

Fritz Hirschberger

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Absence/Presence

Armenia

Armenian
Genocide

Saul Balagura

Joseph Bau

Buchenwald

Cambodian
Genocide

Crimes Against
Humanity

Presenting Sur-Rational Paintings

The Holocaust Series

by Fritz Hirschberger

Please click on images below to start viewing.



After I saw the paintings I knew:
That's it! This is the way to get involved
you are in the most alive the paintings
in Germany, in my knowledge of that
I'll support it. *Fritz Hirschberger*

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about Fritz
Hirschberger](#)

Images from Hirschberger's Life




Daisy Brand



David Dunne



Robert O. Fisch




Fragments




Judith Goldstein



Diane G. Goodman




Fritz Hirschberger



Diana Kurz



Diplomat
Rescuers



Judith Liberman



Translation of the speech held February 07, 1996 by Dr. Klaus Deubel, Mayor of the city of Dresden, Germany on the occasion of the opening of the exhibit of paintings "THE HOLOCAUST SERIES" by Fritz Hirschberger, at the Townhall for Culture. The exhibit was part of the ceremonies and services held February 13, 1996 commemorating the bombing and destruction of Dresden.

Let me begin with the words of Victor Klemperer, professor of philology at the (then) Institute of Technology in Dresden and a Jew, who entered the following in his diary September 19th, 1941, the first day the Jews were forced to wear the Star of David:

"A decent and respectable looking gentleman approaches me, holding a little boy by the hand. He stops one step in front of me:" Horst (a German boy's name) look at this guy he is the cause of all our misfortune" ...

A well groomed gentleman with a white beard crosses the street, greets me bowing his head and shakes my hand: "We have never met, but I must tell you that I condemn such methods"...

I start to board the front platform of the street car, the only part of the tram the Jews are allowed to use now, and only *if* the platform is sealed off from the passenger compartment, and only for commuting to the factory, but only if the factory is farther than six kilometers from the place where I live. As I am trying to board the tram, somebody is pulling me back saying: "Why don't you walk it's better for your health". I am already late for work, and if I am not on time, my foreman can denounce me to the Gestapo (Secret Police)..

Klemperer writes in his diary that the first day the Jews had to wear the *Star of David* was the worst day of all the twelve hellish years. It happened in Dresden in 1941.

I wish that Horst could be here today, and that he had read Klemperer's diaries, and that he could look at Fritz Hirschberger's paintings today and understand that their content should serve as a warning that it never happens again.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Only five years have past since Dresden has been liberated from sixty years of dictatorship and only now are we free to plan for the future and address the past. The Dresdners too, have to acknowledge what the former German Democratic Republic (DDR) has always denied, that all the Germans, also the ones from the East and not only the ones from the West are both inheritors of the guilt of what was inflicted upon the Jews.

The Dresdners should also realize, that the air raids of February 13, 1945, which brought death, destruction and chaos to our city, also saved the lives of some of the last of the seventy of our Jewish citizens, who were to be deported that day. One of them Victor Klemperer. In 1933 the Jewish community counted 6000 members.

The destruction and the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany defies human comprehension. The Jewish tragedy should silence our citizens for generations in shame and mourning, however it is now more important to discuss and face the past, instead of remaining silent.



Fritz Hirschberger has used his art to address this important issue. The paintings shown here, were created only to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust and are not for sale. We want to thank him for bringing this exhibit to his home town, the town he was forced to leave in 1938.

He has returned to Dresden after sixty years, in spite of the fact that it was here that his agonizing journey began, which brought him to Poland and a Soviet communist slave labor camp. Today he makes his home in San Francisco

I would also like to thank the Dresden chapter of the ChristianJewish Coalition, which has made this exhibit possible. It is my pleasure now to introduce Father Dr. Ulrich who will in his speech explain the reason and the motivation for bringing this exhibit to Dresden.

I thank you

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The Same Fire

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1) The Same Fire

Melting the tallow heretics
Ousting the Jews
Their thick palls flow

Over the cicatrix of Poland, burnt-out
Germany
They do not die.

Grey birds obsess my heart,
Mouth-ash, of eye,
They settle. On the high

Precipice
That emptied one man into space
The ovens glowed like heavens? incandescent

It is a heart,
This holocaust I walk in,
O golden child the world will kill and eat.

from *Mary's Son*, by Sylvia Plath

LOCATIONS: *AUSCHWITZ*BELSEN*CHELMO*
MAYDANEK*TREBLINKA*SOBIBOR*



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Let Us Pray

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2) LET US PRAY THE PERFIDIOUS JEWS

or

NULILA SALUS EXTRA

(NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH)

The first part of the title is taken from a prayer that was part of the Roman Catholic liturgy until it was rescinded by Vatican 11.

In 1984 a small group of Carmelite nuns established a convent at Auschwitz Concentration Camp in a building that had stored Zyklon B the prussic acid used in the gas chambers to exterminate the victims of the Nazis. In addition the nuns have erected a huge cross in front of the building. The nuns believe that praying over the dead will hasten the return of their souls to Jesus. It is morbid and ironic that when the 1,500,000 Jews were murdered at Auschwitz the ones who want to rob the souls of the murdered Jews now, were silent then.

Despite an agreement reached in 1987 between the European Jewish Congress and the Cardinals of Lyon, Brussels and Poland to relocate, the nuns are refusing to move. In February 1990 ground was broken to build an interfaith center outside the camp to settle the dispute between the Polish Catholic Church and the international Jewish organizations. As of this date, April 1993, however the nuns still remain there.



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The Concordat

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3) THE CONORDAT

On July 8th, 1933, the year Hitler came to power in Germany, the Vatican signed an agreement (Concordat) with Hitler, by which the Nazi government promised to respect Roman Catholic rights, practices and institutions in Nazi Germany. In return the Vatican and the German Catholic clergy would support the authoritarian and nationalist stances of the Third Reich.



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Zyklon B

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4) "Zyklon B"

Shamefully
 the blue
 fills rooms
 with death color,
 it swirls
 amethyst-crystals
 to paint
 death onto
 canvas
 forgetting the blue
 of the sea
 to pour death
 through sky
 to take away
 breath,
 deceiving with the
 most beautiful
 of blues,
 raining death
 blue.



Alice Rogoff, San Francisco 1991

Zyklon "B," prussic acid in the form of amethyst-colored crystals, was used in Auschwitz and other extermination camps to murder by gassing the victims of the Nazis. The crystals were dropped through openings in the ceiling of the gas chambers. To fool the victims and to avoid panic, the gas chambers were disguised with fake shower heads to look like regular showers.



Indifference

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5) INDIFFERENCE

Fear not your enemies,
for they can only kill you.

Fear not your friends,
for they can only betray you.

Fear only the indifferent,
who permit the killers and
betrayers to walk safely on earth.

Edward Yashinski,

Yiddish poet who survived the Shoah
only to die in a Communist prison in Poland.



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Darkness USA

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6) DARKNESS U. S. A.

On January 21st, 1943, the Polish Jewish National Committee (ZKN, The political arm of the Polish Jewish Combat Organization ZOB) sent a radio message to New York addressed to Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldman of the World Jewish Congress, and to George Boker of the Joint Distribution Committee. It notified them of:

" The greatest crime of all times, about the murder of millions of Jews in Poland. Poised on the brink of annihilation of the still surviving Jews, we ask you:

1. Revenge against the Germans.
2. Force the Hitlerites to halt the murder.
3. Fight for our lives and our honor.
4. Contact the neutral countries.
5. Rescue 10,000 children through exchange
6. 500,000 dollars for purposes of aid.

Brothers - the remaining Jews in Poland live with the awareness that in the most terrible days of our history you did not come to our aid. Respond at least in the last days of our life. At 6 A.M. on Passover eve, April 19th, 1943, the "last days" began for the Warsaw Jewry as heavily armed SS troops began the total annihilation of the Warsaw ghetto."



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Sun & Moon

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7) THE SUN AND THE MOON SHINE ON ALL:

THE MUTE, THE BLIND, THE DEAF



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Puppets on String

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8) PUPPETS ON A STRING



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Jewish Mothers

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9) TWO JEWISH MOTHERS
and
THE LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE



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Semper Idem

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10) SEMPER IDEM (ALWAYS THE SAME)

Poland, 1946. After the defeat of the Nazis, over 1000 Jews, survivors of the Nazi death camps, were murdered by Poles when they returned to their homes, while the Polish Security Police and clergy stood idly by. After the Shoah in June 1946 the Jewish population in Poland was 240,489. In July 1946 when the programs against the Jews in Poland reached their most serious point, about 150,000 terror stricken Jews fled Poland. The remaining Jews, about 80,000, became victims of the 1967 and 1969 anti Jewish terror campaign by the ruling Communist government. As a result most Jews were forced to leave Poland. Thus after living un-interrupted for 1000 years in Poland, through the combined effort of the Nazis, the Poles and the Communists, the Jewish population of Poland was reduced from over 3,200,000 in 1939 to less than 10,000 in the seventies.



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German 'Chamber' Music

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11) DEISCHE KAMMERMUSIK (GERMAN "CHAMBER" MUSIC)

At Auschwitz/Birkenau extermination camp some of the world's finest musicians were forced to perform for the amusement of the Nazi SS guards, while their Jewish victims were tortured and gassed. Henry Meyer, my wife's cousin, played the violin in one of the death camp orchestras at Auschwitz/Birkenau. He survived and became a protege of Isaac Stern. Henry Meyer and three other survivors of the Shoah, founded the world famous "La Salle" string quartet.



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Forgiveness?

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12) AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE WHAT FORGIVENESS ?



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Hypocritical Oath

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13) THE HYPOCRITICAL OATH!



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Work Liberates

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14) ARBEIT MACHT FREI WORK LIBERATES

Slogan over the main entrance to the extermination camp Auschwitz.



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Last Supper

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15) THE LAST SUPPER AT EVIAN OR THE FISH STINKS FIRST FROM THE HEAD

Delegates from over thirty nations met at Evian, France, from July 6th to July 14th to find a solution to the plight of the "involuntary immigrants" (Jews who had fled Nazi Germany to save their lives). The conference resolved nothing. With the exceptions of Denmark and the Netherlands, the refugees were either refused admittance or only accepted under small limited quotas. The delegates resolved to meet again in the future. They never did. Evian represents a critical turning point in Hitler's policy toward Jews. It confirmed his suspicion that the rest of the world would not act with force to protect the Jews. History has proven him right.



Children's Home

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16) THE CHILDREN'S HOME AT JOZEFINSKA STREET CRACOW, POLAND

"At Jozefinska Street, the Germans started to liquidate the "KINDERHEIM" (Home for children). Wagons arrived into which the children were loaded. The small ones were thrown into baskets and carried to the wagons, several at a time. The older were led to the square and shot at the corner of the blind alley."

From the book *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy* by Tadeusz Pankiewicz, a Polish gentile pharmacist who owned and operated a pharmacy in the ghetto, and an eyewitness to the murder of the children. Publisher "The Holocaust Library," New York. Originally published in Poland.



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Martyr Number #44074

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17) MARTYR NUMBER 44074

Born a Jew, Edith Stein converted to Catholicism and became a nun before Hitler assumed power in Germany. She lived as a Catholic, yet she died in 1942 in an Auschwitz gas chamber as Jew number 44074, during the time of the Concordat.

Today, Catholic again, Pope John Paul II has elevated Edith Stein to Martyr Benedicta of the Cross, the first step toward sainthood.



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The Last Lesson

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18) THE LAST LESSON

A Nazi guard talking to a nine year old Jewish boy who is on his way to be gassed in an Auschwitz gas chamber:

"well my boy you know a lot for your age"

"I know that I know a lot, and I also know that I won't learn any more."

Replies the boy.

From the sworn testimony of witness Wolken. 1965 trial of Nazi criminals. Frankfurt am Main, Germany. From the book account *Auschwitz*,; page 88, by B. Nauman. Publisher F. A. Praeger, New York, NY.



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Herr Landau Comes Home

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19) HERR LANDAU COMES HOME

Arrested in September 1939 in Hamburg, Germany, by the Nazis; Mr. Landau is shipped to the notorious concentration camp "Dachau," located in Bavaria about 15 km northwest of Munich. In Dachau 1941, Mr. Landau is murdered and cremated by the SS camp guards. His ashes, in a cigar box, are delivered by an official of the Gestapo (Secret State Police) to the home of the Landau family in Hamburg. There he throws the cigar box on the kitchen table in front of Mrs. Sala Landau and her daughters, 11 year old Karin and 16 year old Cecille. When asked about the meaning of the box. The Gestapo man's only cynical reply: "Mr. Landau!"

Mrs. Sala Landau dies of starvation in the Lodz ghetto. Karin is murdered by Nazis. Cecille miraculously survives the Shoah. From the German edition of the book *don Asche zum Leben* published in 1992. Author Lucille Eichengreen nee Cecille Landau.



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Stigma of Fragments of Memory

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20) THE WAY OF ALL MY FISH THE STIGMA OF FRAGMENTS OF MEMORY



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Sur Rational

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Sur-beyond; Rational-reasonable showing reason. Sur-Rational-beyond the reasonable

This definition was invented by Fritz Hirschberger after he read the diary of a Nazi doctor at Auschwitz who, in the same entry, described with equal relish the deaths of hundreds of Jews and his delicious dinner. Hirschberger applies the term to the series of Holocaust paintings that he was able to produce only forty years after the war.

Hirschberger, whose father was killed in Camp Dora, Germany, confronted his long suppressed feelings about the Holocaust in 1980 when he began reading hundreds of articles and books about it. He was horrified by the obsessive use of numbers: the numbers of people killed in each camp; the numbers of people exterminated by various methods; the numbers of Jewish villages erased. His anger was also kindled after reading about those people who distorted the details and questioned the existence of the Holocaust, those who collaborated with the Nazis, and the governments who continued to persecute others even after the war, as well as by the supposedly "reasonable" players during the war: the world leaders who turned their backs and shut their eyes to the atrocities being committed. It was then that Hirschberger set out to capture his anger on canvas.

Although the paintings are based on facts, they serve as vehicles for Hirschberger's denunciation of those who betrayed and dehumanized others, rather than as documents. To do so, he needed to develop a new pictorial language that would be more easily understood than his then-current abstract style of painting. Rejecting the forceful expressionistic means of artists whom he admires such as George Grosz and Max Beckmann, Hirschberger peopled his canvases with masked creatures, masks that equally dehumanize the

victim and the victimizer rendered in colors more often used for neutral, decorative subjects. By these means the paintings, at first glance, appear deceptively simple until the strength and horror of each message becomes clear, a message that brings the experience from the general to the personal by isolating the incidents by reducing the astronomical numbers to one. Hirschberger originally created the series between 1985 and 1989. In April 1990 his studio and all the paintings in it were destroyed by fire. Arson is suspected. Hirschberger has re-created the pieces in order that their message not be lost.


With the Sur-Rational series, Hirschberger adds his vision to the vast and growing body of work with Holocaust themes in all media art, film, literature, performance, and TV. The issues of who has the "right" to express the Holocaust and what are the best means to do so are hotly debated and difficult to resolve. As the generation of those who experienced it is fading, artists with no direct links to the Holocaust are responding to it, and a growing number of people are applying "Holocaust" language to current and personal disasters. Some scholars such as Elie Wiesel, believe that the subject can be properly addressed only by those who suffered it: "Just as no one could imagine Auschwitz before Auschwitz, no one can now retell Auschwitz after Auschwitz." Others maintain that artists have the need to respond to something that affects them deeply and that through them the catastrophe will not fade from memory. The Magnes Museum and the University of Judaism believe that one way to keep the memory from fading is to present exhibitions such as Fritz Hirschberger's Sur-Rational Paintings.

-Sheila B. Braufman, Curator
The Magnes Museum



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FRITZ HIRSCHBERGER

Born in Dresden, Germany, during the First World War to a Polish -Austrian citizen from Galizia and a Czech mother, both Jewish, Hirschberger received an education in art and the humanities there, before Hitler came to power.

In 1938 Hirschberger was arrested by the Gestapo, the German Secret Police as an undesirable Polish, Jewish alien. He was given thirty minutes to pack and settle his affairs. The same night he was taken by the Gestapo to the German/Polish border and forced by machinegun armed SS men to cross the border into Poland.

In 1939 Hirschberger fought in the Polish Army against the invading Nazis. After the defeat of Poland the Nazis and Communist Soviets divided Poland. Hirschberger was left in the Soviet occupied zone. There he was arrested once again, this time by the NKVD the Soviet Secret Police. Without any legal procedure he was sentenced to twenty years in a slave labor camp when the NKVD discovered his membership in the militant right wing Zionist organization the Betar. Subsequently he was shipped to a slave labor camp in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Komi, behind the Polar Circle. In 1941 the Nazis attacked their former ally Soviet Russia. As a result Russia joined the Allies, but one of the conditions was, that the Soviets had to release all the Poles. Hirschberger, set free without any means, made his way across Russia to the city of Alma Ata in Kazakhstan. There the Poles liberated from a variety of camps from all over Russia, were to form the Second Free Polish Corps. When Hirschberger arrived at the recruiting camp, he was told to return in a few months since the equipment for the future Polish Army had not yet arrived from Great Britain. To survive the waiting period Hirschberger worked as a cotton picker, blacksmith, and camel driver. In due time he enlisted and his unit was shipped to Palestine. After being equipped, his unit was moved to North Africa to fight against Rommel's forces. Later, he participated in the invasion of Italy.

After the war Hirschberger continued his art education in London before coming to the United States. In New York he worked with artists teaching at the New School on 12th Street. In 1984 he moved to San Francisco, where he resides now. His previous work has been exhibited on the East Coast. His present Sur-Rational paintings have been exhibited in one man shows at:

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY, CA. THE HERITAGE GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, CA. THE PLATT GALLERY, THE UNIVERSITY OF JUDAISM, LOS ANGELES, CA. THE JUDAH L. MAGNES MUSEUM, BERKELEY, CA. THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, EUGENE, OR. BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE, CA. TROJANOWSKA GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO CA.



Berlin 1946

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Fritz Hirschberger with Basia Ancona, Berlin 1946.



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Polish "Anders" Army 1943

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Fritz Hirschberger after El Alamein in the Western Desert 1943.
Hirschberger served in the Polish "Anders" Army.



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Passport

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Passport of Isador Hirschberger, father of artist killed at Dora Concentration camp.



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Hirschberger 1913

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Photo taken 4/3/1913.

The Betarist Fritz on the lap of his mother Hermine, with friends (German farmer & wife) who fed us thru 1914 to 1917 and remain friends til the day we were deported from Germany.

Location: Pfaffendorf, Sächsische Schweiz (Saxon Alps) Saxony, Germany. Name Fran and Herr Schäfer!

P.S. The little boy, my childhood friend died at the battle of Kiev, Russia

Fritz and mama sitting in front of photo.

