “DPs” (displaced persons).

Poplawski says, “I have been negotiating the cultural residue of war through my art practice for many years now. This has led me to a fascination with ‘debris’ found in the botanical world.”⁶ She sees the natural world as a place of reassuring comfort as it continues its continual cycles of cleansing and renewal. Whether observing the trace actions of tiny insects on half-eaten leaves, or the decimated carcasses of uprooted trees lying like broken beings, these elements found in nature evoke powerful symbolic associations for the artist.

Dreaming Tree speaks about violent uprootings and issues of disassociation often found in people who suffer from Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This disorder can result in reacting inappropriately to mundane or massive events as if the heart and the head are completely disconnected. In Poplawski’s work, the upper part of the tree is ‘cut away’ from the lower half, each trying to reunite into wholeness. Cradled within the roots of the tree is a pink translucent cast resin crib, suggesting that violence shatters all sense of safety and that ensuing traumas are carried with the victims and continue to affect future generations as well. This work references the moment that her family was ripped from their home at 3 AM in the middle of winter by Russian soldiers and sent to the Gulags. The colour of the crib refers to the pink cotton down comforters that her grandmother used to make and the doily embedded within the crib was actually made by her grandmother.

In *Sleep Pretty Darling Do Not Cry (Mother) and (Child)*, Poplawski incorporates mosses, wood, ash and other botanical matter, Swarovski crystals and crocheted doilies of roughly hewn jute. The title comes out of the Beatle’s song, *Golden Slumbers*, and is also inspired by its other powerful lyric “Once there was a way to get back homeward.” The use of doilies in this body of work symbolizes the notion of discarded,

anonymous feminine labour (such as knitting and crocheting) and how repetitive actions can ground the maker to the actions in her hands while allowing her a contemplative, almost mantric, form of meditation. According to Jungian psychology, such repetitive actions can have a balancing effect on the brain during times of crisis. Poplawski says, “I can imagine her pulling out her crochet hook, the small movements of her hand, repetitive and silent, creating these protective magic circles, while the small domestic world she knew and loved fell beneath the weight of powerful, monolithic, political ideologies.”⁷

Poplawski’s use of diamonds, Swarovski crystals and bits of glass imparts an improbable dream-like quality to the works. Given the fact that diamonds are created under the most extreme elemental pressures, their incorporation here suggests the notion of cataclysmic transformation caused by forces well beyond our control.

Chari Cohen’s installation, *Hanging Forest*, poetically interprets the forests in which Jewish partisans and other resistance fighters hid and operated against the Germans throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. In this installation, 50 white ceramic porcelain trees hover over a cracked earth platform that contains seedlings that will grow into the trees over the course of the exhibition. The trees are suspended and sectioned at regular intervals like vertebrate beings that have been lynched, swaying lifeless in the breeze. Cohen’s base of cracked earth refers to the ‘scorched earth’ policies by advancing and retreating armies, reminding us that, in addition to the vulnerability of innocent populations, nature is especially expendable during times of war. Most infamously used by Stalin against the German invasion,⁸ this practice destroys everything and anything through fire—particularly, anything that might be useful to the enemy such as shelter and food supply. *Hanging Forest* represents a strong statement about how we treat nature and each other. And yet the manifestation of violence is quiet, just like the second and third generational memories of bygone wars. The stories are still there; the stories still cause pain but time does eventually heal—time does eventually trump memory—and so the grass grows, reclaiming and healing the cracked and wounded earth.

Mary McKenzie’s *Departed* is part of an on-going series of visual stories entitled *Unreliable Narrator* that turns on the complexities of memory, desire and fear while engaging aspects of identity and intimacy. Her technique of dipping mundane textile objects in ceramic slip leaves highly authentic-looking facsimiles when the pieces are fired

and the originals burn away. Flexibility of the fabric is replaced with the fragile permanence of ceramic. McKenzie sees these objects as “reminiscent of daily chores, like washing laundry, having an inherent relationship to the ‘domestic’ as in family, home, nurturing and security. The everyday-ness embodies the culture of family where anecdotal objects possess connotations of the universal and as such are stripped of colour to encourage and embrace the narratives of others.”⁹

In developing this installation, McKenzie was inspired by the story of an entire village in the Netherlands that was complicit in hiding a Jewish family while under Nazi occupation. *Departed* sets the stage for the story of a family that is missing after a bomb partially demolishes a home while leaving the remainder almost untouched. In this narrative, no one seems to have perished from the blast but the artist leaves multiple clues to show that the blast represents only the beginning of the story. McKenzie establishes an eerie scene, leaving us with a sense of foreboding as we reflect on the sudden fate of this home’s occupants. Although she makes us witnesses to the remnants of a displaced family, the specifics about any one individual are eschewed in favour of a more universal story that has been repeated over again throughout history. Set in a living room, or as McKenzie puts it, a ‘lived room,’ familiar objects poignantly conjure the smells and sounds of family living that have been suddenly silenced by an act of aggression. Here, a child’s toys are abandoned, as is the laundry that was in progress and a portion of the living space bears evidence of a sudden explosion. McKenzie asks us to look over the room in the hopes that we will discover “wear on an elbow, concealed fingerprints in a glove, a hat reshaped by a head and inscribed traces of life into cloth where, through the intimate, we see humanity, displacement and loss.”¹⁰ *Departed* is an allegorical reference to wartime calamity and to the violence inflicted onto innocent civilians.

Claire Weissman Wilks’ oeuvre speaks to caring, loving and passion no matter the circumstances. In her works, the human body, nakedly vulnerable and vulnerably naked, manifests inner strength and the power of awareness. Mortality comes to us all. It often comes unfairly, sometimes cruelly and always too soon but it is the awareness of our mortality that is at the heart of the human condition. And, it is the human condition that always seeks understanding of, and meaning in, the unknowable.

Weissman Wilk's *Etty* series came out of reading the journals by the young Jewish-Dutch writer, Etty Hillesum.¹¹ In Hillesum's diaries, we become witnesses to how the deepening anti-Jewish measures under German occupation affected her life; yet one also sees her determination to continue her intellectual development and spiritual awakening. She wrote about a way to unite with God even within a world of inhumanity and unimaginable suffering. At the Westerbork transit camp, where she waited with 10,000 Jewish men, women and children for the train that would take them to Auschwitz (where she was killed in November, 1943), she wrote about her experience of God. She did not cry out angrily, nor did she beg God to come to her aid. Her writings reveal her belief in a God who waits at the door of our hearts, waiting as we open our hearts where God's peace may then enter.

Weissman Wilk's *Etty* series depicts various manifestations of love that transcend time and place. In these drawings, the body takes up the entire picture plane. Not set within a landscape or situation, the image becomes both landscape and situation. Here, the body is not meant to symbolize anything beyond what it already is—warm, glowing, fragile and finite. Even in situations of terrible suffering, we can love another freely, we can live for another so they may also live and we can even eroticize the emaciated body of another because love is mysterious, powerful and is part of our very essence of being.

Weissman Wilk's *Timeless Upon Time* series of unfired clay figures on glass portrays the very essence of fragility and vulnerability that is at the heart of the human condition. Here, figures are precariously draped over glass bottles, each holding the other up in what seems like a perilous situation. Underscoring the perception of interconnectedness, where arms hold onto other arms and legs and still others reach back tenderly yet uncomfortably to support another, one can only imagine the disastrous chain reaction should any one of the figures let go. Unfired clay is highly brittle—a tenuous existence—and the uncertain future of these figures is further highlighted by the fragility of the glass itself. As the figures grasp for safety on such a slippery terrain, in itself a sort of empty bubble, art mirrors life where meaning is found in the way we choose to live, to grieve and to die, no matter the circumstances.

Hélène Brunet Neumann's *Caucus: Émergence*, located in the John Pollock Courtyard evokes a collaborative council attempting to reach

some sort of consensus. The sculptures were created using straw and mud, a technique borrowed from the craftsmen of West Bengal, India. Designed to slowly disintegrate through exposure to the elements over the course of the exhibition, the figures' enigmatic contours resonate with the ephemeral nature of human beings in relation to time and space and of their vulnerability in the face of great calamities. At first impression when standing within the circle, one might sense a charged and powerful atmosphere. Yet, true communication seems somehow elusive as some of the figures face away from the circle entirely. Perhaps this council has forgotten its mission and is now unable to transcend their individual needs for the good of the whole. One might even compare this scene to the United Nations, an assembly that promised hope for peace but has since become mostly ineffective and unable to protect the truly vulnerable. Like the many councils before it, these figures will disintegrate and be forgotten, reminding us that we do indeed forget. Yet the work hopefully suggests that one day an inspired council will eventually join all of humanity into a lasting peace.

While *WAR: Light Within/After the Darkness* was initially conceived to celebrate resistance against, and survival from, oppression. Ultimately, the exhibition leaves us with powerful messages about the endurance of hope, love and beauty. If during the darkest times, our inner light can illuminate a pathway to hope, once the darkness has ended, hope can lead us back to our inner light. Meanwhile, survival remains the ultimate act of defiance.

*Christian Bernard Singer,
Curator*

Notes

1 Yad Vashem, the world centre for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust, was established in Israel in 1953. It serves as the Jewish people's living memorial to the Holocaust, safeguarding the memory of the past and imparting its meaning for future generations (www.yadvashem.org). There are Holocaust museums in 24 other countries including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. www.yadvashem.org.

2 Donefer, Laura. From the artist's statement for *Todesmärche*, 2013.

3 Donefer, Laura. From the artist's statement for *Todesmärche*, 2013.

4 Most Diaspora communities have descended from and are categorized into three major ethnic groups: Ashkenazim, the Jews of Germany and Northern France; Sephardim, the Jews of Iberia and Spain; and Mizrahim, or Oriental Jews.

- 5 The Russian Military Police that later became known as the KGB
- 6 Poplawski, Tina. From the artist's statement for this exhibition, 2013.
- 7 Poplawski, Tina. From the artist's statement for this exhibition, 2013.
- 8 Trudeau, Garry B. and Levinthal, David. *Hitler Moves East: A Graphic Chronicle, 1941-43*. Kansas City: Sheed Andrews & McMeel, Inc. 1977.
- 9 McKenzie, Mary. From the artist's statement for this exhibition, 2013.
- 10 McKenzie, Mary. From the artist's statement for this exhibition, 2013.
- 11 Esther (Etty) Hillesum was born to a liberal Jewish family in Middelburg, Holland in 1914. She received a Masters of Law in 1939 from the University of Amsterdam, during which she also studied Russian eventually making her living by teaching the language. She moved in left-wing, anti-fascist student circles and was politically and socially aware without specific affiliation. In 1941, she met Julius Spier, Jungian psycho-chirologist (type of palm-reader). A formative encounter, Hillesum was impressed by his personality and underwent therapy with him. On March 8, 1941, she drafted a letter to Spier in an exercise book and began her diary the next day. Eventually becoming lovers, Spier had a great influence on Hillesum's spiritual development. He taught her how to deal with her depressive and egocentric bent and introduced her to the Bible and St. Augustine. She had been reading other authors, such as Rilke and Dostoevsky since the 1930s but under Spier's influence, their works also took on deeper meaning for her. By the time Spier died on September 15, 1942, he had assumed a less central position in her life.

Expecting a summons to report to Camp Westerbork, Hillesum obtained a patronage position on the Jewish Council. While she had a negative opinion of the Council's role, she eventually found useful work for the department of "Social Welfare for People in Transit" at Westerbork, where she was transferred at her own request on July 30, 1942. Over the next year, she left Westerbork several times for personal reasons and illness but she was very keen to get back to the camp and resume her work so as to provide a bit of support for the people as they were preparing themselves for transport. It was for this reason that Etty Hillesum consistently turned down offers to go into hiding. She said that she wished to "share her people's fate." In July 1943, an end was put to the special status granted to personnel at the Westerbork section of the Jewish Council. Half of the personnel had to return to Amsterdam, while the other half became camp internees. Etty joined the latter group in order to remain with her father, mother, and brother Mischa, who had meanwhile been brought to Westerbork. The family was shipped to Auschwitz in September (her parents either died during transport or were gassed immediately upon arrival). Etty Hillesum was killed in November and her brother was killed four months later.

In Hillesum's diaries, one can clearly see how the deepening anti-Jewish measures under German occupation affected her life; yet one also sees her determination to continue her existentially spiritual and intellectual development. She wrote, "God is not accountable to us, but we are to Him. I know what may lie in wait for us... and yet I find life beautiful and meaningful." While in Westerbork, where she waited with 10,000 Jewish men, women and children for the train that would take them to Auschwitz, she wrote about her experience of God. She did not cry to God angry, nor did she beg God to come to her aid. Her writings reveal her belief in a God who waits at the door of our hearts, waiting as we open our hearts so that he can get inside us to give us his peace. Her writings are highly important, not just for historic reasons but because of their literary merit and spiritual value. Before her definitive

internment at Westerbork, she gave all of her writings to Maria Tuinzing with the promise that if she did not return, they would be given to the writer Klaas Smelik who would publish them. Despite numerous attempts, they were only published in 1981 under the title *An Interrupted Life*. In 1986, all of her known writings in Dutch were published and later translated into English. *An Interrupted Life* was republished in 1999 by Persephone Books. (Sources: *Etty Hillesum, Life and Identity*, lecture given by Frits Grimmelikhuisen in 2002 at the Etty Hillesum Centrum in Deventer, The Netherlands; *Spiritual Maturity: The Case of Etty Hillesum* by Dr. Larry Culliford, published in *Psychology Today*, October 10, 2011; and Etty Hillesum Onderzoekscentrum (research centre), University of Gent, www.choc.ugent.be).

The Voices

Sharon Singer

I hear the voices. They speak to me: they whisper, call, howl, and cry. I try to push them from my mind—it is agonizing to bear their anguish, their pleas for mercy, for comfort, for peace. They tell me of their constant pain, from hunger, from torture; some are refugees without a land; some no longer remember their own name. They are human wreckage fluttering on life, like a butterfly with only one wing.

From what century do they come? from what land? from what nation? At one time, they had a nation, but war forced them to abandon their homes, desert their loved ones—the old and the sick.

Perhaps it is not war—perhaps it is expulsion, perhaps it is conquest. Over and over in human history, lust for power, hunger for riches has cruelly devastated ordinary people. Kings, czars, and conquerors luxuriate in opulence and indulge in pleasures they forbid the masses. Even the act of love can be outlawed. Abetted and sanctified by their spiritual defenders—priests exalted with infallibility or sole access to the inerrant word of their god—these princes distort reality, falsify history, and terrify the populace with warnings of eternal suffering.

Under this hyper-vigilant regime, young and old are forced to live in their imaginations, to harbour unfulfilled desires from birth to death. How easy, how brilliant for the elite, who have all they need, all the physical comforts they could ever want, to create a paradise where all they themselves possess here and now is freely given after death to others programmed to pray to the god that power has created.

With anger simmering below the surface in the hearts of a nation repressed, the crowd is made ripe for dictators to stir up and channel their hate against an alien tribe whose paltry lot is not so different from their own. Adamantine, hard as stone, ruthless rulers stir up the folk with reminders of centuries-old insults. Through the unending clamor of repeated slogans, the disciples are roused to gladly follow the flying

colours of those who send them into battle. These loyal believers do the will of power—slaughter men, women, and children in the name of their cultic gods. Hundreds of thousands die.

The broken voices come to me, but what can I, the watcher of the living, do? I can only commit these bare words to the page, only tell the stories I hear. These are not the humorous tales of pilgrims, nor the epic journeys of heroes, nor the saga of the descent into the deepest regions of fire, a fable framed by polluted doctrines that deny the flesh yet glorify punishment.

Where does conscious intelligence reside? Why do the masses not see through the fictions that press down upon them. Why do they join the unleashed fury of the mob? How many times have young men fought against an invented enemy who, they have been convinced, is less than human, and deserves the bestial beatings, the rapes, the bloody executions, and the mass murders the followers are ordered to deliver?

And the suffering goes on, without surcease, without pause, as humanity trudges along in a maze of numberless corridors, each leading to an insubstantial dream, an abyss of fire, or an apocalypse.

I want to embrace these wanderers, soothe their wounds, give them hope that things will change, that our species will evolve. But other voices give me pause. One is a voice from a cultivated, civilized sophisticate, a bystander who unthinkingly parrots ancestral tropes, or force-fed religious prejudices. Another rules a kingdom where his daily broadcasts repeat: “They are different. We cannot trust them. God hates them. Kill those who do not make the magic sign. They don’t deserve a country of their own. It will be a better world, purified of their putrid presence!”

There are new voices now, voices that speak of hope, voices that try to drown out those that divide and alienate. These recent voices speak to all humankind, they speak before all nations. A young girl in a headscarf scarred by a bullet in her skull, denounces “illiteracy, poverty, and terrorism.” A great statesman proclaims, “Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind.”

These are the voices who feel and express the pain of all the world. These are the voices that might give humanity a future. These voices speak to every one of us. Do you hear them too?

Sharon Singer

Toronto-born Sharon Singer is a published poet, librettist, writer, speaker and spoken word performer. With an Honours B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Toronto, Sharon has been writing poetry since she was a teenager. In addition to four published poetry books, “Global Warming,” LyricalMyrical Press (2008); “Moses,” Batsheva Books (2007); “The Last Years of the Natural World,” Rising Phoenix Press (2002); and “Fire Rider,” Fire Mountain Press (1996), Singer’s work has been published in poetry journals, anthologies, and as original art posters.

Over the last ten years, Sharon Singer has collaborated with musicians and composers. Guitarist Richard P. Elliott composed evocative soundscapes for her poetry texts, which they performed together in Toronto clubs. In 2006, Ottawa composer Colin Mack set three of Singer's poems to classical music resulting in the song cycle “The Names of Water” sung by soprano Doreen Taylor-Claxton for her CD “Hail: Canadian Art Song.” Also in 2006, Singer was commissioned to write lyrics by Hamilton composer Marko Lukac for his CD “Sunrise.” In 2008, Wordsinger Music released Sharon Singer’s jazz/spoken word CD “Global Warming,” a collaboration with renowned New York jazz saxophonist Bob Mover. Also in 2008 Toronto composer Philip McConnell wrote music for her short story “The Museum” and her documentary poem, “The Burning Book” which Singer performed with the Toronto Sinfonietta Orchestra at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. She is currently adapting the ancient Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris for the opera stage that will be set to an opera score by Peter Anthony Togni. The first public performance of an excerpt of the opera took place on March 31, 2010 at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Works







Standing in line for countless hours, bare, bruised feet shuffle slowly. The stench of unwashed bodies hovers like a cloud, though my nose has long grown immune. Shivering with cold, wearing but tattered, thin material, I realize that the line splits... and my mother has just moved into the other column to join my grandfather...

Livia Meller-Ravek

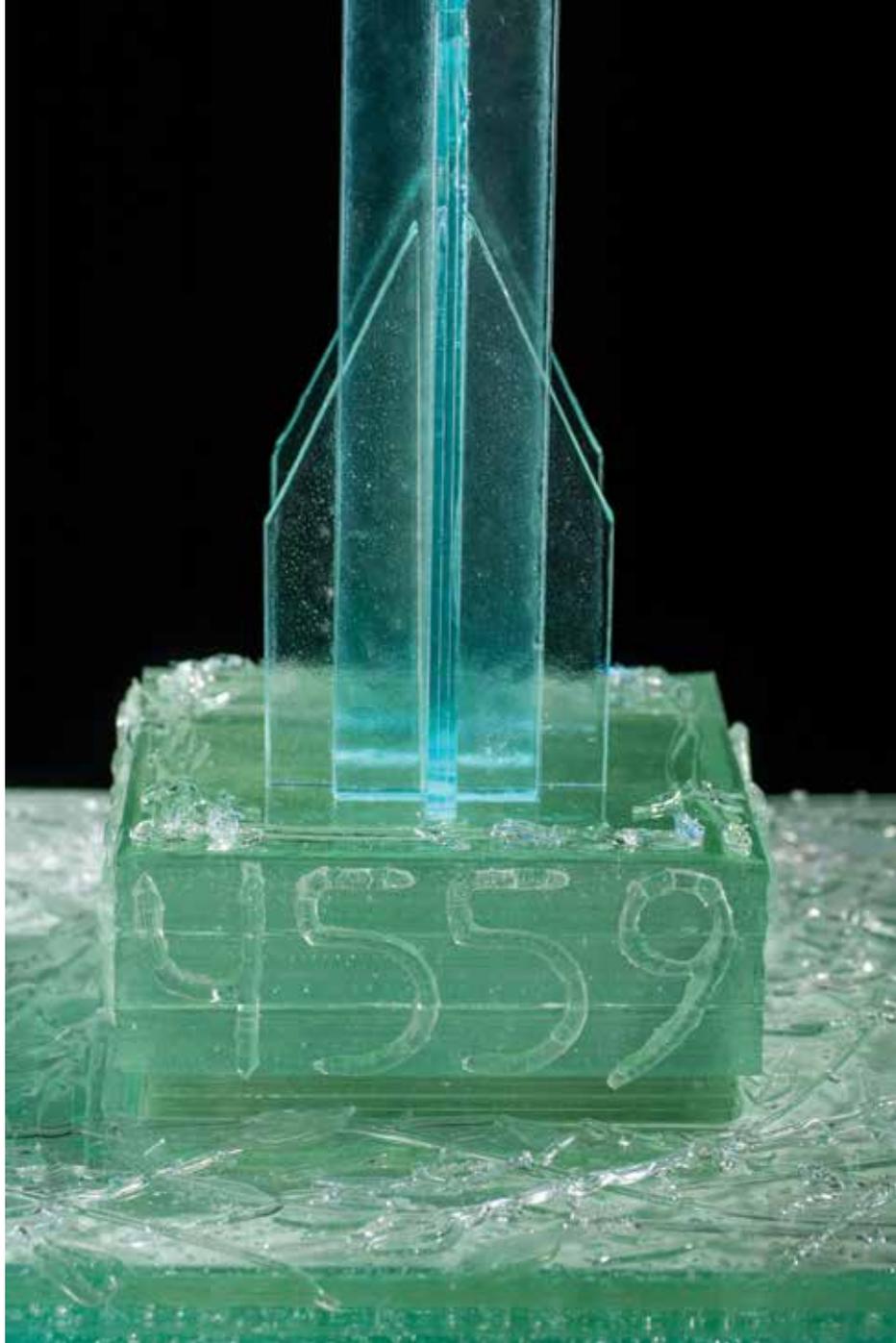


25

Livia, Cibi and Magda Meller in Vranov, Czechoslovakia, 1942
(taken one month prior to being taken and sent to Auschwitz.)

Oded and Pamela Ravek

Opposite: *The Miracle of the Three sisters*, 2013

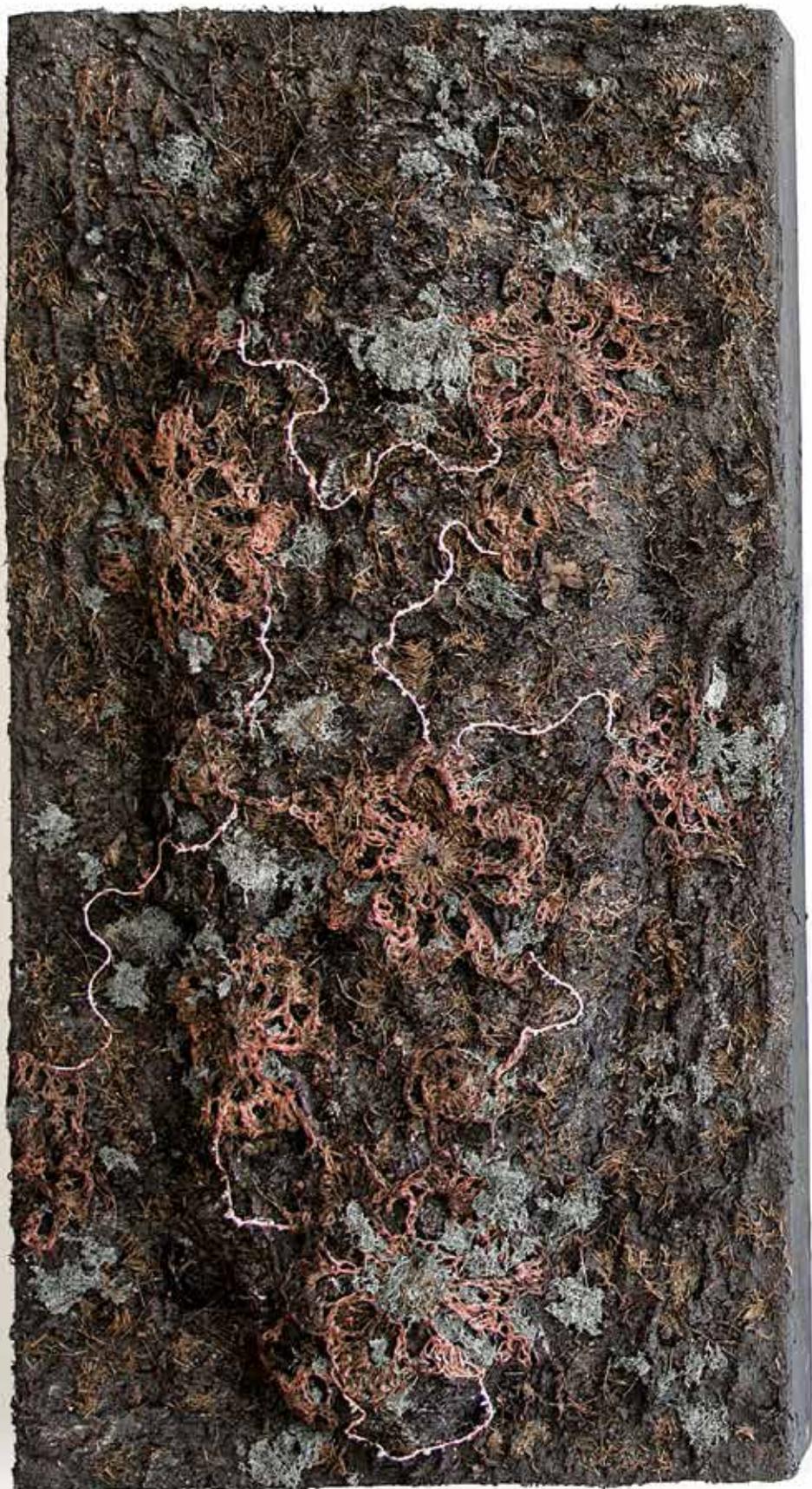




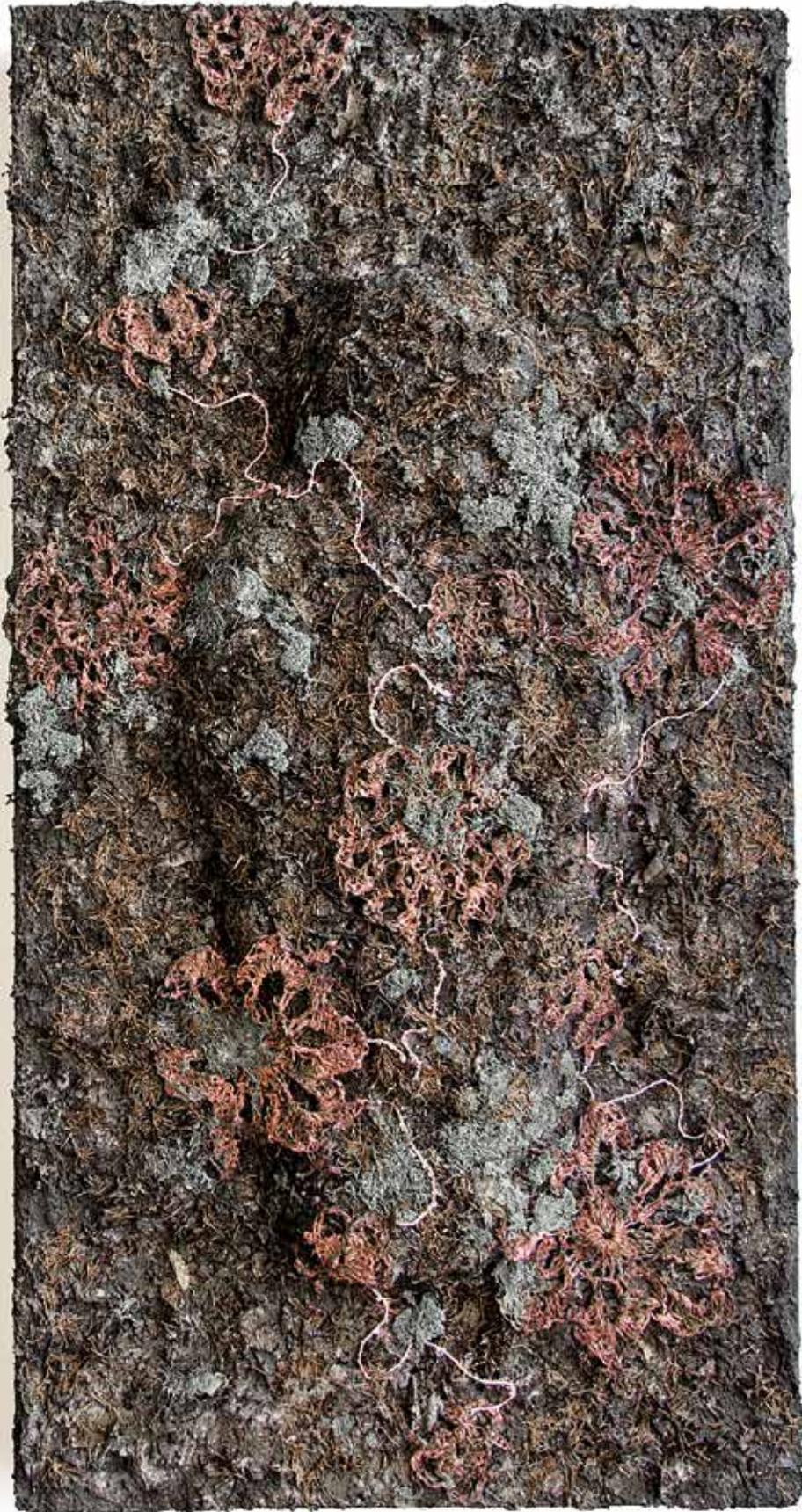
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Oded and Pamela Ravek
Details from *The Miracle of the Three sisters*, 2013



Tina Poplawski
Sleep, pretty darling do not cry (Mother), 2013



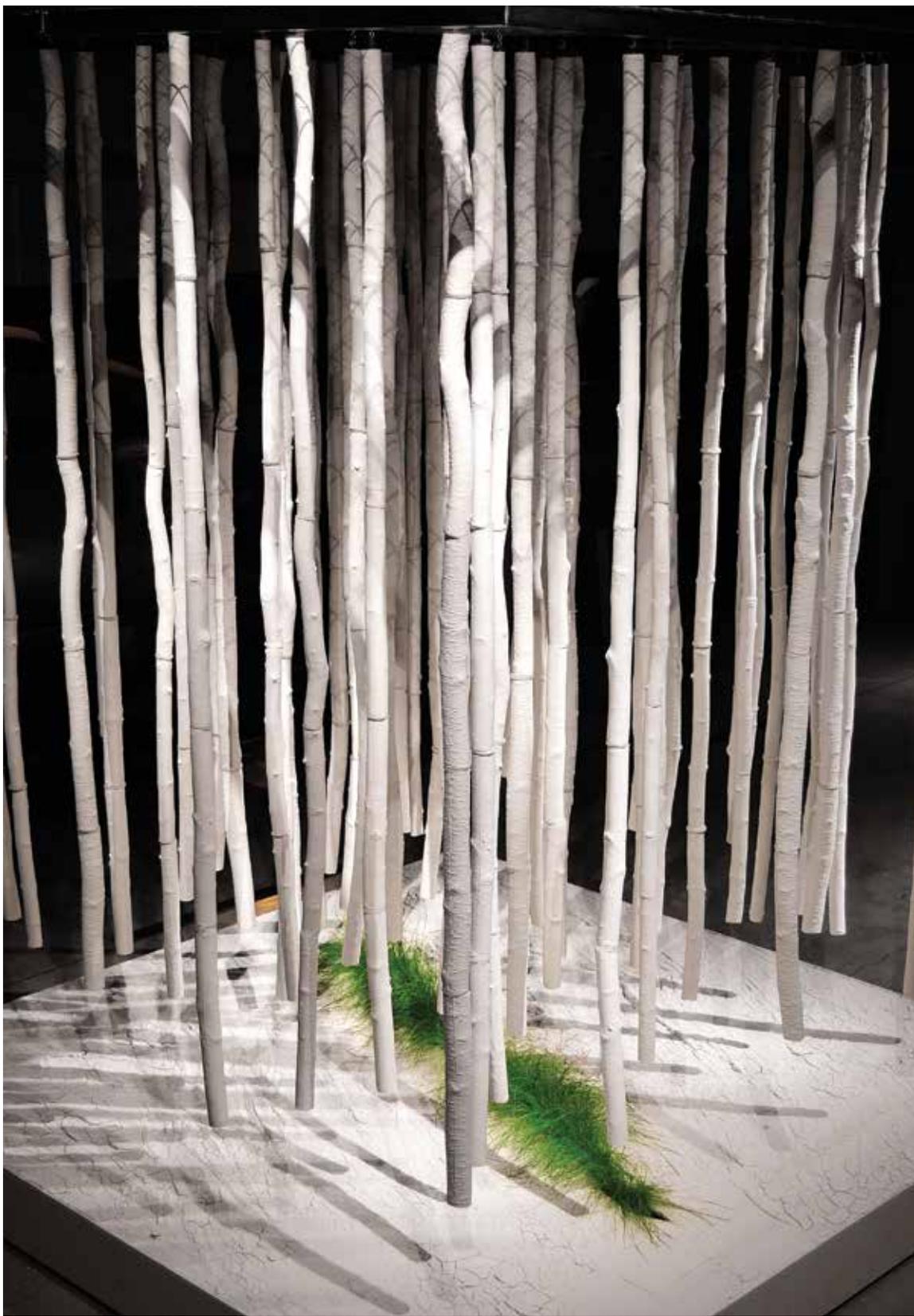
Tina Poplawski
Sleep, pretty darling do not cry (Child), 2013



I am a frayed and nibbled survivor in a fallen world, and I am getting along. I am aging and eaten and have done my share of eating too. I am not washed and beautiful, in control of a shining world in which everything fits, but instead I am wandering awed, on a splintered wreck I've come to care for, whose gnawed trees breathe a delicate air, whose bloodied and scarred creatures are my dearest companions, and whose beauty bats and shines not in its imperfections but overwhelmingly in spite of them...

Annie Dillard





Chari Cohen
Hanging Forest, 2013
(Detail opposite)





Chari Cohen
detail from *Hanging Forest*, 2013







Mary McKenzie
Departed, 2013



38



Mary McKenzie
details from *Departed*, 2013



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Mary McKenzie
details from *Departed*, 2013



Claire Weissman Wilks
left: *Totem*, 1993; right: *Vortex*, 1992







Claire Weissman Wilks
Have Broken My Body Like bread and Shared It Out Among Men (from the *Etty* series), 1984



Claire Weissman Wilks
Untitled, 2010, from the *Timeless Upon Time* series (2004-2010)



45

Claire Weissman Wilks
Untitled, 2010, from the *Timeless Upon Time* series (2004-2010)

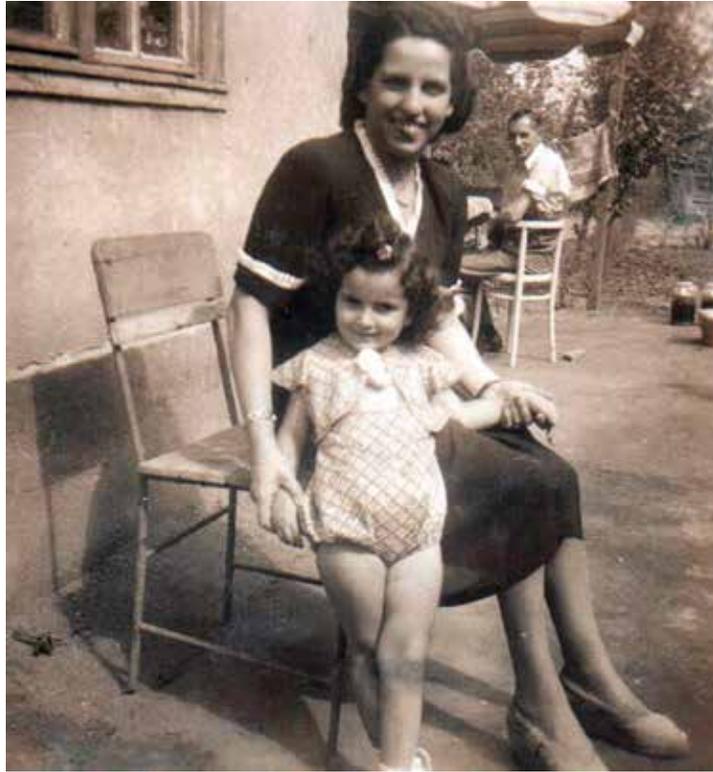












Mother (Mirjam) and Anna (born Panni Zenner), early 1944, Hungary.

52



Anna and Joe Mendel, with children and grandchildren, 2007.

Anna Mendel:

The Story of a Holocaust Survivor

Anna Mendel was born Panni Zenner in the early 1940s in Budapest, Hungary. Throughout the Second World War, Hungary aligned itself with the pro-Fascist powers (Germany, Italy and Spain). However, when Hitler discovered that Hungary had secretly engaged in peace negotiations with the Allies, Germany immediately occupied the country on March 19, 1944. Shortly thereafter, all of Hungary's Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps or murdered on site. While little Panni went unnoticed as she played quietly in the kitchen, her mother was dragged from their home and beaten in the street until dead. Her mother's sister, who had married a non-Jew, took Panni in for a couple of months but abandoned her when it became too dangerous to camouflage the sudden appearance of a young child from the watchful eyes of neighbours. At only four years old, Panni lived on the streets until she was eventually brought to an orphanage where she was later found after the war ended.

Panni's father, who had managed to elude capture, brought her to live with him, his new wife and her son. The little boy, who was troubled and had polio, would beat Panni and neither her father nor his wife would step in to protect her. Given what she had already lived through during the war, her aunt (father's sister) and her husband adopted Panni and lovingly brought her up as her own child, whereby her maiden name became Spiegel.

Living in post-war Communist Hungary brought its own set of problems. Her adopted father, whose work was considered valuable by the regime, could go nowhere without being accompanied by two guards. He began making secret arrangements to escape from Hungary, including spending a small fortune on fixing up their home to make it appear that they were there to stay. At one point, he managed to elude the guards and they all ended up in Paris. Panni changed her name to Annie, and when in 1953, they were finally able to move to Canada, she changed her name to Anna. Anna married Joe Mendel in the 1960s.

Anna and Joe Mendel have had a love affair with glass and its artists and have been visionary philanthropists in their support of the glass arts and Holocaust education. They recently donated over 100 significant Canadian and international glass works to the Montreal Museum of Fine Art. As well, they generously supported the making of Laura Donefer's installation, *Todesmärche Revisited: In Honour of Those Who Perished During the Death Marches*, on view in the Bierstock Gallery.



Paternal Grandparents.

54



Anna with mother's sister and her husband.



Nandor and Mirjam (Miriam) Zenner, Anna's parents.



Anna and Joe Mendel on their wedding day with Anna's adopted mother, Aunt Serena (Piri) Spiegel (father's sister) and her husband;



Torah curtain, c. 1840s, Hungary.



Grandmother's candlesticks; mother's prayer book and handkerchief.



What If?

Degenerate Art from the Permanent Collection

In this companion exhibition to *WAR: Light Within/ After the Darkness*, entitled *What If? 'Degenerate' Art from the Permanent Collection*, the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery explores the possibility of what might likely have happened had the Nazis won the war and their ideology had extended to North America. Included in this exhibition are works by Jewish and gay artists, Jeannot Blackburn, Judy Chicago, Laura Donefer, Léopold L. Foulem, Irene Frolic, Marilyn Levine, Richard Millette, Claire Salzberg and Jack Sures. These contemporary works would have most certainly been labelled as 'degenerate' based on the ethnic or sexual identities of their makers. Moreover, some of these same works would have also been banned in their own right due to their erotic playfulness or for their socio-political messages that would have been incompatible with the Nazi's obscene ideology and nefarious propaganda.

What If? 'Degenerate' Art from the Permanent Collection is predicated on the 1937 Nazi propagandist exhibition, Degenerate Art, in order to bring attention to the shocking loss of creative voices had North America lost these artists to Fascism. It also serves as a warning against the unenlightened influences of politically dogmatic and fundamentalist religious forces existing today. The original Degenerate Art exhibition opened at the Residenz Museum in Munich and drew over 3,000,000 visitors while it toured the country for four years. The exhibition included 650 works of art confiscated from 32 museums across the country. The Nazis' use of the term "degenerate," applied to all art that was incompatible with their ideology or propaganda. A term that virtually encompassed all of modern art, banned art movements included Bauhaus, Cubism, Dada, Expressionism, Impressionism and Surrealism. "What offended Hitler most deeply was art that aimed to show the artist's state of mind rather than mirroring an external

reality.”¹ In the Degenerate Art exhibition, Modernist works were placed next to drawings done by the mentally disabled and the physically challenged as a way of illustrating the Fascist notion of “diseased” and “Jewish-Bolshevist” inferiority. Meanwhile, visitors could view “good” and “healthy” “German art” in the Great German Art Exhibition, on view nearby.

At the heart of our exhibition, is a banner that memorializes over 60 well-known Jewish visual artists, writers, musicians, composers, theatrical performers, entertainers, impresarios and intellectuals, all of whom either died in, or while in transit to, concentration and extermination camps. While this list is incomplete, given the monumental task that would be required in order to research all of the artists murdered by the Nazis, it is nevertheless an extremely moving account of their lives, their contributions to humanity and of the abhorrent events that led to their deaths.

*Christian Bernard Singer,
Curator*

Notes

1 Fisher, Marc. *Half a century later, the paintings of Adolf Hitler are still a federal case: Part II*. Washington, DC: The Washington Post, April 21, 2002, p. W26.

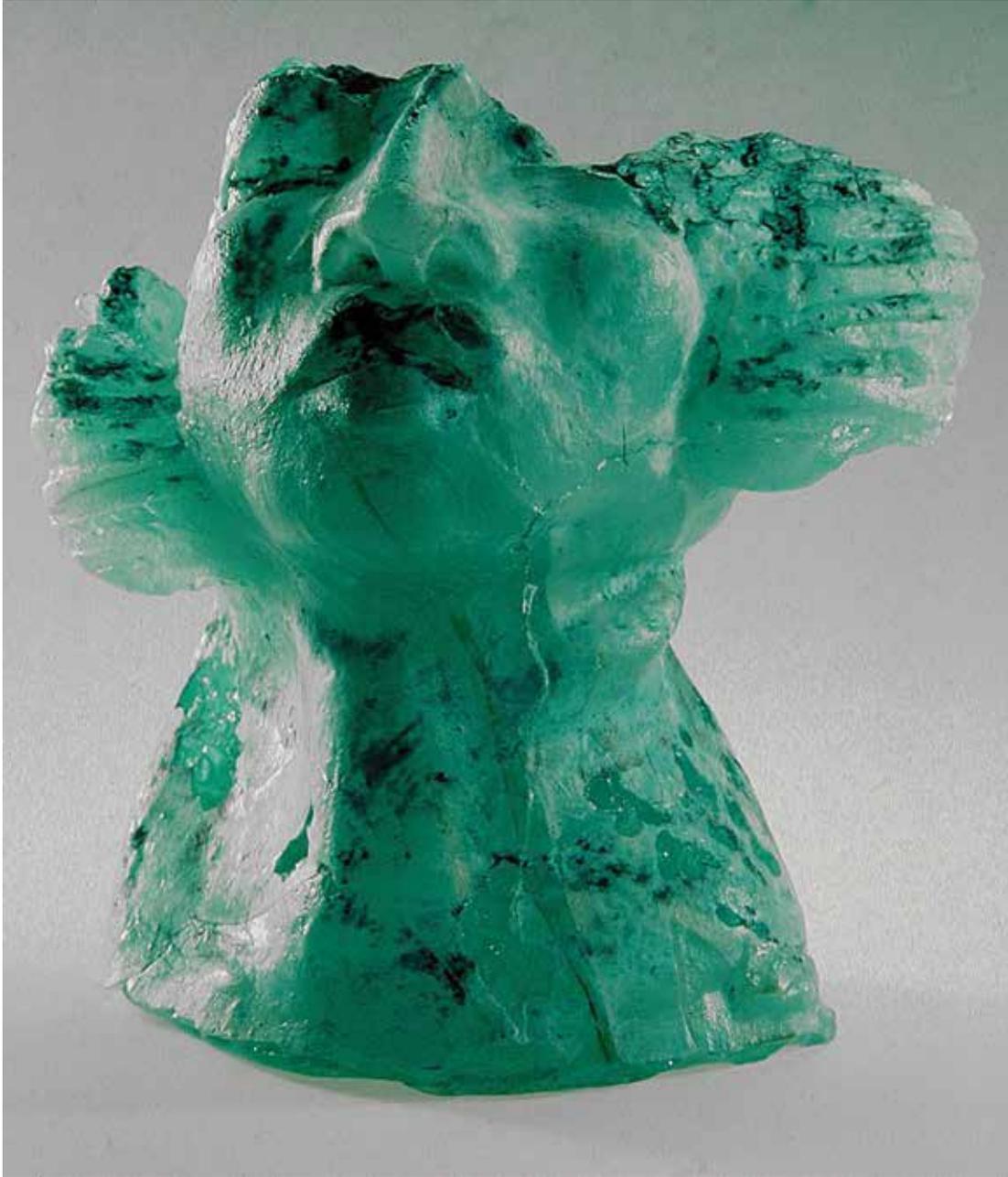




Jeannot Blackburn
Roses Orange, 1989







Irene Frolic
Untitled, c. 1980s



Jack Sures
Untitled, 1995



Judy Chicago
Twinned Veins, 2006

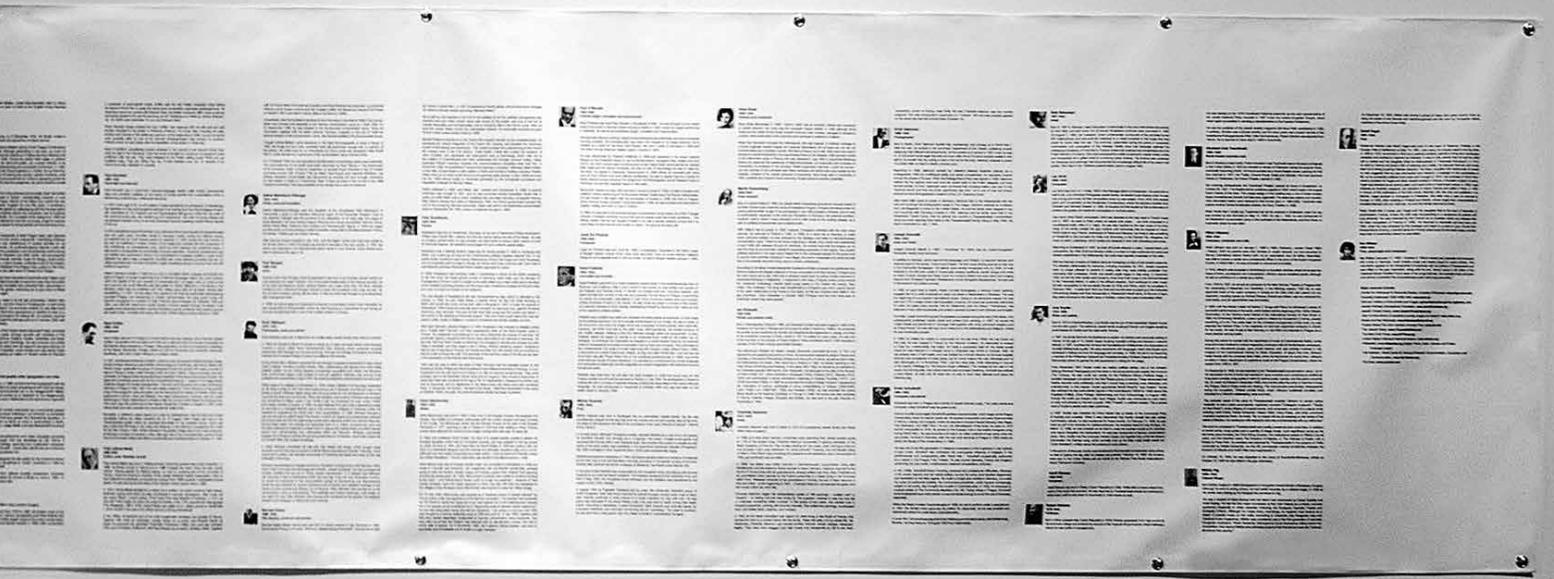


Marilyn Levine
Dufour Backpack, 1973

Jewish Cultural and Intellectual Life Destroyed by the Holocaust

This exhibit consists of a long, narrow wall panel divided into numerous vertical columns. Each column contains a small, square portrait of a person, followed by a block of text. The text appears to be biographical or historical information related to the individual depicted in the portrait. The portraits are arranged in a grid-like fashion across the entire length of the panel. The text is dense and appears to be in a smaller font size. The overall layout is organized and systematic, suggesting a comprehensive list of individuals whose cultural and intellectual contributions were lost during the Holocaust.





Jewish Cultural and Intellectual Life Destroyed by the Holocaust.

List of Illustrations

War: Light Within/After the Darkness

Laura Donefer

22, 23

Todesmärche Revisited: In Honour of Those Perished During the Death Marches, 2013

Sandcast glass footprints, earth cast plaster footprints, black paint and black earth
Dimensions variable

Oded and Pamela Ravek

24, 26, 27

The Miracle of the Three Sisters, 2013

Clear glass, Spectrum ice glass and iridescent cast glass, hot-worked, cut, fused and polished glass. Clear dichroic inclusions
29.5" x 20" x 22"

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Tina Poplawski

28

Sleep, pretty darling do not cry (Mother), 2013

Acrylic, botanical matter, jute, foam, Swarovski crystals on wood panel
93" x 75" x 6"

Tina Poplawski

29

Sleep, pretty darling do not cry (Child), 2013

Acrylic, botanical matter, jute, EPS foam, Swarovski crystals on wood panel
93" x 75" x 6"

Tina Poplawski

30, 31

Dreaming Tree, 2013

Fir tree, acrylic, crushed glass, Swarovski crystals, urethane casting resin, grandmother's doily
180" x 72" x 72"

- Chari Cohen** **32, 33, 34, 35**
Hanging Forest, 2013
 Ceramic, silicon, unfired clay, grass, earth, steel, wood.
 9' x 9' x 9'
- Mary McKenzie** **36–37, 38, 39**
Departed, 2013
 Ceramic, wood and found objects
 67.75" x 121" x 171"
- Claire Weissman Wilks** **40**
Vortex, 1992
 Brush and lithographic ink
 28" x 40"
- Claire Weissman Wilks** **40**
Totem (Ed. 3/10), 1993
 Bronze
 46.75" x 23.5" x 22.5"
- Claire Weissman Wilks** **41**
Untitled, 2008 from the *Out of the Cave* Series
 Monoprint
 18.5" x 24.5"
- Claire Weissman Wilks** **42-43**
Have Broken My body Like Bread and Shared It Out Among Men
 (from the ETTY Series), 1984.
 Conte crayon on paper
 119" x 25.5"
- Claire Weissman Wilks** **44**
Untitled, 2008 from the *Timeless Upon Time* Series (2004-2010)
 Unfired clay on glass
 20.5" x 8"

Claire Weissman Wilks **45**

Untitled from the *Timeless Upon Time* Series, 2010

Unfired clay on glass bottle
32.5" x 25.5"

Hélène Brunet Neuman **47, 48, 49**

CAUCUS: Émergence II, 2013

Clay, straw, wood and metal
Dimensions variable

What If? Degenerate Art from the Permanent Collection

 **Judy Chicago** **58**

Arcanum in Shades of Grey, 2000

Etching and enamel paint on 4 laminated glass panels
29.25" x 19.5" each
Installation size 36" x 32" x 50"

 **Laura Donefer** **61**

Witchpot, 1986

Blown glass with copper inclusions, sandblasted and embedded
8.75" x 6.25" x 6.25"

 **Jeannot Blackburn** **62**

Roses Orange, 1989

Porcelain
7" x 11.5"
Gift of Sarah Neaton in memory of the artist

 **Jeannot Blackburn** **63**

Untitled, c. 1980s

Porcelain
9.5" x 14.75" x 2.5"

- 
Léopold L. Foulem **64**
Banana Cup #2, 1979
 Wheel thrown with coiled and press-moulded additions, clear glaze and sil
 4" x 4.75" x 3.5"
- 
Irene Frolic **66**
Untitled, c. 1980s
 Kiln cast glass
 10.5" x 6" x 9"
 Gift of Winifred Shantz
- 
Jack Sures **67**
Untitled, 1995
 Thrown ceramic with scraffito and applied sculpture
 19" x 18" x 18"
- 
Judy Chicago **68**
Twinned Veins, 2006
 Cold work, glass paint on cast glass
 10" x 16" x 6"
- 
Marilyn Levine **69**
Dufour Backpack, 1973
 Slab-built stoneware and fibreglass with terra sigillata
 5.25" x 17.75" x 17.75"
 Gift of the Estate of Marilyn Levine
- Jewish Cultural and Intellectual Life Destroyed by the Holocaust.* **70-71**

Biographies

Hélène Brunet-Neumann

Chari Cohen

Laura Donefer

Mary McKenzie ⁷⁷

Tina Poplawski

Oded and Pamela Ravek

Claire Wiessman Wilks

Hélène Brunet Neumann

Artist and art critic, Hélène Brunet Neumann has also worked as a curator. She lived in India for six years where she learned about various printmaking techniques and studied visual art and art history at Visva-Bharati University. Upon her return to Quebec, she completed an MFA at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Also interested in digital imagery, she studied at the Graff Atelier and l'Atelier de l'Île, among others. She is particularly interested in contemporary art and the art of India. Her interdisciplinary artistic approach lies at the borders between painting and sculpture is steeped in her impressions of India and of the impact of her time spent there.

Chari Cohen

Chari Cohen studied fine art at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, received a Bachelor of Education from the University of Calgary and studied ceramics at Sheridan College. Her exhibition credits include numerous juried exhibitions such as the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, two travelling Fusion Fireworks exhibitions and the Mississauga Living Arts Centre. She has also exhibited her work at the Propeller Gallery, John B. Aird Gallery, York Quay at Harbourfront, and the Hamilton Art Gallery and her work is in the permanent collection of the Burlington Art Centre.

Laura Donefer

Over the decades, Laura Donefer has used glass to explore memory, sexual assault, inequality, bereavement, joy, hope and madness. In series such as, *From the Core*, *Bereft*, *Private Stigmata*, *Shields for the Millennium*, *Earthangels*, and *Shields to Ward off Madness*, she has multiplied conceptual layerings by adding diverse materials. She is perhaps best known for her *Witch Pots*, blown glass baskets with bones as handles and her more recent *Amulet Baskets*, initiated after September 11, 2001.

Laura Donefer has been working with glass since 1982, and is an internationally recognized artist and educator. A graduate of the Glass Program at Sheridan College School of Craft and Design, she has taught there, and has been on the faculty at Espace VERRE in Montreal for over 25 years. Her teaching has taken her to Sydney College of the Arts in Australia, the University of Honolulu in Hawaii, and the University of Tulane in New Orleans, to name but a few. She also teaches regularly at Pilchuck Glass School, Penland School of

Craft, Red Deer College, and the Corning School of Glass. She is on the International Council of Pilchuck, and is a former Board Member of the Glass Art Society. Laura is an ex-President of the Glass Art Association of Canada, as well as a former editor of the Glass Gazette. Her work has been exhibited worldwide, including recent exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts in Shanghai, China, and the Museum of Glass in Monterrey, New Mexico. Her work is part of many important private and public collections.

Mary McKenzie

Mary McKenzie is a Toronto based artist who received a BFA from the University of Alberta and graduated from Sheridan College's Ceramics Program. In 2002, she was Short-listed for the RBC New Painter award for Central Canada and has exhibited her work shown locally, nationally and as far away as Norway, Austria and Korea. Her work is part of several collections including the Raphael Yu / Gardiner Museum Collection.

Tina Poplawski

Tina Poplawski received her visual arts education at York University and the New School of Art. She has been a faculty member of the Toronto School of Art since 1998 and has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Ontario, Quebec and New York. Her work is found in numerous collections in Canada, the United States and Europe. She is the recipient of many awards, including numerous Ontario Art Council Grants.

Oded and Pamela Ravek

Oded and Pamela Ravek's sculptural and architectural glass have been part of exhibitions at the National Gallery of Canada, the Glass Art Museum (Arad, Israel) and Glazen Huis (Lommel, Belgium). Their numerous commissions include the Beth Israel Synagogue in Kingston, the Wellness Spa Resort in Turks & Caicos, the QUAD Arts District in Ottawa and their *Memorial Light Sculpture* for the Soloway Jewish Community Centre in Ottawa that was commissioned by the Ottawa Shoah Committee and featured on *The Current* (CBC) and received other mainstream media coverage. Their work has also been featured in the

GAAC Magazine for Contemporary Canadian Glass and was included in the Corning Museum's Rakow Library Catalogue Collection. Their work is held in the Prime Minister's Residence (Permanent Crown Collection), the Museum of Glass Art (Arad, Israel) and private and corporate collections in Canada, the United States, China, Turks & Caicos and Israel.

Claire Weissman Wilks

Claire Weissman Wilks has published several books as well as pursuing a career in painting, drawing and sculpture, showing her work in Canada, the US, Mexico and Europe. During the 1970s her erotic images of women were rarely accepted for showing in conservative Toronto galleries, so she sought other means to show them, such as book publishing and illustration. Her books include: *Two of Us Together: Each of Us Alone* (1982), a compilation of erotic drawings exploring the nature of human sexuality and love; *I Know Not Why the Roses Bloom* (1986), a collection of lithographs and sculpture inspired by the diaries of Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jew who died in the 1940s at Auschwitz; and *Hillmother* (1983), a series of drawings on birth and the relationship between mother and children. While her Lithuanian heritage was not an emphasis in her upbringing, Wilks feels that the connection to Eastern Europe has constantly affected her work, particularly a preoccupation with the Second World War. In her sculptures and drawings of women and sexuality, such as the series *Tremors* (1989), there is an underlying empathy with the life of women in concentration camps, and a need to reinvest that life with the sexuality and sensuality that is denied in most Holocaust imagery. Even in her images of mothers and children, she is in part attempting to give life back to the great number of children whose lives were lost during the war. Wilks has also illustrated books, including John Montague's *The Love Poems* (1992) and D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1991), and in 1979 published her own book, *The Magic Box: The Eccentric Genius of Hannah Maynard*, photographer. Wilks for many years was visual researcher for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, work for which she has been awarded an Emmy in 1978 and 1980, the Art Director's Award in 1981, and an Oscar in 1982 for the documentary, *Just Another Missing Kid*.

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