

"...a very profound exhibition..."

Shadows of Shoah

A UNIQUE MULTIDISCIPLINARY HOLOCAUST EXHIBITION

Wellington

Wellington
WATERFRONT

Remember, Reflect, Respond and Resolve formula

REMEMBER:

The first part of learning about the Holocaust is the importance remembrance itself.

As we remember the six million Jewish victims of the Shoah – defamed, demonized and dehumanized – we have to understand that the mass murder of six million Jews and millions of non-Jews is not a matter of abstract statistics.

Today we will encounter just a few of those stories of people who survived the Holocaust, when you view the exhibition. As you view these stories you need to be aware that each story is unique and does not sum up the experience of the Holocaust entirely. Rather, this exhibition provides us some insight into the atrocities that occurred as well as stories of kindness and humanity.

By viewing this exhibition, we are beginning the process of remembering and acknowledging what has happened.

What do you expect to see, hear, feel when you view this exhibition?



- Remember to be respectful when viewing the exhibition.
- If you are overwhelmed by the exhibition let a teacher, an adult, or myself know – and you can return to the conference room with supervision.
- As you view the exhibition try and take in as much information as possible i.e. the tone of music, how the survivors have been filmed, how the exhibition has been displayed, the type of stories told.



Kitia Altman, Born Bedzin, Poland

Before being sent to Auschwitz I spent time in a labour camp.
Food was scarce but we were able to wash and wear our own clothes.
There were even moments of kindness.

A German supervisor would leave things in my locker...
...a piece of bread, half an apple, a small piece of soap.
Another German supervisor employed three thousand Jews in his factory.
He was able to delay the day of their deportation.
Eventually he was arrested and hanged by the Gestapo.

Things changed so violently when we arrived at Auschwitz.
We were modest middle class girls. We had to strip naked in view of men.
Our hair was hacked away. We were stripped physically, emotionally, spiritually.
We soon looked so grotesque we couldn't recognize each other.

The Nazis developed an elaborate system of dehumanisation.
Hunger, torture, loss, humiliation.
It revealed the human capacity to do evil to another human being.
I saw a woman wrench a blanket from her own sister, saying "I must survive".
Auschwitz did not change people.
It revealed what was hidden deep inside.

Were the German supervisors in the labour camp (mentioned by Kitia) helpers, perpetrators, collaborators or bystanders?

A consequence of helping the Jews could lead to a death sentence. Do you think this led to some Germans being forced to make a choice, which they may have usually been opposed to?

Moshe Orgad, Born 11 August 1933, Belgrade, Serbia

In April 1941 the Germans bombed Belgrade.

Our home was destroyed and Mother decided we must run away.

I remember Grandfather saying to her, “Why run away?”

“The Germans have Beethoven, Goethe, Brahms...”

“They can’t be bad people.”

“Why run away?”

But Mother knew. She understood.

I went to live with Serbians whose daughters had worked for our family.

One of the sons of the family was killed.

It was then that Sava, the old man of the family, decided we would join the Partisans.

Sava became a father to me.

He was old but he was very strong.

The Partisans walked 400 kilometres through snow, from Serbia to Bosnia.

Sava carried me all the way on his back, wrapped in a bear skin.

The Partisans would ambush the Germans, wherever they went.

In all of Europe, only the Partisan’s area remained free.

We lived in the forests and moved frequently.

I remember once saying to Sava, “Why are those people sleeping in the snow.”

“Milani,” he said, “they are not sleeping...”

“...they are dead.”

**Were the Serbians who helped Moshe
helpers, perpetrators, collaborators, or
bystanders?**

**How Could This Happen?
Moshe’s grandfather did not think
they had to run away, why?**

Roald Hoffmann, Born July 18, 1937, Złoczów, Poland

Shortly after the Germans occupied our town our family was placed in a labour camp. Being an engineer my father was valuable to the Germans. He had a special role in the camp.

In 1943 my father found a Ukrainian willing to hide my mother and me. Father stayed behind in the camp. He was part of a group planning a breakout. Mother's brother was a Partisan. He supplied weapons to smuggle into the camp. Father was betrayed. He and the other leaders were arrested, tortured and shot.

Mother poured out her grief in father's notebook. It was a book in which father had been keeping notes on relativity. To this day this is one of my most precious possessions. For 15 months mother and I lived in a very cramped hiding place. She taught me to read and occupied me with endless geography games. Outside there was great danger. Mother cocooned me with love. I felt safe.

How has the Holocaust impacted my life?
In those days we had to suppress our emotions.
Even now I have difficulty expressing emotion.
Perhaps that's why I write poetry.
And to this day I have a fear of people in uniform.
Even waiters or doormen.

How is Roald affected today by the Holocaust?

Do you think the Ukrainian who hid Roald and his mother was a helper, perpetrator, bystander or a collaborator?

Robert Narev, Born 1935, Eschwege, Germany

My birth coincided with the passing of the Nuremberg Laws.

The Nuremberg Laws were a milestone in the isolation and persecution of the Jews.

Within a year my father lost his job as a teacher.

Life became increasingly difficult.

From 1941, German Jews were forced to wear a yellow star.

Those failing to do so were sometimes shot.

In 1942 my family was deported to Theresienstadt, a camp in Czechoslovakia.

One of my grandmothers died within a few days.

Soon after my father became ill and died.

Theresienstadt was a transit camp.

Jews were gathered there and then shipped to Auschwitz for extermination.

There were 40,000 Jews in a town designated for 3,000 persons.

In 1944 Theresienstadt was used for propaganda to dispel rumours about the murder of Jews.

Areas of Theresienstadt were beautified for a Red Cross visit.

After the Red Cross visit conditions reverted.

The transports to the death camps continued.

Three months before the war ended the Nazis called for volunteers to go to Switzerland.

Luckily for me it was not just another Nazi ruse.

Fifteen thousand children passed through Theresienstadt.

About ninety percent perished.

How were the Jews discriminated against?

How did the Nazis use propaganda to further their agenda?

REFLECT:

How did you feel about showing your emotion during the exhibition?

How did you think the participants in the exhibition felt about showing their emotion?

What is the impact of just seeing their faces and upper bodies?

What did these stories portray?

Which stories affected you the most?



Shadows of Shoah is an artistic and educational project. Using photography and original music, the exhibition includes the stories of survivors who came to New Zealand.

Artist statement:

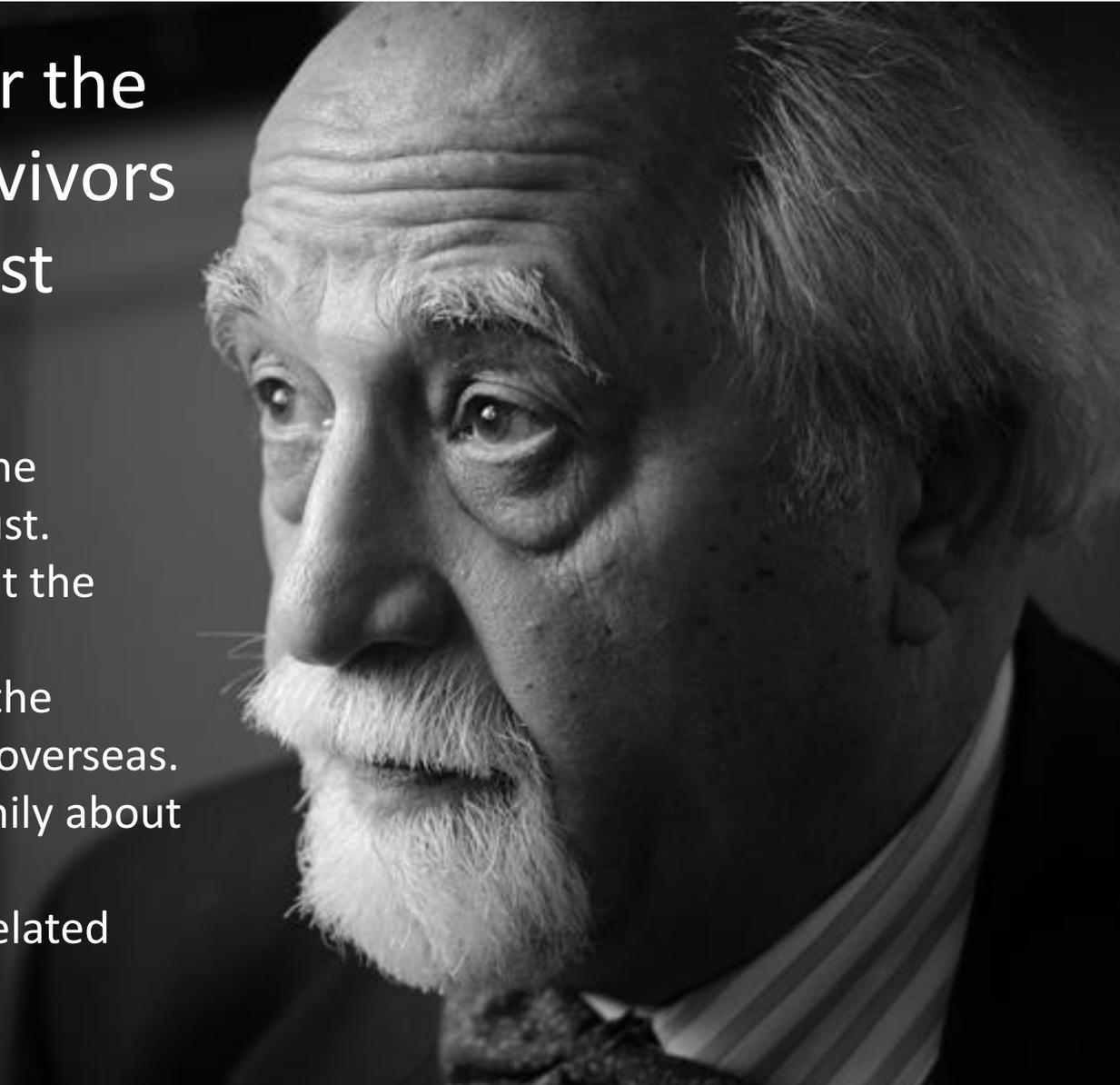
The Shoah (or Holocaust) is one of the most documented events in all of human history. The peculiar phenomenon of Holocaust denial is one among many reasons the ongoing work of documentation is essential. And yet, for all the work that is done, all the evidence that is gathered, all the documentation that is amassed, there is something, it seems to this outsider, that is often neglected. It is the human face, the pathos of this event that is too quickly passed over. It is the shadow that the Shoah casts upon Jewish people, and, for reasons that become apparent when the events of the last two millennia are considered, the shadow that this event casts upon a great many non-Jews. The sheer magnitude of corporate destruction somehow serves to deflect the onlooker's attention from an unfathomable personal toll. When one speaks of a thousand, a million, six million, the personal experience of the individual son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father, is too readily subsumed in the statistic. I am not Jewish. Thus, as an artist, I approach the Shoah as an outsider, and in some sense, almost as an intruder. In my rendition I must tread carefully, respectfully, and ensure that the survivor's account is faithfully conveyed. From interviews typically ninety minutes duration, a mere fifteen to twenty lines of text have been distilled. These have been combined with black and white portraits and music. Seven three minute stories are told. The first appears immediately to one's right upon entering the exhibition. The enclosure is dark. The visual and auditory immersion combine to create, I hope, a sense of the sacred. I have attempted to create something beautiful out of material that exposes and confronts something within the human condition that is grotesque. Minimalism - visually, textually and musically - leaves room for the viewer to grapple with the incomprehensible.

Perry Trotter

RESPOND:

How do we honour the stories of these survivors that we have just viewed?

- Create art in response to the exhibition and the Holocaust.
- Read and study more about the subject.
- Visit sites associated with the Holocaust when travelling overseas.
- Speak with friends and family about what you have learned.
- Watch documentaries or related films about the subject.



Ekphrastic Poetry: The Poetry of Empathy

Poetry written in response to great works of art.

By definition, ekphrastic poetry requires the viewer/poet to “enter into” the spirit and feeling of the subject of the art work through a variety of poetic stances: describing, noting, reflecting, or addressing.

- If you could speak to one of the participants from the exhibition, what would you say?
- If you could speak to anyone referred to in the exhibition (parents of the survivors, bystanders, Nazi officers, etc), what would you say?
- If you could imagine any of the subjects speaking to you, what do you think they would say?

Write a poem reflecting on your viewing of this exhibition. You may reread your wonder questions and reflections to help you get started.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

Written by William Carlos Williams.

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring
a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry
of the year was
awake tingling
with itself
sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings' wax
unsignificantly
off the coast
there was
a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning.



Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

Originally thought to be painted by Pieter Bruegel, now seen as a good early copy of Bruegel's original painted in the 1560s .
(About over 400 years old)!

RESOLVE:

- To settle or find a solution .
- To decide firmly on a course of action.

Why is it important to learn about the Holocaust?

What can remembering the Holocaust achieve for us today?



Australia

Sir Ronald Wilson was once the president of Australia's Human Rights Commission. He stated that Australia's program in which 20-25,000 Aboriginal children were forcibly separated from their natural families was genocide, because it was intended to cause the Aboriginal people to die out. The program ran from 1900 to 1969. The nature and extent of the removals have been disputed within Australia, with opponents questioning the findings contained in the Commission report.

Hutu

In the early 1990s, Hutu extremists within Rwanda's political elite blamed the entire Tutsi minority population for the country's increasing social, economic, and political pressures. In 2010 a report accused Rwanda's Tutsi-led army of committing genocide against ethnic Hutus. The report accused the Rwandan Army and allied Congolese rebels of killing tens of thousands of ethnic Hutu refugees from Rwanda and locals in systematic attacks between 1996 and 1997. The government of Rwanda rejected the accusation.



Any further questions or comments?



Thank you for visiting Shadows of Shoah and the Lakes District Museum & Gallery.