

Eight Holocaust Survivors and one spouse, a Holocaust Centre docent, and nine young artists between the ages of 14 and 84 responded to archival photographs of Willy Fick's destroyed works. Diverse in age, culture and experiences, the feelings these individuals expressed in word and image, connect the past to the present. Their shared experiences around Willy Fick's foreboding visions, guide us towards our own interpretations of life during the Nazi era.

The Art of Dissent



Natalie Austin (18) graduated from Henry Street High School as an Ontario Scholar. Her art work was recently displayed in a Durham art gallery as part of the *Art Smarts* program. "From Willy Fick's works, I took the sense of danger and loss of control and applied it to my own photograph."

Esther Bem (78) was raised in Zagreb, Croatia. Two older sisters joined Tito's underground resistance army in 1941. Sister Jelka, caught in 1942, was executed. Her other sister was cited for bravery and became an officer. Esther and her parents survived by hiding in Italy, aided by poor farmers in the mountains. Esther and her family arrived in Canada in 1966.

Karen Brown (24), a dual Canadian/Israeli citizen, is an illustration student at Sheridan College. Willy Fick's archival photographs moved her away from her usual artistic style. "Fick's work inspired a lot of emotion for me concerning the suffering of that time and the scars that suffering still leaves today. My pieces record that emotional response."

Judy Cohen (80), born in Debrecen, Hungary, was the youngest of seven siblings. She survived concentration and labour camps. Her parents and most of her family were murdered by the Nazis. Deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, she subsequently survived Bergen-Belsen, the slave labour camp in Ascherleben, and a death march. She came to Canada in 1948.

Danielle Crosby (25) attends Sheridan College and works for a toy company. She won the "Best Drawing Award" in the Oshawa Art Association Juried Show in 2007. "In Fick's works, I saw the deconstruction and dehumanization of the individual. In response, my pieces include distortion of the human form."

Gerda Frieberg, born in Upper Silesia, was deported to Jaworzno, Poland in 1940 with her mother and sister. Her father was taken away. On Passover in 1942, the three women were sent to the Oberaltstadt Concentration Camp. They were slave workers in a spinning mill under very harsh conditions until finally liberated on May 9, 1945 by the Soviet Army. Of 172 extended family members, only Gerda, her mother and sister survived. In Toronto since 1953, Gerda's active Holocaust Education work has taken her across Canada and into schools in the US and Germany.

Arnold Friedman (80), born in Chudlovo, Czechoslovakia, was deported to Auschwitz in 1944. He survived a January 1945 death march to the Gross Rosen and Dachau Concentration Camps. Liberated by the US Army, he was brought to Canada as a war orphan in 1947. Arnold's mother, father and younger brother were murdered in Auschwitz - Birkenau.

Herb Goldstein (84) was born in Stanislawow, Poland. He survived as a refugee student in the UK. Herb's family moved to Germany in 1926. Herb witnessed the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938. He managed to find refuge in the UK, eventually joining the British Royal Navy. He came to Canada in 1947.

Sheba Goldstein (84) was born in Montreal, Canada. She was a teacher for 16 years. She also did volunteer work at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre where she received her docent training. After moving to Toronto in 1997, she followed up on her six years as docent in Montreal, by volunteering at the Holocaust Centre of Toronto. She also spent a number of years as a Gallery Interpreter at the ROM. Sheba is married to Herb Goldstein. They had two daughters and four grandchildren. Although Sheba is not a Holocaust Survivor, she participated fully in the Survivor workshop with her husband Herb.

Ariel Nacson (21) is about to enter his third semester at Yeshiva University. Ariel's academic performance and excellence in Jewish Studies led to the honour of being valedictory speaker for his high school class. "The hopelessness and confusion in Fick's works made me question the concentration camp slogan, [*Arbeit Macht Frei* | Work Makes You Free]."

Melle Onyschuk (23), an illustrator, creative director and Toronto resident, earned her degree in Fine Arts at Central Wyoming College. "Fick's work evoked in me a feeling of unrest and detachment. My work portrayed the dehumanization process, the feeling of not knowing exactly what you are looking at, not knowing what to compare experience to, being unsure of what you are."



Victoria Ruznak (18), or "Tori", graduated from Henry St. High School. She's been taking photographs for her personal interest for five years and is looking to get into Photography/Digital Arts in the future. "I saw many doomed individuals in Willy Fick's works. This led me to create a portrait of a group, as a mass, of these lost individuals."

Samuel Shene (72) was born in France. His family life with three siblings was comfortable until 1942, when the Vichy government and the Nazis began to deport Jews. His mother and father were murdered in Nazi camps. His sisters were protected by the Salvation Army. His baby brother was murdered before he turned five. Samuel survived by hiding with different farmers. He was reunited with his sisters after the war. Samuel lived in Israel before moving to Montreal in 1955.

Vera Schiff (82), born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, was deported to Theresienstadt in 1942. Vera survived three years in the camp while members of her family died around her. After liberation by the Soviet Red Army in May 1945, she lived for 12 years in Israel before coming to Canada in 1961. Her book, *Theresienstadt - the Town the Nazis Gave to the Jews*, tells her story.

Jeff Sun (14) goes to St. Roberts Catholic High School. "I had decided to have my picture made with black and white in order to represent conflicts of opposites such as good and evil or luxury and suffering. However, due to the way that I saw the original picture, I had many places in which the shade was neither white nor black as I wanted to present how in any case not everything is completely one or the other."

Jessica Tsang (14) was born in Canada and is of Chinese heritage. Currently a student in the Unionville High School *Arts York* Program, Jessica was a Junior Division winner in the Toronto Holocaust Education Centre's 2008 provincial student arts/writing contest which had the theme "Remember the Children". "Willy Fick's works tell many stories of the dread and the horrors of the Holocaust. Many thoughts are portrayed in every perspective of his drastic and moving pictures, and with that, many people may be inspired."

Leonard Vis (78), born in the Netherlands, survived the Holocaust as a child in hiding in Holland. While a teenager, he was betrayed and arrested. He escaped from a transport and went into hiding again until liberation. After stints in the Dutch and US Army, he emigrated to Canada in 1967.

Alexis Wagner (16) is in grade 11 at Centennial C.V.I. in Guelph, Ontario. She is an avid athlete always willing to try a new sport. She's been playing field hockey, provincially, for *Team Ontario* for three years. "A common thread which I believe ties Willy Fick's works, is the use of hard lines in the architecture and checkerboards. In both my interpretations I tried to incorporate hard, cold lines that contrast with soft human emotion."

Gershon Israel Willinger (66) was born in Amsterdam, Holland to Jewish parents. He was orphaned as a one year old when his parents were murdered in Sobibor. Even though he was placed in hiding, at age two he was sent on a child transport to Bergen-Belsen and then later transported to Theresienstadt where he was liberated at the age of three. He emigrated to Canada with his wife and three children in 1977.