

Artists of the Holocaust

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

April, 2011

Expected Date of Graduation

May, 2011

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Abstract

It is without question that the Holocaust is one of the most horrific events of the twentieth century. While it might be difficult and emotional to think about such a terrible time in history, it is imperative that we do not forget. We must remember for the sake of preventing something like this from happening again. Memory is becoming more and more difficult as the years go by—those who witnessed the atrocities of the Holocaust and of the Nazi regime are getting fewer and fewer. It is becoming increasingly important that the survivors' stories get passed on before it is too late. One way in which this can be done is through artwork. I have examined four individuals and/or groups who were directly or indirectly affected by the Holocaust. These four individuals or groups are Alfred Kantor (Holocaust survivor), the children of Theresienstadt concentration camp, Art Spiegelman (second-generation Holocaust survivor), and Kathe Kollwitz (a German woman whose art was banned by the Nazi regime). I have provided a brief biography of each of these, replicated a piece of each of their artwork, and discussed how their works affect my artistic interpretation of the Holocaust. I have also produced a creative artwork to serve as a tribute to these artists and to those who did not live to share their story of the Holocaust.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Frank Felsenstein for his guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. He provided advice, suggestions, and support which were crucial to the success of my project.

Artists of the Holocaust

Introduction

When Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933, many people did not realize the change that was underway, not only for the Jewish community, but for the entire western world. It isn't uncommon for discussion of the Holocaust or the Nazi regime to focus most directly on victims of the concentration camps, but it doesn't end there. Millions of people have been affected by the Holocaust, some of whom were not even alive in the 1930s and never lived in Germany.

One of the many ways the impact of the Holocaust can be studied is through artists. By examining art from the Nazi era, the concentration camps, and post-concentration camp life, our understanding of that terrible time in history takes new life. Four artists/groups I've focused on in particular are Alfred Kantor, the children on Theresienstadt concentration camp, Art Spiegelman, and Kathe Kollwitz. Each will serve as a representative of a category of artists influenced by the Holocaust.

I. Examination of Artists Affected by the Holocaust

Alfred Kantor, Holocaust Survivor

Born in Prague in 1923, Alfred Kantor was a Jewish art student when Hitler's plans to rid Germany of its Jewish population really came underway. He had completed one year of a two-year art program at the Rottner School of Advertising in Prague when he was expelled from school because of his Jewish identification. Shortly after his expulsion in 1941, Kantor was transported to Theresienstadt concentration camp (in the modern day Czech Republic), the first of three camps he would be interned at during the war.

Theresienstadt was unique in that it was set up as a model camp for propaganda reasons. Meant to fool the public that the Jewish population wasn't being treated as harshly as they might imagine, the camp was set up more comfortably than other camps were. However, most prisoners did not spend the duration of their camp experience at Theresienstadt alone. In time, the prisoners were "sent east" to harsher extermination camps where they lost their lives.

The Nazi regime took the deception of Theresienstadt to the next level in 1944 when they allowed the Danish Red Cross and International Red Cross to come inspect the quarters of the camp. Before their arrival, it was made sure that all sick prisoners were sent out of the camp to an extermination camp and that new, healthier prisoners were brought in. Fake banks, cafes, shops, and markets were set up in the streets. Families were kept together, the prisoners were fed freshly baked bread, fruits, and vegetables, and cultural activities were available for entertainment. As the Red Cross was touring the pre-determined route set forth by the Nazis, it looked as if all was running smoothly. All the rumors the Red Cross had heard seemed like nonsense as they watched the happy families thriving under the benevolence of the Third Reich. Of course, this was all an act. The inmates knew that if they didn't behave that way, they'd be punished or lose their lives.

After the Red Cross left Theresienstadt, deportations to extermination camps were resumed, and daily life became harsher again. Even though the camp wasn't designed as a death camp, thousands of the prisoners died from stress, hunger, and disease, particularly typhus. By 1942, conditions in Theresienstadt got so poor that the Germans built a crematorium to dispose of all the bodies of the dead. "Of the approximately 140,000 Jews transferred to Theresienstadt, nearly 90,000 were deported to points further east and almost certain death. Roughly 33,000 died in Theresienstadt itself," ("Holocaust Encyclopedia").

Alfred Kantor was one of the many who was eventually faced with deportation—in his case, it was to Auschwitz. Auschwitz, the infamous Nazi death camp, had some of the most unforgiving living conditions out of any of the concentration camps. It was very rare for a prisoner of Auschwitz to escape with his/her life, but Kantor did. In 1944, he was relocated again to Schwarzheide camp with other prisoners to help rebuild a German synthetic fuel plant. Then, when the war ended, he was transported again—this time, back to Theresienstadt. In fact, he was one of only 175 prisoners out of 1,000 who survived the death march back to Theresienstadt. (Lewis). Miraculously, Kantor had survived three different concentration camps, and was again a free man.

As mentioned, Kantor was an artist before World War Two broke out. Surprisingly, he didn't give up artistic expression during the war. While he was imprisoned in Theresienstadt, he painted and sketched realistic scenes that depicted daily life in the ghetto. He illustrated the fake shops and fresh food that arrived just in time for the Red Cross to visit. He showed people being transported to other camps, and people crammed into extremely close living quarters, plagued with disease. Many artists (along with actors, musicians, and other well-known and beloved Jewish people) were sent to Theresienstadt so that the public would think that conditions were much more tolerable than they actually were. In addition, many artists were assigned the task of making charts, graphs, maps, and other organizational tools for the Nazis (the Nazis were known for being structured keeping impeccable order). Because they were in charge of such tasks, the artists had access to paper, pens, inks, and paints, which they used for artwork.

It wasn't terribly difficult to create art in that camp; however, Kantor did have to hide some of his more controversial works to avoid punishment. While some art was allowed to flourish in the camp, not *all* art was encouraged. Any art that was deemed *Greuelpropaganda*, or

horror propaganda, by the Nazis was punishable by death or severe punishment (often a mutilation of the artist's hands). This was art that depicted the truths of Theresienstadt—that it wasn't a paradise for the elderly where theater and education flourished.

The prisoners of Theresienstadt were well aware of what their fate would be upon the discovery of horror propaganda, and they made efforts to hide this art in walls, underground, and in other secret hiding places. Many of these pieces were uncovered after the war by the few survivors and serve as testimony to what was really going on. In fact, some of it was also smuggled out during the war by camp guards and distributed, so it is likely that the lies of Theresienstadt were unveiled far before the end of the war. While the Nazis continued their scheme of fooling the public into thinking Theresienstadt was a resort town, the artists exposed reality.

When Kantor moved to Auschwitz, things changed. Not only was art totally prohibited in Auschwitz, Kantor couldn't find the supplies he needed to create his work as easily. It is reported that a physician slipped Kantor a watercolor set when he was working in the sick ward of the camp. Still, if Kantor was caught painting, he would be seriously punished, perhaps even killed. For this reason, most of the art he created in the camps was destroyed. The rest was hidden in places where Kantor was confident that the prison guards would be unable to find it.

His sketches [of Auschwitz] show all the horrors of that camp: naked women being sorted into those who would live and those who would die; prisoners loading corpses from the gas chambers into trucks; the desperate search for food; the lurid red glow of flames from the crematorium chimneys at night; brutal guards; and the haughty and infamous chief physician, Josef Mengele, in Nazi uniform. (An attached note said that "a motion with his stick" was sufficient to send a prisoner to his death), (Lewis).

When Kantor was relocated to Schwarzheide, he continued to create art in a way that was similar to his Auschwitz art—in secret, often at night, and often destroying the art soon after its completion. This creation of art which was immediately destroyed is intriguing. Kantor wasn't creating the art for anyone but himself, since he wasn't able to share it with anyone else. While I'm sure he yearned for his work to leak out to the public so they could see what was really going on, he knew that wasn't likely to happen just yet. Even though Kantor's work was a realistic depiction of his surroundings, a sort of snap shot of truth, it must have served as a sort of purification for Kantor. Otherwise, he wouldn't have risked being caught creating it in the first place. Art must have soothed him and made him feel some sort of normalcy. After a day of work for the Nazis that was unproductive and demeaning, it must have felt pacifying to go back to what his version of normal life was. He could create art the way he used to, and he could feel his purpose in life flooding back to him.

It would be tempting to say that Kantor's work as an artist during his years of incarceration enabled him to retain his sense of dignity and kept him alive. But we must make some very careful distinctions about the role of creative activity during the Holocaust, lest we sentimentalize the ordeal and underestimate the withering effect of physical punishment on the human body. Looking back, Kantor speaks of the psychological value of his secret artistic activity: "my commitment to drawing came out of a deep instinct of self-preservation and undoubtedly helped me to deny the unimaginable horrors of that time. By taking on the role of an "observer" I could at least for a few moments detach myself from that war going on in Auschwitz and was therefore better able to hold together the threads of sanity, (Langer).

This idea of becoming an observer of one's own life is fascinating to me. At what point would I take to creative representation of my own life as a way of escaping reality? I can't say I've ever been in a mental state where I wanted to be out of my own life so badly that I pretended to be an outsider of my own reality. It makes sense—if he's an observer, then he's not living the terrible reality of the Holocaust. He can remove himself and document what's going on without it being personal. But how much mental and physical torture would it take for a person to realize this? Langer also writes,

One has only to compare the withered human form here with, say, Michelangelo's splendid statue of David to recognize what the Holocaust has done to the Renaissance image of man. The goal of the Nazis was to extinguish that image, and anyone familiar with the physical condition of most survivors on the day of liberation will understand that survival was in no way a triumph of the human form. Of the dead (except for those not yet disposed of) nothing – literally nothing – remained: which is why visual representations of their ordeal are so vital to us. They help us to imagine the unimaginable – always the major challenge of Holocaust art – and in so doing they dramatize the reality of our post-Holocaust universe, one diminished and mutilated by the disappearance of so many victims (Langer).

Thankfully, some artists, like Kantor, did escape the Holocaust with their lives, and their works can be used as proof of the atrocities performed. A prisoner's spoken testimony is only one piece of the puzzle—often visual documentation is necessary for a human being to fully understand physical and mental torture of that extent.

So how did Kantor's art go on after the war? Shortly after his liberation, he immigrated to the United States, where he lived until his death. Here, he recreated from memory the art which

he was unable to hide and/or smuggle out of the camps with him. He later compiled these works into a book he titled *The Book of Alfred Kantor* (1971). At the Nuremberg Trials (trials held after the war for those responsible for Nazi war crimes), films were shown of the liberation of the concentration camps; however, there is very little evidence of everyday life and working conditions in the camps. Kantor's paintings and sketches, even those reproduced after the war, serve as evidence of what really went on day to day.

Scanning the pages of *The Book of Alfred Kantor* can prove a daunting task. It's not comfortable to look at these images. In fact, it draws out emotions that the viewer may not expect. This book kind of presents itself as a diary or photo album of Kantor's experience. There are sketches and watercolor paintings by Kantor on each page, most of which are supplemented with handwritten captions. Both of these offer a truth that is incomparable to any other artwork I've seen before. Knowing that Kantor is a Holocaust survivor, his work is so personal. He actually witnessed all of the things he presents in his book, and it is his own unique journey from his home in Prague, to Theresienstadt, to Schwarzheide, and back to Theresienstadt.

One particular page of the book shows Jewish prisoners clearing out the remains of other Jewish prisoners from the gas chambers. On the same page is written, "The Germans are testing war gas "Cyclone B"...Ten minutes later, prisoners loading dead bodies into trucks. The gas chamber is the only place where families stay together...Gestapo agent looks thru special window at choking victims," (Kantor 57). This page is particularly striking for a number of reasons.

First, the Jewish prisoners could very well be unloading the bodies of their own family members, friends, coworkers, and so on. This has always been particularly hard for me to handle.

Isn't it bad enough that they *suffered* alongside some of their loved ones? Do they really need to see them dead too?

Second, the building which housed the gas chamber looks like a factory. Once the door is opened, we see exactly what Germany was producing—dead Jews. This metaphor is often made when the Holocaust is discussed. The Nazis systematically killed millions of people just as they would have produced anything else. They killed efficiently, cost-effectively, and quickly.

Kantor's works aren't extremely creative, colorful, or technical. They serve primarily as documentation of what happened in the camps. Photography didn't exist in the camps on a day to day basis, so this is about as close as we can get to knowing what happened at meal time, exercise time, work time, etc. We know what the camps looked like at liberation. It's those day to day tasks that were left up to our imagination before works like Kantor's were able to be seen by the general public. While these images are terrifying and sad to look at, they are necessary. The human mind cannot comprehend such horrific events from images created in their own brains. These pictures are a necessary complement to the things we hear and the things we read about the Holocaust.

The Children of Theresienstadt

The children of Theresienstadt provide just as much insight into what life was like in the camp as adult artists like Kantor did. Over 15,000 children passed through Theresienstadt. Of those, only about 150 lived to see the end of the war (Green 138). Some of the children of Theresienstadt were kept with their parents (again, to maintain the semblance that this was a family friendly ghetto), but most of them were housed along with the other children in crowded barracks. The children weren't of much concern to the Nazis, and they were left to be looked after by the Jewish Council. Because of this, they set up make-shift schools despite schooling

being outlawed, they were allotted a bit more food, they were subject to less harsh circumstances, and they were encouraged to be creative and artistic.

While some of the art created by the children of Theresienstadt shows the reality of life in the camp, other art shows what the children were dreaming of or remembered from home. They painted and wrote poems of better days, of times when they were surrounded by flowers, food, and love rather than death and disease. It is appalling how aware these young children were of their fate, and many of them used art to cope with those fears and negative thoughts. One child writes,

A little garden
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.
--Franta Bass (Green 187)

One of the most popular child poems of the Holocaust is titled "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," by Pavel Friedman. Pavel writes,

I never saw another butterfly . . .
The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzling yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears sing
Against a white stone . . .
Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly `way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it
Wished to kiss the world goodbye.
For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto,
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me,
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.

Butterflies don't live here in the ghetto.

-- Pavel Friedman, June 1942 ("Shoah Education")

Both of these poems show the depth of the sorrow of these children, how quickly they were forced to grow up, and how poignantly they were able to express their emotions during their internment. Even at their young age, their parents couldn't protect them from knowing that they weren't likely to survive this era of their lives. Since so many art professionals were sent to Theresienstadt, these children had encouragement and guidance in creating artwork and poetry. This, coupled with the fact the children weren't watched as closely, meant that a *great* deal of art from these children surfaced after the war.

Pavel Friedman's poem, "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" formed the framework for a play after the war, based on a true story of a child living in Theresienstadt. The play was written by Celeste Raspanti, and it centers on a teacher named Irena Synkova who has devoted her life to teaching the children in the camp and encouraging artistic expression through poems and drawings. One of these students is Raja, a child who lived through the end of the war. Together with the other students, Raja creates a world of happiness, flowers, and butterflies behind camp walls. It is a story of hope when many thought all hope was lost. To the children, butterflies became a symbol of rebelliousness—they could play and dance together while awaiting their deportation. This seems impossible, but isn't that what kids do? Perhaps it's lack of maturity and a true sense of reality that allows children to somewhat ignore the possibility of death, but I'd say it's essential for children's survival during emotionally trying times. Coping with death (especially your own) is extremely hard, and it is their ability to laugh and play and find innocence in a world of hopelessness that allows children to carry on.

Reading poems and looking at artwork of the children of Theresienstadt is heartbreaking. I've always enjoyed looking at artwork, holiday cards, and journals from when I was little with my mother. We spend hours laughing at the silly things I believed, the funny way I represented things, or the issues I thought were extremely pressing. Never do I look at those items and feel sad about my childhood. I had nothing but happy messages to report about my daily life.

Looking at these same items produced by Theresienstadt children is a completely different experience. The poems and artwork range from happy memories from before the war to documentation of daily life in the camp to extremely dark forecasts of what these children know to be almost certain death. When I look at one of these drawings, particularly one forecasting death or destruction, I immediately search for the age of the child who created it. Often, I am quite shocked by how young these children were. Was I even capable of these feelings when I was eight or nine years old? I'm so thankful that I was never put in a position where I felt my life was over before it had really even had a chance to begin.

One particular poem which struck my attention was written by thirteen year old Hanus Hachenburg. The poem is entitled "Terezin." Hachenburg writes,

I was once a little child
Three years ago,
That child who longed for other worlds.
But now I am no more a child
For I have learned to hate.
I am a grown-up person now,
I have known fear.

--Hanus Hachenburg (Rubin 25)

The children themselves even recognized that they knew more than they should at their age. They realized that they had quickly morphed into little adults with adult feelings. About a year after Hachenburg wrote this poem, he was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where he

perished. Like so many children of Terezin, Hachenburg was correct in assuming that he would not survive under Nazi rule.

The artwork that the children of Theresienstadt produced was very similar to their poetic expressions. Often, their drawings conveyed darkness, uncertainty, and fear. The children's use of dark colors, blurred images, and harsh lines suggest that they were angry, confused, and had no idea where their lives were headed. However, it was not uncommon for these children to incorporate stars or candles in the darkness. Even though these children had recognized that death was a certain possibility, they often didn't lose hope that they might live to see better times.

Art Spiegelman, Second Generation Survivor

But what about children who didn't live through the Holocaust themselves? What about children of Holocaust victims and survivors? Art Spiegelman is a prime example of how second generation Holocaust survivors were affected by the experiences of their parents, especially through artistic expression. Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1948. His parents Vladek and Anja Spiegelman were both Auschwitz survivors. In 1951, when Art was just three years old, the family moved to the United States. The family lived in Rego Park in Queens, New York City. It is here where Spiegelman developed his artistic style and produced some very profound works. His medium is comics.

Spiegelman attended Harpur College (now a college within Binghamton University) majoring in art and philosophy. He never completed his degree, but he did earn an honorary degree from the college in 1995. In terms of Holocaust works, Art Spiegelman is most known for his work entitled *Maus*, an autobiographical comic in which Art depicts his parents' journey through life. The memoir begins with Vladek and Anja's young marriage in Poland, and carries

the reader through the birth of their first child (who they later lost to the Holocaust—relatives poisoned the child before he could be taken away), Vladek’s military service, Vladek and Anja’s capture by the Nazis and their lives in Auschwitz, Vladek’s march from Auschwitz to Grossrosen Camp, Vladek’s search for Anja after the war, their brief stay at an internment camp, and the couple’s life in America. The work also shows the suicide of Art’s mother Anja, Vladek’s second marriage to Mala (also a Holocaust survivor), and brings the reader up to the present day. As author Stephen Tabachnick puts it, “Spiegelman shows the movement from the tortured life and death of one generation to the rise and continuation of the psychologically damaged second generation,” (Tabachnick 319).

Maus is a representation of how the Holocaust continued to affect Art’s parents after their liberation and how these personality changes spilled over to Art as well. The *Encyclopedia of World Biographies* references Vladek and Anja saying,

They both survived, but not without sustaining permanent mental and emotional damage. Spiegelman’s mother struggled with debilitating depression for the remainder of her life, while his father became frugal to the point of it being an obsession and difficult to deal with. In an 1986 interview with *People*, Spiegelman admitted that it was only after leaving home that he realized “that not everybody had parents who woke up screaming in the night,” (“Art Spiegelman”).

I’ve often pondered the effects that parents’ complications have on their children. I assume that children believe their life is normal until proven otherwise. That is, I imagine that children coming from broken homes think that all families live that way until they grow up, talk to their peers, and find out that’s not true. It seems like that was what was happening in Art’s life when he was a young boy. He didn’t realize that all parents weren’t tormented by a haunting

past or that all fathers weren't cripplingly frugal and extremely hard to please. I wonder how Art transitioned from thinking his childhood was very typical to realizing that his experience is actually very unique, particularly for American children. I assume it was a difficult transition, especially if he was fairly young when he came to this realization.

Spiegelman, like other second generation Holocaust writers and artists, faces a special struggle in creating his works. He has to represent a time in history that he never lived through. He has to rely on testimony from others to get his inspiration and content. He supplemented this research by making visits to Auschwitz two times during the creation of *Maus*. Naturally, many people will question the historical accuracy of Spiegelman's work. The main bulk of the content of *Maus* is historically accurate, but there is also some room for imaginative elements. It would be impossible for Spiegelman to create a work that was both historically accurate and that had a natural flow, since so many small details are forgotten or unknown. Spiegelman often makes it obvious to the reader that some things were up to his creative license. For example, "In the second volume of *Maus*, Art jokes to [his wife] Francoise that in real life she would never let him speak so long without interrupting him, thus pointing out to the reader that the book includes imagined as well as verifiable factual elements," (Tabachnick 318). Both of Art's parents had passed away before *Maus* was completed. Thus, some events had to be created to bridge time gaps. These imagined events are minor in comparison with the main subject and goal of the memoir, and the crucial events are recorded in *Maus* as his parents remember them.

Art Spiegelman associates the creation of *Maus* to his desire to link himself to his cultural background just as much as his desire to depict the effects of the Holocaust on second generation survivors. Tabachnick writes, "...he has likened his creation of *Maus* to his coming out of an assimilation closet to reveal the Jewish element in himself, which matches the post-1960s

context of the civil rights and sexual liberation movements, including ethnic identification and self-confession,” (Tabachnick 318). Spiegelman was simply working in a medium he was familiar with and comfortable with to express his beliefs about where he fits into society.

It may seem alarming that Spiegelman would create a graphic memoir to express a subject as serious and emotionally draining as the Holocaust. In fact, it might turn some people off or make them think that he wasn't taking it seriously at all. This was most certainly not Spiegelman's aim. In fact, some believe that his medium may have helped his cause more than hurt it. Tabachnick says, “Because of the great exposure the Holocaust has received over the past half century, many worthy representations fail to impress as deeply as they should. Spiegelman's serious literary adaptation of the allegedly frivolous comic book format shocked many readers into the Holocaust anew,” (Tabachnick 319). The work also has an element of separation from reality which may help readers to cope with the seriousness of the subject. “The 2004 *Contemporary Authors Online* stated that ‘by making the characters cats and mice . . . *Maus* and *Maus II* allow us as readers to go outside ourselves and to look objectively at ourselves and at otherwise unspeakable events,’” (“Art Spiegelman”).

I most certainly agree that Spiegelman's use of comics helped him get his point across. He gained exposure, because what he was doing was different. After he drew in a sizeable audience, he shocked them into realizing that this comic experience is unlike any other. The reader really gets the sense that this is an emotional story for Spiegelman to tell. He packs so much emotion into each little cell, and the reader can almost feel the anger and stress that he was feeling while creating each scene (particularly the scenes where he is speaking with his father in what is understood to be the present day). There is an obvious tension in his family, and it jumps off the pages.

One scene which packs in an immense amount of emotion is the scene where Art's aunt, Tosha, poisons Richieu (Art's brother), her own child, her niece, and herself to avoid being taken away by the Nazis to the gas chambers (Spiegelman 109). The book goes on to mention that it wasn't until weeks later that Art's parents even learned of Richieu's death. The impact of this event on Art's family is probably even greater than the book can let on. Not only did Art's parents lose their child, but their child was poisoned by their family member. And not only was he poisoned by a family member, but that was a *preferable* way for their child to die compared to what the Nazis would have done to him. The emotions that this would conjure up are unimaginable, as are the after-effects. This scene is wrapped up by showing Art and his father ending the conversation of how Richieu died. I imagine that being a very touching moment for both father and son. I'm sure pain was felt, but maybe also some sort of closure. As Vladek told Art from start to finish his experiences of the Holocaust, I'm sure Art came to understand his father's situation much more thoroughly.

Even though Richieu was very young when he died and Art never met him, I wonder if a lot of the tension felt between Art and his father stem from his feelings of inferiority to Richieu. That is, I wonder if he ever felt pressure because he couldn't "replace" their firstborn child. I also wonder if his parents felt guilty that they did survive and their child did not (a feeling often felt by Holocaust survivors). Even though Art didn't live through the Holocaust, he most definitely suffered effects from it.

An interesting thing about using comics to tell a story is that the author is able to travel back and forth through time relatively easily without losing the reader. It's more obvious when Art flips back and forth through generations and time frames while telling his story. Had Art not used a visual representation of his story, this would have been much more difficult.

Unfortunately, Spiegelman's father Vladek died four years before the book's publication, and he didn't have a chance to see how his life story through his son's work would affect the world. "*Maus* has been translated into twenty languages (including, after some delay, Polish) and had already sold 180,000 copies by 1992," (Tabachnick 321). The first volume also won the Present Tense Joel M. Cavior Award for Jewish Writing, and after the second volume was published, it won a National Critics Circle Award, a Los Angeles Times Award, and the Before Columbus Foundation Award, all in 1992.

Spiegelman didn't stop at *Maus*. He continued to create controversial comics throughout his career, particularly for *The New Yorker*. "In the wake of the disaster of 11 September 2001, which happened around the corner from where he lives (Greenstreet/Canalstreet), Spiegelman has made a Sunday page format story about the terrorist assault on the World Trade Center in New York, called 'In the Shadow of No Towers,'" ("Lambiek.net"). Also, "Spiegelman served as a contributing editor for the *New Yorker* from 1991 to 2003, often designing controversial cover art. One Valentine's Day cover depicted a Hasidic Jew kissing an African American woman, and another featured a child in Arabic headgear demolishing sand castles on the beach," ("Art Spiegelman").

Spiegelman has used comics to bring serious subjects to the attention of society. He has been extremely successful in his career despite his mental and emotional hardships as a second generation Holocaust survivor.

Kathe Kollwitz, German Artist

Effects of the Holocaust reached far and wide—they were not limited to the Jewish population. Kathe Kollwitz (born Kathe Schmidt), though not of Jewish decent, was one artist who found herself very affected by the Nazi regime. Long time resident of Germany and firm

advocate of Socialism, Kollwitz despised war and acted as a voice for the less fortunate. As Hitler came to power, he found no place for Kollwitz's strong political stance. Labeling her work "degenerate," Hitler banned the display of Kollwitz's work in museums and art showcases.

Kollwitz began drawing as a young girl. Encouraged by her father to pursue art as more than a hobby, Kollwitz took classes with local artists in her hometown of Königsberg in East Prussia. The Königsberg Academy barred female pupils, but as she progressed in talent and age, she pursued higher education in the arts. Kathe first studied in Berlin at an art academy designed for women only. She then continued her studies in Munich at Munich's School for Women Artists. It was at these two schools where Kollwitz really developed her style, and she looked to the writer Zola and the artist Max Klinger for inspiration. In particular, Kathe was drawn to the realism and symbolism used in these individuals' works.

Two months after finishing school in Munich, Kathe married Dr. Karl Kollwitz. Karl was a physician, and he specialized mainly in the care of poor patients. Dr. Kollwitz had been appointed as physician for a workers' health insurance fund. He served tailors and their dependents in the northeast section of Berlin. Since Dr. Kollwitz worked out of his home, Kathe came in close contact with his patients. Mina and H. Arthur Kline write in their biography of Kathe Kollwitz,

Karl Kollwitz was a dedicated physician, sensitive to his patients' needs and feelings. To him they were individual fellow human beings, not faceless cases or file numbers. His office was always crowded. There his wife saw sickness, unemployment, hunger, despair, children loved and children unwanted—the whole bitter daily struggle to survive. In drawings and etchings she began to picture the sufferings, defeats, and endurance of the poor who came to her door (Klein 27).

Kathe soon became labeled as a socialist artist. Aiming to raise awareness of poor conditions in Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries, her work often displayed suffering, grief, and many Germans' inability to feed themselves and their children adequately. In 1914, when her son Peter was killed in World War One, her art took an even stronger pacifist and socialist stance. She often quoted the great writer Goethe and looked to him for inspiration. She said, "Seed corn must not be ground," implying that the nation's future depended on its youth, which must not be squandered in a war of attrition," ("Galerie St. Etienne). It was troubling to Kollwitz to know that the greatest minds and bodies of Germany were being used for something as gruesome and troubling as war. Unfortunately, as Kathe's life spanned both world wars, she was seemingly constantly surrounded by war.

Because of her great skill and popularity, Kathe Kollwitz was appointed the first female professor and member of the Prussian Fine Arts Academy in 1919. This was a great honor for Kollwitz, and she took great pride in teaching her students. Soon after this, during the 1920s, Kollwitz began a theme in her work of anti-war propaganda and war protests as well as pro-Socialism works. Petri Liukkonen writes,

Kollwitz made several prints as propaganda against war, such as the woodcut *Die Freiwilligen* (1922-23, The Volunteers), a version of the dance of death. The feverish mass hysteria, which had gripped the nations at the outbreak of WWI, is portrayed through a group of young men following blindly the figure of Death. Among Kollwitz's most copied anti-war pieces is *Nie wieder Krieg* (1924, Never Again War), in which a male figure raises one arm high and the other hand is on his heart. Kollwitz was internationally known for her etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs, but also her posters for leftist organizations and humanitarian leaflets contributed to her fame...In 1927

Kollwitz visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AkhRR). Although she was subsequently disillusioned, she did not denounce Stalinist culture and propaganda. In 1932 her works were shown in Leningrad and Moscow. Before the great wave of terror, she made a pro-Soviet lithograph, *Wir schützen die Sowjetunion* (1931-32), in which a chain of people form a protective wall (Liukkonen).

Due to Kathe's firm anti-war sentiment and promotion of a socialist society, it should come as no surprise that Hitler would not be fond of her work as he came to power in 1933. As Hitler was trying to promote Germany as the greatest nation in the world and the Nazi regime as the most effective ruler, he despised Kollwitz's publicity of poor conditions and her favoritism of the socialist regime. Not long after Hitler came to power, Kollwitz lost her teaching position and membership of the Prussian Fine Arts Academy. Soon after that, Kathe's artworks were banished from public view. Since Kathe was so well known and so well-loved, her works were never officially banished (as were many other artists'); however, at the last minute, her works would be pulled from public galleries and shows. This happened gradually until Kathe didn't even seem to exist at all anymore. In 1937, the Nazis really took hold of German art with the aim of ridding the country of all that was "degenerate." In Munich, the House of German Art was built by plans stemming directly from Hitler. Klein writes,

[Hitler] esteemed himself a genius in architecture as well as a gifted artist whose career had been thwarted by Jewish influences in Vienna years before the start of the First World War. In a violent seventy-minute speech at the opening of the new House of German Art, Hitler poured out hatred of modern art—decadent, Bolshevist, Jewish corruption. There was no room for it in his Third Reich, which was to endure for a

thousand years. Art works not understandable to the average German would be eliminated...In the spacious House of German Art were displayed more than eight hundred paintings, drawings, and sculptures that were pleasing to Hitler's taste and made by approved German artists, mostly since the Nazi takeover in 1933. Hardly a single piece rose above the level of mediocrity. Not one had a vestige of antiwar content. Many glorified combat and the military way of life. The day after the opening of the House of German Art the Nazi dictators opened in an old gallery a "degenerate art" display, supposed to be a kind of chamber of horrors, disgusting to all true Germans...They were jammed into sections labeled MOCKERY OF CHRISTIANITY, DEFILEMENT OF GERMAN WOMANHOOD, SLANDER OF GERMAN HEROES, JEWISH ART, and so on (Klein 132).

Kathe Kollwitz didn't appear in either art display. As previously stated, it was like Kathe didn't exist at all. In fact, in 1940 an encyclopedia of art entitled *Dictionary of Art* was published. There was not one mention of Kollwitz in the entire work. Kathe Kollwitz was widely adored before Hitler came to power, and it was obvious that he was trying to erase her existence completely. Meanwhile, Kathe's works were still loved and sold in foreign countries—the rest of the world was not forgetting her so quickly.

The Nazis actually behaved pretty passively toward Kathe until 1936. In 1936, Kollwitz was interviewed by a foreign journalist about how Germany's most well-known artists were coping under Hitler's rule. Klein writes,

...Later the Russian newspaper *Isvestia* published an article on the interview, including the sentence, "We sat three together, talked about Hitler and the Third Reich, and looked each other deep in the eyes." On July 13 two Gestapo officers entered the Kollwitz home

and threatened the artist with concentration camp. They assured her that neither her age—then sixty-nine—nor anything else would protect her. Next day, in a follow-up action, one of them came to her studio, examined her work, and finally asked her to write a statement for the press repudiating the *Izvestia* article...Despite her great personal courage and self-respect, she had not felt that she could openly defy the Gestapo. She must have known all too well what had happened to those few who had dared to attempt this (Klein 128).

This mood of being absolutely against the Nazi regime but compliant enough to not suffer too much direct consequence was a theme in Kathe's life under Hitler's rule. Kollwitz's ability to remain compliant was really tested in early 1938 when a pro-fascist magazine (published in both German and Italian) used a series of Kollwitz's prints from her *Hunger* portfolio that she had created for the International Workers Aid in 1924. These works showed the poorest of Germany, and they were originally used for fundraising and other relief efforts. In 1938, they were printed to represent "Hunger in the Red Paradise." These works were not credited to Kollwitz, but rather to "an important German artist" who remained unnamed. Later that year, her lithograph entitled "Bread!" also from her *Hunger* portfolio, was given the signature of another artist and used by a Nazi magazine to supplement pro-fascist writings. This work was twisted to apply to Spain rather than to Germany. However, Kollwitz bit her tongue and didn't speak out about these misuses of her works. If she did speak out, it would appear she was pro-fascist. If she denied and said she wanted no part of the pro-fascist works, she would appear pro-Communist, and she knew the danger that would bring her.

As time went on and Hitler stayed in power, the Nazis ordered the seizure of huge numbers of art works held in German museums. These works were all stored in a warehouse.

Specialists were ordered to sift through the artworks and determine which works could be sold outside of Germany for a profit (thus bringing in foreign currency to aid the war effort). From this, 125 were deemed salable, and the other 5000 were surplus. The book *In the Final Hour* by Diether Schmidt proposes that more than thirty works by Kathe Kollwitz were burned at this time (Klein 143).

In 1940, Kathe's companion of forty-nine years, Karl Kollwitz, died after being ill for nearly a year. In 1942, Kathe heard of the death of her oldest grandson, Peter. He'd died in the war in Russia. These events seemed to break her spirits more than anything, and she began aging quickly. In 1942, Kathe made her last lithograph entitled *Seed for the Planting Must not be Ground*, a quotation from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Goethe was Kathe's favorite poet. The lithograph is said to mimic her other lithograph *Never Again War!* As it signifies how she wishes her son and grandson had not been taken by war. To her very last work of art, Kathe followed her lifelong theme and pulled for peace and better assistance programs for the poor and less fortunate.

Intensified Allied bombings forced Kollwitz to flee to Nordhausen in 1943 to live with the sculptress Margarete Boning. Kollwitz lived here for about a year, and during that time, her house as well as the houses of her children and grandchildren were destroyed in Berlin. As the war moved closer to Nordhausen, Kollwitz moved to Moritzburg under the care of Prince Ernst Heinrich of Saxony who admired and collected her work. It is in Moritzburg in 1945 that Kollwitz died. She now rests in Berlin next to her husband Karl Kollwitz beneath a bronze statue relief that she created a decade before her death. Unfortunately, Kathe didn't get to see the end of the war—something she looked so greatly for during her lifetime.

Although Hitler tried to erase Kathe Kollwitz from the memories of the German population, he did not succeed. Malcom E. Lein writes,

The street in East Berlin where she had lived so many years is today named Kathe Kollwitz Strasse, in her memory. In a small park called Kollwitz Platz, a monumental sculpture of the “old Kathe” by the German sculptor, Gustav Seitz (1906-1969) rests on a massive stone pedestal. There, the great mother once again gathers the children, “Seed for the Planting”, into her protective arms (Lein 8).

Kathe often disregarded art critics and popular art techniques in favor of creating work that was valuable to the viewers. She cared more about spreading her message than anything else. Klein writes,

She once wrote of her hopes for her works after she herself was dead. If, decades later, they continued to exercise the effect she had intended—“...yes, then I shall have attained a great deal. For then people will have been enriched by me. Then I shall have been a co-worker in the great upbuilding,” (Klein 168).

As Kathe’s works have continued to be effective and enriching years after her death, she should not be disappointed for what she accomplished while on earth. A true believer in pacifism and helping the less fortunate, Kathe made use of her skills in a way that allowed her to reach out and help others. Although she saw little peace in her lifetime, she knew the value of peace, and her artworks continue to resonate with that important message.

Kollwitz is somewhat unique as an artist in that she works in many different mediums. Kollwitz has produced sculptures, etchings, lithographs, drawings, and woodcuts. She doesn’t really stick to one medium as most artists do. Not only that, she is extremely proficient in conveying emotion in all of those mediums. Kollwitz’s main subjects were victims of poverty,

war, hunger, and unemployment. Her ability to distinguish between anger, sadness, hunger, and loneliness through facial expression alone is uncanny. Not only are those emotions hard to convey, it is even harder to distinguish between them. Kollwitz is able to do that, and I believe that makes her a very effective artist. Her goal was to raise awareness of the effects of how Germany was operating. I think the expressions on her subjects' faces speak for themselves, and that is exactly why Hitler banned her works from public view. He didn't want the public to see the country as weak or war as harming the citizens. He did his best to ensure that that didn't happen.

One particular series of woodcuts which Kollwitz made are a series called "War (Krieg)." One of the cuts in this collection is called "The Widow I." It shows a woman who has been widowed because of war. Her sadness and strength are both equally prevalent in the work. Her hands emit a sense that she is strong and capable, yet her facial expression and posture show that she has been torn apart by the loss of her husband. The way her stomach is rounded and the way she rests her hands on her belly suggest that she may be pregnant. This obviously adds even more sadness to her already upsetting situation. It is pieces like this for which Kollwitz was banned by the Nazis ("War (Krieg)")

II. The Importance of Memory

"Forgetting the extermination is part of the extermination itself."

---Jean Baudrillard

Remembering something as horrific as the Holocaust is both difficult and necessary. It's necessary to remember in order to prevent such things from happening again, even if on a much smaller scale. It's necessary to commemorate those who lost their lives. Trying to forget such atrocities, a sort of anti-memory, brings the Holocaust to a person's attention just as much as

remembering. They'd have to remember exactly what it is they're trying to forget. Through the act of forgetting, the person is still acknowledging that something terrible has occurred, and they'd still likely try to prevent it from happening again. What we most need to fear is the event where future generations do not know that the Holocaust occurred. We should fear a repeat of past events. We should fear a time when people don't know history well enough to learn from it.

Remembering the Holocaust is difficult for a number of reasons. The most obvious of these reasons would be that as time goes by, fewer and fewer actual witnesses to the Holocaust survive. Stories of the era may be passed down from generation to generation, but those who were directly affected, those who are likely most passionate about remembrance, are fading away. Memorials taking the shape of books, art pieces, statues, and dedications that are being created today are often being created by a person who wasn't there. Of course, these people are plagued by the desire to persuade people to remember something that they were not alive to witness. How can one represent the terrible events of the Holocaust when one wasn't even there? On the other hand, should we just stop memorializing the Holocaust once all the active participants have perished?

Remembering the Holocaust is also difficult in the emotional sense. I often think of Germans when I think about remembering the Holocaust. Every nation wants to remember their successes and victories. But it's hard for a nation to commemorate the people they victimized. Author James E. Young writes,

...while the victors of history have long erected monuments to their triumphs and victims have built memorials to their martyrdom, only rarely does a nation call upon itself to remember the victims of crimes it has perpetrated. Where are the national monuments to the genocide of American Indians, to the millions of Africans enslaved and murdered, to

the Russian kulaks and peasants starved to death by the millions? They barely exist,
(Young 21).

As the years go by, it's even less likely that countries like Germany will want to remember the Holocaust. Future generations may have the sentiment that since they were not personally the ones who committed crimes against the victims of the Holocaust, they shouldn't have to take responsibility for what happened.

At this point, I don't think it's about taking responsibility, and it's not about remembering in the literal sense of the word (since the majority of people alive today cannot remember—they weren't alive and present at time). It's about never letting the Holocaust go untaught. It's about never letting it happen again. It seems absurd that something like the Holocaust would ever happen in modern America, but is it? The Holocaust wasn't *that* long ago. We aren't talking about a primitive society of barbarians here. We're talking about a technologically advanced, civilized country in the 20th century. The fact that Germany was so technologically advanced actually enabled the Holocaust to occur. How else could so many people be so efficiently murdered in such a short period of time? It's scary to think about, but it's not ridiculous to say that it *could* happen in the western world again, given a persuasive and determined ruler coming into power under unforgiving, trying political conditions.

III. Author's Reasons for Memorializing Artists of the Holocaust

"Painting is just another way of keeping a diary."
---Pablo Picasso

Artists have a unique purpose. Artists create to express personal emotion, they create to document their surroundings, they create to persuade, they create to soothe, they create to please, and they create to confuse. Whatever their inspiration for creating art, artists are an important

part of any community. In reality, everyone is an artist in their own right. Removing this ability to express and to document can be detrimental to any human's sanity.

So imagine how artists of the Holocaust felt when they were punished for documenting what was really going on. If they were caught with physical evidence of the Nazis' crimes, they were surely punished, and often killed. At a time when expression to maintain sanity was so vital, artists were stripped of that right. To make matters worse, Nazis were very careful to cover up what they were doing. They wanted no evidence of the concentration camps and other war crimes to be left behind. Since no photographs were taken of the day to day life in the camps, the only way to document it would be through drawings or sketches. Anyone found creating these drawings (or even caught possessing the works) was punished severely.

I can only imagine how mentally drained these artists must have felt. I envision it feeling like those terrible dreams where you cry for help but no sound comes out. As a creative and expressive person, stories about the artists of the Holocaust have always resonated with me. I, like most young adults in America, have never lived through anything as horrific as the Holocaust. However, I do find great importance in remembering that time in history. That is why I have chosen to put myself in the shoes of a modern day Holocaust memorial artist. To supplement my journey, I also replicated an artwork from each of the aforementioned affected persons/groups. I then used their styles and themes to build the framework for my own creative piece.

I think it is relevant to add that I am not an art student, a history student, or a Holocaust expert. My goal isn't to wow crowds with magnificent works of art or to tell in exact detail what happened during the Holocaust. My goal is to spark interest in the viewer and for the viewer to

realize the importance of memory. For if we let ourselves forget, so will the next generation, and the next.

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Replicas of Discussed Artists' Works



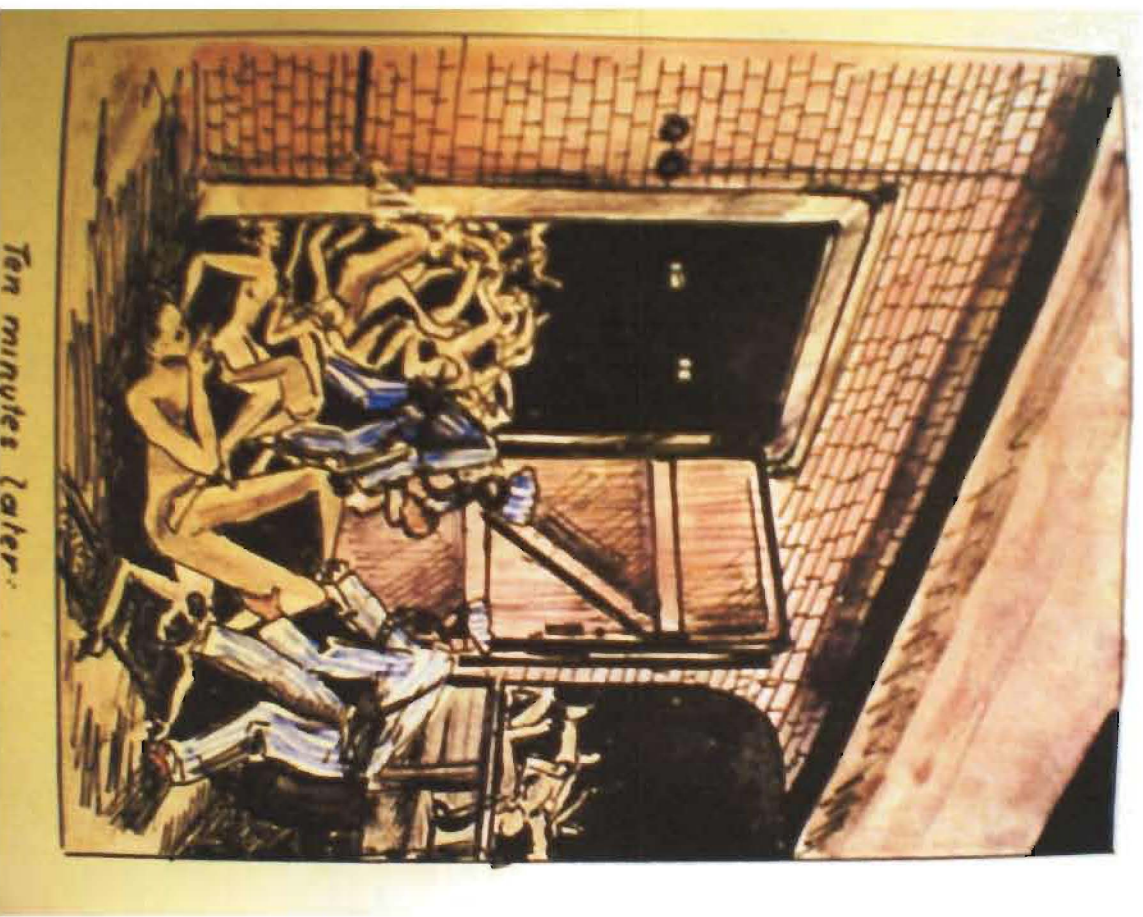
Replica of Kathe Kollwitz's "The Widow I." Medium: ink.
By Melanie Rapp, 2011.



Original. "The Widow I" by Kathe Kollwitz. Transcribed woodcut.



Replica of a scene from "The Book of Alfred Kantor." Medium: ink and watercolor. By Melanie Rapp, 2011.



Original. Scene from "The Book of Alfred Kantor." by Alfred Kantor. Medium: ink and watercolor.

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<http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=69682>.

Creative Work

Author's Note

It is important to note that I am not an art major, history major, or Holocaust expert by any means. I am a business student at Ball State University who enjoys artistic expression and wishes to raise awareness for remembering the Holocaust. I did not set out to impress viewers with my technical expertise, but to spark an interest in the viewer about why it is important to remember traumatic historical events (the Holocaust in particular).

The thought process behind my creative work is as follows: The Jewish people were thriving in Germany before the Nazis came to power. They were subject to ridicule, and they were stereotyped, but within their communities, they were doing fairly well for themselves (as signified by the blooming tree). The Jewish people were the products of many generations of their Jewish ancestors (shown by the Star of David intertwined in the roots of the tree). When the Nazis came to power, all of this came to a screeching halt. Even if an individual did not identify as being Jewish but had some Jewish part to their "roots," they were persecuted. At best, Jews came out of the Holocaust broken, but alive. This is shown by the swastika-shaped lightning. At *best*, the tree will suffer some damage, but not die completely; however, it is likely that the tree will be killed by the power of the lightning.

---Melanie Rapp, April 2011



“Remember the Holocaust” by Melanie Rapp, 2011. Medium: Ink and charcoal.

Journal of My Experience

My Creative Journey: Recreation and Origination

February 18, 2011

Re-reading *Maus* and reproducing one of the scenes has been more emotional for me than I thought it would be. The first time I read *Maus* was for class, and I definitely didn't pick up on a lot of the details. I don't know if I was caught up in other school work at the time or what happened... I just didn't seem to be as affected by it the first time. This time, I was really trying to picture myself as Art Spiegelman. I tried to think about all the pain he inherited, since that is mainly what my thesis is focusing on. Art's father was my main focus last time, and I don't think I really picked up on how much second generation survivors can be affected by the things their parents endured.

The scene I reproduced was when Art's aunt, Tosha, poisoned herself, Richieu (Art's brother whom he obviously never met), her own daughter Bibi, and her niece Lonia. As I was recreating this scene, I was thinking about how Art would be affected by his parents losing their first child. Not only did they lose Richieu, but they didn't even know he was dead until weeks after it happened. And not only did Richieu die, he was killed by his own family. Obviously, Tosha had good intentions when she poisoned Richieu—she didn't want him or the other children to be taken and killed in a gas chamber; however, this news has to have been debilitating to Vladek and Anja (Art's parents).

While it might not be as graphic, this scene made me think of the other mothers of the Holocaust who had their babies pried from their arms and were forced to watch them be shot, burned alive, etc. by the Nazi guards. I cannot even begin to imagine the amount of emotional pain these women suffered. To see your children killed (either directly or indirectly) is something no parent could ever get over.

I wonder if Art, even though he never met Richieu, felt a sense of guilt for Richieu's death. I wonder if Art ever felt that he could never measure up to his parents' first child. Even though Richieu was very young when he died, parents tend to have a special love for their firstborn child. Even if Vladek and Anja fostered no resentment toward Art, I'm sure he felt during his lifetime that he just couldn't "replace" Richieu.

Art had to deal with two separate issues—his parents surviving a tragedy, and his brother not surviving the same tragedy. His parents were bitter, and rightfully so. The bitterness and stress that was in Art's household really jumps off of the pages of the book to me, especially in the drawings. I didn't notice the anger in the drawings until I attempted to reproduce one—he sure does get a lot of emotion into a cartoon.

I've spoken about *Maus* to a few of my friends to kind of gauge their feedback. Most of them agreed that a comic about the Holocaust seemed weird, and almost a bit perverse. I mean, how can you take something that's usually so lighthearted and attack a serious subject like the Holocaust with it? Once they saw it, though, they realized we weren't talking about a comic like "Garfield" or "Peanuts." *Maus* is really just an autobiography written in Spiegelman's best format. If anything, the pictures magnify his words, making them more effective. I hope people give *Maus* a chance. It's told from such a unique perspective. The reader feels affected, but still very removed from the situation. I'm interested in looking into some of the other controversial work he's done, particularly for *The New Yorker*.

February 21, 2011

Sorting through Alfred Kantor's *The Book of Alfred Kantor* has been a very different experience for me. I kind of feel like I'm reading his diary, and that he drew pictures to accompany each entry. The book outlines his journey from Prague to Theresienstadt to

Schwarzheide and back to Theresienstadt where he was liberated. It's almost a photo album of his Holocaust experience. He puts into pictures what others have put into words. Given the horrific nature of what occurred, a picture (although disgusting) is often necessary for the human mind to comprehend what happened.

Unlike Spiegelman's book *Maus*, Kantor's book includes pictures that are quite realistic representations of reality. They act more as snapshots of what he went through than anything else. They aren't artistically very creative—they're documentation. Documentation is something that the concentration camps didn't experience much of. As the prisoner's cried for help, their cries fell on deaf ears. Since the Nazis were so strict, they couldn't get word out as to what was really going on in the camps. I'm sure Kantor longed to sketch the realities of the camp and let them leak out into the public. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to do so.

Kantor's medium is primarily watercolor. There are occasional sketches with no color and sketches colored with colored pencil, but those were usually the ones he snuck out of the camps with him—not the ones he did later. I've chosen a watercolor to try and replicate (the scene shows Jews unloading a pile of bodies from the gas chambers), and am kind of nervous. I've had little experience with watercolor artwork, so it'll take a good bit of trial and error.

In Kantor's book, *The Book of Alfred Kantor*, there are handwritten captions under most of the pictures he's drawn. These were extremely personal, and they really got to me. The reason why I chose the particular painting I did to replicate was because of the way in which the caption moved me. The caption stated that "the gas chambers are the only place families are kept together." Having read a great deal of Holocaust literature, I know this to be true. Families were normally either split apart upon arrival from the camp, or they perished together immediately upon arrival. I was also particularly moved by the fact that Jews were removing their own peers

(perhaps even some of their friends, family, etc.) from the gas chambers. I knew that this happened—but seeing it in picture form really got to me. The Nazis acted as if the Jews should be able to look at a pile of their peers as they'd look at a pile of dirt—something that just needed to be moved from one place to another. I picture the Nazis looking on with a smirk on their face (don't they always seem to be smirking in pictures and paintings?) like it's all a part of their sick joke.

Creating this book has to have been so cathartic for Kantor. He was finally able to draw and paint exactly what he saw, exactly how he saw it, and use it as a testimony of his experiences. Even though he did some drawing and painting in the camps, he had to destroy most of it to avoid punishment. Almost all of what is in his book was recreated later from memory.

I applaud Kantor for his works. Without them, the public probably couldn't really fully comprehend exactly what happened day to day in the camps. Photographs were taken when the camps were liberated, but there aren't pictures of the Jews loading up their family members to be burned in the crematorium, the Jews eating their "soup," the Jews being beaten for not working fast enough or hard enough, etc. For me, pictures are necessary to comprehend atrocity. I can't imagine something that terrible from images created in my brain. Although his paintings are hard to look at, they help me really *feel* what happened during the Holocaust. I was greatly moved by Alfred Kantor's works.

February 25, 2011

I've been looking at a bunch of Kathe Kollwitz's works, trying to find one which fits into my theme of remembering those who are no longer around to tell their own story. Kathe's situation during the Holocaust was somewhat unique to my thesis. Kathe wasn't Jewish, and she didn't get sent to a concentration camp. Neither did her family members. Rather, Kathe's art was

banned during the Nazi era because it was deemed “degenerate.” It simply wasn’t German enough for the Nazis. It didn’t further their purpose.

Knowing what I know about the Nazis, I am not surprised. When you look at Kollwitz’s art, you see hunger, disease, poverty, mourning, death, etc. You see everything that she saw wrong with Germany. You see everything she saw wrong with war. Why would Hitler like Kollwitz? She’s trying to show that Germany’s people are NOT as taken care of as Hitler would like to promote. She showing that war is NOT a benefit to society—it leaves people hungry, widowed, and destructed.

Kathe’s style is actually pretty varied. She made sculptures, woodcuts, lithographs, paintings, and sketches. It’s actually quite impressive that she seemed to be such a master of all of these art forms. I am by no means a master of any art form, and she dabbles into all of them!

Another impressive quality of Kollwitz’s work is her ability to place SUCH emotion in the faces and expressions of her subjects. In my opinion, sorrow, hurt, pain, and loneliness are the hardest expressions to show through art. Even harder is distinguishing one from the other. Kollwitz can do this! I chose “The Widow I” from Kollwitz’s “War (Krieg)” collection to replicate. This was actually a woodcut originally (kind of like a stamp made of wood), but I drew it in ink. So it’s more a replica of the transposed image. Either way, when I attempted to replicate the expression on the woman’s face, I had a really hard time! I was copying something that she did, and I STILL couldn’t seem to get the expression down pat. When I look at all of her other works, I see that same thing over and over and over again. Time and time again, she masters these expressions.

I wonder what Kollwitz’s mood is like. Her artwork makes her seem like she’d be a really sad person. I hope that she used art as an outlet for her troubled emotions but maintained a

sense of happiness in her day to day life. I'm always interested to match people's personalities with their artwork. Sometimes I'm really surprised

March 1, 2011

This past weekend, I was having a particularly rough day with school and some of my friends. I went home looking for comfort from my mother. When I walked into my home, I found her snuggled up next to her hope chest, sorting through photos, journals, letters, and cards that my sister and I had made over the years. Together, we read through my letters to the tooth fairy, Valentine's Day cards to my parents, wish lists to Santa, etc. We were laughing hysterically. Why did I think it was SO important that Santa know how badly I wanted a stuffed Pooh bear for Christmas? Why was I so concerned that the tooth fairy might not believe that I really did lose my tooth, but I just happened to swallow it? And isn't it funny that I didn't even know what my parents did for a living when I was 4 or 5? It's the innocence of a child that can sometimes soothe our spirits. Children have a way of knowing nothing while somehow knowing everything. Sure, they don't always know what's really important in life, but they are vocal about what's important to *them*.

After leaving my parents' house refreshed and renewed, I began working a little more on my thesis project. Coincidentally, the portion of my thesis I was working on was the art of the children of Theresienstadt. Looking through their drawings, paintings, and poems was much different from looking through my personal childhood belongings. Sadness rushed over me. Actually, almost a sense of guilt. I felt guilt for two reasons: 1) I really thought I was having a terrible day that day, when in reality, it wasn't any big deal at all, and 2) my childhood was so innocent and seamless—NOTHING like the lives of the children of the Holocaust. If you compared my journal from when I was eight or nine to the journal of a child in a concentration

camp, there would be many, many obvious differences. I thought it was a big deal that my mom wouldn't let me eat pizza for breakfast? These children wondered if they'd ever feel full again. I thought it was a big deal that Santa didn't fulfill my requests for Christmas presents? These children were yearning for basic necessities.

It's heartbreaking to look at the artwork of Holocaust children. The fact that they knew (and some had even seemed to accept) that they were not going to live to see the outside of the concentration camp seems so beyond their years. When something bad went on around me when I was little, my mom and dad always found a way to shield me from it, and I never knew it happened. Nothing could protect the children of the Holocaust from knowing their fate. It was too obvious.

March 12, 2011

I've been thinking a lot about how Holocaust survivors react to memory of the Holocaust. Through this project, I've set out to prove the importance of remembering by the general public, but how do the survivors themselves handle the memories? Do they want to share their story at all? How do they expect the person they're speaking with to react?

What does this mean for memory? Of course, if survivors are hesitant to share their story, the public cannot be aware of their individual journey through the Holocaust. I in no way blame these people for not wanting to speak about their past. It's just another milestone that we face in making the public aware. In my experience, it seems that most people react to stories of individuals during the Holocaust more than they relate to stories of the Jewish population as a whole. Individuals' stories are more relatable and thus usually more touching. When Holocaust survivor Frank Grunwald came to speak to my honors class about his experiences, I know I started to think about the Holocaust on a more personal level. As these survivors age and become

fewer and fewer, people will lose the opportunity to have that experience. Getting these survivors' stories on paper is so extremely important as we move into the future.

March 13, 2011

I'm having a rough time with the planning of the art piece I'm creating (not replicating). I feel like I've spent so much time thinking...but not getting anything substantial down on paper. I want to convey that many Jews were forced to stop living before their time. They were murdered, and for no good reason. It wasn't random chance that they were killed, but there wasn't a solid reason why they should be killed either. Their death was justified by heartless claims founded on centuries of stereotypes. They were murdered because of the family they were born into. What if that would happen now? It could happen now, and that's extremely scary to contemplate. What if President Obama decided that all Catholics should be wiped clean from the United States? I don't identify as a Catholic, but my dad is a Catholic. If Obama used the same reasoning as Hitler, that's enough reason for me to be sent away to a concentration camp and killed. The Jews were killed for something that was a part of their family's history, a part of their roots. Now, I just have to figure out how to get all of those aspects rolled into one piece of art.

Something positive has come from this experience of having a rough time brainstorming. I've done a lot more thinking about the Holocaust and how it affects an individual than I have ever done before. I've learned a lot more about myself and become much more aware of the life journeys of others than I would have without doing this project. I no longer have such a selfish view of the world—I think more before I speak, and I try to understand where others are coming from. Maybe they act a certain way for a reason, and who am I to judge them? I might not know the whole story, and I don't need to. I've learned to be much more accepting.

March 22, 2011

I've come a long way since my last entry. I have finished a substantial portion of my creative work, and I did indeed find a way to incorporate all of the items that I wanted to. The main focus of my work is a tree which is alive and blooming. The viewer can see the roots of the tree, and encompassed in the roots is a Star of David. The scene behind the tree is stormy and ominous. Out of the sky comes a giant, swastika shaped bolt of lightning, and it's cracking directly down the center of the tree.

The Jewish people were thriving in Germany before the Nazis came to power. They were subject to ridicule, and they were stereotyped, but within their communities, they were doing fairly well for themselves (as signified by the blooming tree). The Jewish people were the products of many generations of their Jewish ancestors (shown by the Star of David in the roots of the tree). When the Nazis came to power, all of this came to a screeching halt. Even if an individual did not identify as being Jewish but had some Jewish part to their "roots" they were persecuted. At best, Jews came out of the Holocaust broken. At worst, they didn't escape the Holocaust at all. This is shown by the lightning. At *best*, the tree will suffer some damage, but not die completely.

March 24, 2011

I've learned so much through this process of completing my thesis project. I wouldn't have learned nearly as much as I did if I removed any part of my progression. If I hadn't done the research behind each of the artists whose work I replicated, I wouldn't have understood their creative processes as much as I did. If I hadn't replicated their work, I wouldn't have looked as closely at every detail. If I hadn't created my own original work, I wouldn't have thought as deeply about what memory means to me, and what I find most important.

I thank Dr. Frank Felsenstein for all of his guidance. Without him, I may not have taken this project the direction that I did. Dr. Felsenstein made it obvious to me that remembering the Holocaust is important. I hope I can do that for other people.