



# FRAGILE FRAGMENTS

## EXPRESSIONS OF MEMORY

**Lesson Plan for Use with the Holocaust Museum Houston Exhibit**  
On view at Holocaust Museum Houston Nov. 5, 2010 through June 5, 2011

### **Rationale/Purpose for the Lesson**

“Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory” examines the complex relationship between art and loss as seen from the perspectives of several different female artists – Nancy Patz and author Susan L. Roth, Thea Weiss, Ziva Eisenberg and Roz Jacobs. Each of these artists examined the Holocaust through fragments of that history: photographs, poetry or first-person testimonials. Through the work of these artists, questions are explored about how the Holocaust can be and is being remembered and memorialized in the visual arts. Exploring these interpretations of history allows students to consider their own understanding of the Holocaust and its lessons.

As students visit this exhibition, they will be able to consider issues such as how the Holocaust is memorialized in the visual arts and how it will be remembered by future generations. This lesson allows students to actively view the exhibition through a guide that can then be used for discussion in the classroom after the visit.

### **Materials/Teaching Resources Needed**

- Background Information: The Artists and Displayed Works in “Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory”
- *Guide for “Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory”*

### **Activities**

1. **Pre-visit:** Provide students with background information about the Holocaust. The “Guide for Preparing Group and Student Tours” ([http://www.hmh.org/Uploads/PDF/Group\\_Student\\_Tours\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.hmh.org/Uploads/PDF/Group_Student_Tours_Guide.pdf)) has some suggestions that teachers could implement. Teachers also could have students view the overview video of Holocaust Museum Houston available online at [www.hmh.org](http://www.hmh.org) so they are prepared for a visit to the Museum.

Teachers should read the included background information resource to develop the necessary preparation of students for the visit. Students may need help understanding that “Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory” is a group exhibition featuring several artists, each of whom presents a different perspective in remembering the Holocaust. The exhibition can be viewed as having four different sections.

The first section of the exhibition, titled “18 Stones,” features paintings by Nancy Patz, each accompanied by prose poetry by Susan L. Roth. These pieces reflect on life before the war and what will be lost during the Holocaust.

The second section of the exhibition features works by Thea Weiss as she learned of her mother-in-law, survivor Lotte Weiss's experiences in Auschwitz. This section is titled, "2065: A Healed Memory," and relates the events of the Holocaust as well as the survivor's retelling of those events.

How a survivor remembers the Holocaust is captured in Ziva Eisenberg's section titled "The Holocaust Project." The use of drawers and objects to relate the history of the events of the Holocaust, as well as how a survivor might remember these events, is central in these pieces.

The last section of the exhibition features the work of Roz Jacobs. "The Memory Project" reflects a member of the second generation (children of survivors) attempting to connect with what was lost during the Holocaust. As the artist attempts to get to know her uncle by painting him, she explores the experiences of her mother and those who perished.

Teachers should also photocopy the *Guide for "Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory"* for each student, discuss the directions and have the students bring the guide with them for the tour. Students should also bring a pencil to write with. Pens are not permitted in the exhibition areas.

2. **During the visit:** Have students respond to the questions on the handout *Guide for "Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory."*

*It may be helpful to have a few extra copies of the guide and some extra pencils for students who forget them. The Museum does not provide these items.*

3. **Post-visit:** Discuss the guide that students completed, focusing on the questions asked in the guide but also allowing students to consider additional ideas. The guide also could be the starting point for a "Socratic seminar."

### **Additional Resources**

- Art in Response to the Holocaust: <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/artRespo.htm>
- Web site for The Memory Project (Roz Jacobs): [http://www.memoryprojectproductions.com/The\\_Memory\\_Project/Home.html](http://www.memoryprojectproductions.com/The_Memory_Project/Home.html)
- Web site for Thea Weiss: <http://www.theaweiss.com.au>
- James Young's "At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture" (Yale University Press, 2000) and "The Texture of Memory" (Yale University Press, 1993)

### **Assessment**

1. Collect the guide that students have completed for a grade that is appropriate to the teacher's grading structure.
2. Have students complete a journal entry that reflects on this quote in relation to the Holocaust: "How does history become 'personal' – only when it is survived, or only when private lives become public knowledge? What constitutes an 'experience' of history – 'being there,' being told about it (telling it), being taught it (teaching it), reading about it and/or writing it? Or does history become 'personal' when an individual cares about it?" – *Susan Crane, in "(Not) Writing History"*

### **Extensions**

1. In an effort to remember the children who perished during the Holocaust, Holocaust Museum Houston is collecting 1.5 million handmade butterflies for exhibition in 2013. Information about this project can be found on the Museum's Web site at [http://www.hmh.org/ed\\_butterfly1.shtml](http://www.hmh.org/ed_butterfly1.shtml).
2. Students could also be asked to develop a memorial place for victims of the Holocaust at their school or create memorials individually.

## Background Information: The Artists and Their Works in “Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory”

*\*\* This text appears in the exhibition itself.*

### **18 Stones**

**Nancy Patz and author Susan L. Roth**

“In ancient times, stones were used at graves to protect the dead from predators as well as to mark the sites. Today, still, gravestones mark burial places. In Jewish tradition small stones, symbolic tributes, are placed on gravestones for remembrance and respect.

In this spirit, we offer our small stones – 18 prose poems and 18 drawings, inspired by 18 photographs – to the people represented in the photographs. We wish to pay tribute to a family of people whose histories were involuntarily, abruptly, dramatically changed. Some of these histories were stopped short.

We are privileged to have had access to photographs from the Verveer Collection at Holocaust Museum Houston. We were left alone with these photographs, these traces. Somehow, as we studied their faded images, the people seemed to introduce themselves to us.

We used photographic images for the prose poems to help us bring into focus the lives of a family as we imagined them. We used the photographic images for the drawings as the source and inspiration for the faces and surroundings portrayed. And so we offer our 18 symbolic stones to remember and to respect the people in the 18 photographs.”

– Nancy Patz and Susan L. Roth, United States

For “18 Stones,” Patz created a series of drawings, each of which is accompanied by a prose poem by Roth.

### **2065 – A Healed Memory**

**Thea Weiss**

“Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.”

– Lewis Benedictus Smedes

“Lotte Weiss is a Holocaust survivor. She has never forgotten the horrors of her three years of internment at Auschwitz and Birkenau. Yet, it is her immense life force that propelled her through the torture and devastation enveloping her. Her inherent integrity and morality remained steadfast. And it was her capacity for goodness, kindness and love which never faltered throughout the misery and beatings she endured, to give her the strength and the will for survival.

Lotte Weiss is my mother-in-law. Lotte has related these stories of unbelievable and unmentionable horror during the past 35 years. Her memory has remained razor sharp. Her words flow without hesitation. Her voice is calm. There is no bitterness or anger.

The choices I have made for this exhibition reflect Lotte’s courage to withstand all that she has endured – the miracles and her memories.”

– Thea Weiss, Australia

## **The Holocaust Project**

**Ziva Eisenberg**

Eisenberg is an Israeli-born artist currently living in England. Her husband, Joe (Yossi) Eisenberg, is a Holocaust survivor who was born in Poland in 1939. The creation of "The Holocaust Project" was sparked by listening to Houston Holocaust survivor and Joe's aunt, Celina Fein, speak of her personal experience during that time. When Joe was three years old, his father (Celina's brother) put him into hiding. Joe's father did not survive, but before he was killed, he asked his sister Celina to find Joe after the war. Joe survived the Holocaust after being hidden for three years in the attic of a courageous Christian teacher. Celina found him after the war. Two years later, he was reunited with his mother in Israel.

Eisenberg's work is presented in drawers inspired by survivor Erika Blumgrundova's poem "Thoughts":

"Let me replace the album  
Deep down into my drawer  
Not to see it anymore...  
Let the memories sleep  
At the bottom of my soul  
They hurt too much."

## **The Memory Project**

**Roz Jacobs**

In "The Memory Project," Jacobs focuses on her own family's history to explore the convergence of memory, loss and the creative process. The subject is her mother's brother, a young boy, Kalman, who was last seen in Poland during World War II.

"I'm addressing the universal experience of loss. Coming from a refugee family and having had our past nearly wiped out by the Holocaust makes me tenacious about connecting to what came before me.

It's paradoxical to consider this a memory project since I have no direct memory of my uncle. However, during this creative process, I felt connected to him, so that I experience and 'remember' him.

Through this exhibit the lost one can articulate himself and touch others as well. I hope to counter the totalitarian tactic of destroying identity by recreating and reclaiming through art and oral history the child who would have been my Uncle Kalman."

– Roz Jacobs, United States

## Guide for “Fragile Fragments: Expressions of Memory”

A. Please respond to these questions as you tour this exhibition.

1. Complete the chart by filling in responses to these questions:
  - a. What aspect of the Holocaust is this artist memorializing?
  - b. What do you notice about this artist’s work? What draws your attention?
  - c. What one piece by this artist would you like to discuss more? In other words, which piece “speaks” to you, causes you to ask questions or confuses you?

<b>Nancy Patz and author Susan L. Roth</b>	<b>Thea Weiss</b>
<b>Ziva Eisenberg</b>	<b>Roz Jacobs</b>

B. After viewing the works of the four artists and completing the chart, please answer the following questions:

1. How do art and history work together? As you respond to this question, consider the works by all four of the artists.

2. How will you remember the Holocaust and bear witness about these events in the future?

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