

ART OF DISSSENT



Holocaust Centre of Toronto

The Art of Dissent Package for Educators

The exhibition and catalogue for *The Art of Dissent* originated with paintings that Cologne artist Willy Fick created during the dark times of the Nazi rise to power. Although the paintings were destroyed in the bombings and resulting fires in Cologne in 1944, archival photographs remained as witness to the metaphorical world Fick had created to show his dissent at a time when dissent was difficult.

As grandniece of the artist Willy Fick, I wanted to bring these lost works back into the modern discourse about the role the arts play in society. Thanks to Jennifer Ritter, the Executive Director of the Holocaust Centre of Toronto, I was able to work with Holocaust survivors and young people, to carry out the idea of multi-layered reflections on Fick's work.

The Holocaust survivors brought the past and present together in their thoughtful responses which provide signage for the exhibition. The young peoples' artistic responses to Fick's work brought the present and future into the project. Together they show how important it is to continue to forge new access points for the study of the Holocaust.

The Art of Dissent exhibition and catalogue

The triads in the exhibition group a Fick archival photograph, words of response from Holocaust survivors and visual work by a young person. Original paintings by Fick are included to provide a sense of the palette he used in the works which were destroyed.

The 18 respondents were diverse in age and cultural background demonstrating that pondering Fick's works in an educational setting leads to deeply felt engagement. The triads invite verbal and visual responses from all viewers.

The two essays in the catalogue provide contextual information for Willy Fick and the time period in which Fick created his own metaphoric language to express the Nazi atmosphere of apprehension.

Images

Images of Fick's works and those of the young artists are available:

- in the Package for Educators;
- on the website(s) www.angelittlefield.com; and
- in the catalogue.

They may be reproduced for educational purposes only. Permission to use the images in any other than an educational context must be obtained from Angelika Littlefield (angie.littlefield@yahoo.ca).

Fact Sheets

The three fact sheets provide quick context for the historical period featured in *The Art of Dissent*. They include prompts to start student discussion.

Fact Sheet 1933 focuses on the year that Hitler and the Nazis took power. The staccato passage of laws that were enacted in such a short time period in 1933 says a great deal about how watchful one has to be to protect democracy.

Fact Sheet 1935 focuses on the Nuremberg Race Laws and the 'legal' stripping of rights from those the Nazis categorized as Jewish and *Mischlinge* (those of Jewish and non-Jewish heritage). It shows the tremendous scope of the laws that made the unthinkable possible.

The Fact Sheet – Cultural Scene up to 1937 shows the groundwork that the Nazis established to control art and the media and to use them for their own purposes.

Lessons

There are twelve lessons, one for each of Fick's images. The lessons, which have five parts, may be used before or after student visits to the exhibition or as lessons to complement Ontario Ministry of Education outcomes in Arts, History, Civics, Media, or English.*

Themes – The listing of themes is a guide and not comprehensive. Educators, with the help of students, might wish to add additional themes after having worked through a lesson.

Before the Viewing – The pre-viewing questions build readiness by introducing ideas; they relate what the students will see to things they already know.

Discussion – These questions focus the students on specific things within Fick's painting. They are meant to sharpen viewing/analytical skills and to focus students on viewpoint.

Activities – The activities are predominantly visual art and language arts related.

Extensions – The extensions are for independent studies and/or for students who require a challenge. Although the main focus is literature, art, media and history there are extensions that relate to science and music.

Case Studies

The four Case Studies provide information on people connected to the Cologne arts scene who were persecuted because they were Jewish. The two men and two women were selected as they include an artist, photographer, art historian and musician. The Case Studies provide context but they may also be used to inspire further study.

Ilse Salberg and Anton Raederscheidt – This case study raises the issue of the Nazi policy around what they deemed to be 'mixed' marriages. Anton was an artist; Ilse was an accomplished photographer.

Erwin Schulhoff – Although Erwin had only limited contact with Willy Fick and the Cologne arts scene, his Case Study raises the issue of the Nazi attempt to control music.

Dr. Luise (Lou) Straus-Ernst was an independent art historian, who like Ilse Salberg and her family sought refuge in France. Her Case Study raises the

issue of the problems associated with trying to get out of Europe.

Otto Freundlich was a close friend of Willy Fick. The Case Studies of both Schulhof and Freundlich show how they were "thrice damned"—for their religion, their politics and their art.

Educator Response

Willy Fick's destroyed art works were his response to the emotional impact of tyranny. *The Art of Dissent* contains the responses of 18 individuals to Fick's work.

We are interested in YOUR and YOUR STUDENTS' visual and written responses.

Please forward to: angie.littlefield@yahoo.ca
or rlibman@ujafed.org

Please ask students to provide consent for use of their images or responses in the event that they might be used on the websites or in any future articles about *The Art of Dissent*.

*There will be separate sheets on Ontario Ministry of Education outcomes on the website angielittlefield.com.