

“In My Lifetime”

The title of this series of prints is not simply a statement of fact. For me personally it has a special significance. I was born in 1924 in London, England and in 1939, the year WWII began, I was 14 and a very rebellious teenager. There were frequent disputes with my father about the state the world was in: about the 30's, about poverty, The Depression, anti-Semitism, and WWI and its aftermath and the mess my parent's generation had made of the world. And I would vow "In my lifetime, things will be different."

They were; they were much worse. How profoundly ignorant I was...

In 1982 I retired from practicing Internal Medicine after 32 years. I resumed my avocation in the arts full-time. Actually, it was not a resumption because from childhood onwards and even during my years of solo practice I had created paintings, prints, and even did oxy-acetylene welded steel sculptures. But now I could devote myself full-time to art.

It came as a surprise to me when, around 1985, I created the first, ("Arbeitslager"), of what was to become, over the next five years, a series of intaglio prints devoted to The Holocaust. From time to time images would "seize" me and demand to be realized. They were not abstract. That artform seemed inappropriate for this subject. The images had to be narrative and sufficiently realistic to have meaning and to communicate.

From that time onwards the series became an obsession. Complete pictures would come to me in the middle of the night and although I would resist doing the preliminary drawings and etching the plates, I was, in the end, compelled to do so. Most of the prints began this way and were executed in this manner.

In retrospect I realize that these works were a kind of an act of atonement; perhaps for being relatively unscathed in spite of being bombed in London during the war, and guilt perhaps for the arrogance of my youth. In a sense they were created as an "apology" to my father.

Also a number of my aging patients had been in the concentration camps. Their arms were tattooed. Their families destroyed. They were getting older, dying and their voices were being silenced. I wanted to preserve their memories.

And there were other reasons. Only thirty miles of water, the English Channel, had separated me from the same fate. 1939 was the year I was to have been an exchange student with a young French boy. Because of the unsettled international situation "Peace in Our Time", this was cancelled. And there was a young Viennese girl, Erika, whom my parents succeeded in bringing to our home. Her brother Karl and their mother came later. But their father was murdered by the Germans.

Although America was not directly involved in the Holocaust, it has led the world in presenting the facts. Some countries in Europe are still unable to confront their participation. Two generations later many young people are poorly informed about these events. I have felt compelled to talk about them. By showing these prints to students in universities and community colleges, provoking discussion and combating prejudices, I have realized the greatest satisfaction that my labors could have given.....and always there has been a sense of frustration because there really is no way to create art that does justice to this incredible overwhelming tragedy.

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