

Annotated Bibliography: *Holocaust Art as Resistance*

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Amishai-Maisels, Ziva. "The Complexities of Witnessing." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2, no. 1 (1987): 123-47. PDF.

Summary: Ziva Amishai-Maisels is an art historian, who has published many works that have focused on the Jewish art, as well as the impact of the Holocaust on art. The article, "The Complexities of Witnessing," discusses the Holocaust witnesses' depictions through art. The article focuses on how these works of art were depicted. The artists were eyewitnesses to the atrocities that were occurring around them. All the little details included in these works of art have meaning and add to the overall message the creator intended to get across. In the article, Amishai-Maisels explicitly states that many of these artists were artists before the Holocaust, like Karol Konieczny. Karol had studied in Krakow a year prior to his internment. As a result, their previous experiences could've been incorporated into their art pieces. However, Karol, as well as many other artists, communicated his feelings through visual associations. As one artist noted, the art created were witness reports. They were not meant to be aesthetically pleasing, but instead portray the horror they were experiencing. The art of these witnesses was not a photographic image. These are reactionary pieces that include emotion, even when not intended. Boris Taslitzky, a surviving artist, stated that after liberation his artistic style changed. The Holocaust art he was creating was no longer objective reports of scenes he was seeing, but instead, he was now documenting his memories after the Holocaust. Artists continued their works after the Holocaust as a way to document their experiences but also as a way to survive, living with the memories of the Holocaust.

Significance: The importance of this article is that our understanding of how these individuals were witnessing and depicting the Holocaust deepens our knowledge of the events that were occurring in those specific areas. This article discussed various artists who created these witness reports during the Holocaust. Each artist's artwork was looked at with a critical lens to dissect the work they had produced and understand the

complexities of what they had endured. Dr. Perry's presentation discussed Holocaust artwork as witness reports, which was an overarching theme of her talk. This article provides readers with a better understanding of how witnessed during the Holocaust created art.

Costanza, Mary S. *The Living Witness: Art in the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*. N.p., 1982.

Summary: The author of this book, Mary Costanza, was an artist and a college professor, who was very involved in studying Holocaust art. Costanza includes many pieces of art from prisoners in death camps, Jewish ghettos, and Nazi concentration camps. The artists used art as a way to record the horrors, but also as their way to fight. This was compared to biological continuity, but also brining this information out to the "free world." Many survivors had said that without the graphic representation that these pieces provide, the true sorrow and atrocities of that time period would have been lost. This book includes various works that were used as resistance. Many who worked on secret documents or technical drawings were instrumental with the resistance groups to save the lives of many. However, some of these hidden artists died in action or due to Nazi execution.

Significance: This book provides the reader with examples of artwork that was created during the Holocaust as a result of the persecution and torture these artists experienced. The artwork that Costanza gathered in this book was taken from various museums as well as personal collections to portray the experiences of those witnesses. The book also includes interviews with surviving artists. This provides a diverse collection of artworks that can be used to look at the Holocaust through a different lens. Costanza comments on the artwork with sensitivity and shows that the Holocaust cannot be portrayed in any other way except for suffering.

Milton, Sybil. "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary." In *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, edited by Randolph L. Braham, 147-52. New York, NY: City University, 1990. Digital file.

Summary: Dr. Sybil Milton, the author of this summary, was the leading Holocaust expert of her time. She had been a senior historian for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, a professor, and involved in other aspects of advocacy. The summary denounces the idea of Holocaust art as a style of art. Rather, it's a compilation of art produced by individuals between 1933 and 1945 in various locations, such as ghettos, concentration camps, in hiding, and as resistance. The art in the camps and ghettos was used as an escape from reality. The article denies the glamorization of art, especially Holocaust art. These artists had to scour for any materials they could use in order to portray their experiences. Other artists were commissioned by Nazis to document their work or create portraits as gifts, which gave the prisoners some privileges. There were five types of graphic documentation that was uncovered, which the article further discusses. The various types include portrait, landscape, evidentiary, caricature, and abstract art.

Significance: This article provides a succinct description of the various types of artworks that were uncovered from the Holocaust. Understanding the circumstances that these artists were in gives the reader a better understanding of how and why these individuals created the art that they did. This article also provides the reader with specific examples of certain artists and their experiences as artists during the Holocaust. Dr. Perry specifically mentioned Halina Olomucki, Dinah Gottliebova, and Felix Nussbaum in her presentation, so this article can provide more context for these artists. The various techniques and analysis of the art that the author provides gives the reader a better understanding of the role art played during and after the Holocaust.

Moreh-Rosenberg, Eliad, ed. *Art from the Holocaust – 100 Works from the Yad Vashem Collection*. Compiled by Yad Vashem. N.p., 2016.

Summary: This source from Yad Vashem includes only a few hundred of the works of art created by artists from the Holocaust. These pieces are taken from artists that were Jewish inmates of the labor, concentration camps, and ghettos. This was compiled as a

tribute for the artists from the artworks at Yad Vashem, which is the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem. Many of the artists that were included in this compilation died as a result of the heinous crimes committed during the Holocaust. The collection recounts those who were killed and remember all those that suffered.

Significance: As Walter Smerling, who curated the Holocaust art collection, said, “Art is a powerful response to oppression and terror.” The works of art included in this collection are a testament to the suffering the Holocaust victims endured. The artwork shown includes artists from various backgrounds with different experiences that recount the Holocaust. This source provides the reader with more autonomy to interpret the artwork for themselves and make connections with other secondary sources that have discussed Holocaust artwork in depth.

Rosenberg, Pnina. "Art during the Holocaust." In *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Macmillan, 2006.

Summary: Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, the author of “Art during the Holocaust,” received one of her degrees in art history, while also studying Jewish Resistance. This excerpt focuses on the comparison of the artwork created by women and men, which gives us a better understanding of how their day-to-day activities differed. Through a women’s artwork, it was found that many tried to create as much normalcy in the camps as possible but continuing their previous activities like cooking and cleaning. These women also attempted to maintain hygienic practices as best as they could to look clean and reduce their risk of infection. While many art pieces were produced at different times, the themes were conserved among female artists. Even the artists that created works based on their imagination, the even present reality of suffering was always apparent. Women artists provided a level of hope in their artwork that shined through amidst the horror they were enduring.

1. **Significance:** Female artists also created many important works just as men did. This article discusses the similarities and differences between their works of art. This source provides a comprehensive look into the artwork of women and their impact on our

understanding of the Holocaust. Dr. Rosenberg includes various examples of female artists, including their stories and works of art. This article is can further supplement the reader's knowledge of female Holocaust artists, specifically focusing on Halina Olomucki. Dr. Perry included Halina in her presentation, so this information from the text can further our knowledge of Halina and the art that she created. The author also discusses the common theme among many of these sources, which is documentation. Some artists were more involved in using their artwork as a means of documenting the Holocaust. However, any piece of artwork that is uncovered from that time period is a record of those that suffered.

Artists discussed by Dr. Perry in the program...

2. Halina Olomucki
3. Zalman Gradowski
4. Benjamin Fondane
5. Felix Nussbaum
6. David Olere
7. Dinah Gottliebova
8. Sofia Stephen-Bator
9. Mala Zimetbaum
10. Edward Galinski
11. Yehuda Bacon
12. Josef Szajna
13. Wladyslaw Siwek
14. Zinovii Tolkachev
15. Jan Kowski
16. Ella Liebermann-Shiber