

## Portraits Depicting Siblings of South Jersey Holocaust Survivors Part of Exhibit at Stockton

International Artist Manfred Bockelmann's Portraits of Children Murdered in the Holocaust Exhibited for First Time in the U.S. at Stockton's Art Gallery

***For Immediate Release; Watch the film [trailer](#); [Erika Fisch portrait](#)***

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**Galloway, N.J.** – Distant memories and faded photographs are now more vivid and permanent for seven South Jersey Holocaust survivors whose siblings, murdered by the Nazis, were artistically rendered as 5-foot charcoal portraits drawn by international artist Manfred Bockelmann.

He drew the survivors' siblings from photographs provided by the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center to give faces to some of the 1.5 million children murdered during the Holocaust.

His drawings are on display through **Sunday, Nov. 13, 2016** in the Stockton University Art Gallery as part of a larger exhibit, Drawing Against Oblivion, which is being exhibited for the first time in the United States. For gallery hours, directions and parking information visit [Stockton.edu/artgallery](http://Stockton.edu/artgallery).

Ruth Fisch Kessler, of Ventnor, N.J., survived the Holocaust on a Kindertransport to Great Britain, where she was sent by her parents to live with a foster family. She last saw her sister, Erika, who had tears filling her eyes, while saying goodbye at a train station when she was only 5 years old. She will see Erika again, in the form of a portrait that is sharing her family story globally.

One portrait at a time, Bockelmann is honoring the children and their surviving family by sharing their stories and ensuring that the atrocities of the Holocaust will never be forgotten.

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## Drawing Against Oblivion/ page 2

Stockton's Holocaust Resource Center and Maryann McLoughlin, who has written or edited more than 60 survivor and liberator memoirs in the past 12 years through the Writing as Witness program, worked with students to provide Bockelmann with photographs from local survivors.

Bockelmann was born at the height of the Nazi mass murders and was motivated to begin drawing children who were murdered in the Holocaust to answer a haunting question. What happened to the children who were born the same year as he, in 1943, but into the wrong cradles, he asked himself on his birthday in 2010. "Nobody cried for these children because their parents were already dead," said Bockelmann in an award-winning film, *Drawing Against Oblivion*, documenting his mission to preserve history through art.

Marion Hussong, professor of Literature and the Carol Rittner Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, connected Bockelmann, who is her uncle, with the Stockton and wider community because she knew that "our community needs to see these images."

Hussong saw her uncle's first 20 portraits on a visit to her home country, Austria, and on her flight back to the U.S., she realized that he should draw her friend and colleague Murray Kohn's sister, Ida, who was murdered along with his mother and 80 other relatives in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In 2014, Bockelmann flew to Stockton University to meet Kohn, a retired professor of Holocaust Studies at Stockton and Rabbi Emeritus of Beth Israel Congregation, and to present him with a portrait of Ida, the first of seven portraits of South Jersey Holocaust survivors' siblings now on display in the Stockton Art Gallery.

Possession of photographs in concentration camps was forbidden by the Nazis.

Murray Kohn had a family photograph in his suitcase when he was sent to Auschwitz, but when he got off the train, his luggage was gone. An inmate at the camp tasked with sorting the luggage came across the image and recognized his mother. She secretly threw the image over the fence to Kohn, a risk that could have gotten her killed.

Hanna Granek Ehrlich, who was forced to work for the SS, hid photographs in her work files. Her brother, David Dov Granek, was drawn by Bockelmann.

Jadzia Altman Greenbaum hid a photo in her shoes before she was sent to the showers to de-luce. When she returned, her shoes and clothes had already been given away, so she searched until she found the person with her shoes and regained possession of the photograph. Her siblings, Tova and Yossel Altman, were drawn by Bockelmann.

Many survivors have no images because they were left behind or destroyed by the Nazis in the concentration camps with the rest of their belongings. Maryann McLoughlin said that photographs are so precious to survivors because they're often all they have to remember their family members who have been gone for more than 70 years.

"The window is closing, and this is the last generation to have face-to-face experiences with survivors," she said, noting that memoirs and artwork will remain for future generations. **-more-**

### **Drawing Against Oblivion/ page 3**

In addition to the local siblings, other portraits in the series were drawn from imagery captured by the Nazi identification service at Auschwitz (Erkennungsdienst), which was charged with taking, processing and storing prisoner photos of those who were selected for work or medical experimentation. These portraits capture the camp uniforms and the fear in the children's eyes.

Three children in the exhibit were victims of euthanasia who died at a children's hospital in Vienna, the Spiegelgrund clinic. Their parents were told they would be given excellent care and received letters with fake causes of death.

The fourth and final grouping of portraits depict the genocide of Roma and Sinti (gypsy) children.

On **Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2016 at 2:30 p.m.** the Stockton Art Gallery is hosting an exhibition panel discussion that is free and open to the public in the Art Gallery. The panelists are Manfred Bockelmann, Marion Hussong, Andrea Heymann, a Stockton graduate of the Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies program whose capstone project focused on art curation and research for the exhibit, Carol Rittner, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, associate professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and Maryann McLoughlin, director of the Writing as Witness program. The discussion will be moderated by Kate Ogden, professor of Art History.

At **7 p.m.** the documentary "[Drawing Against Oblivion](#)," produced by Final Frame, an international film crew based in Munich, Germany, will be shown in the Campus Center Meeting Room 5. Following the screening, there will be a streamed panel discussion in the same room with Bockelmann, David Kunac, producer, Bärbel Jacks, director, Marion Hussong, and Adrienne Parvin, a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies program. The film documents the artist's portrait project and includes his visit to Stockton in 2014 where he presents survivor Murray Kohn with his sister's portrait. The film won "Best International Documentary" at the Garden State Film Festival in April 2016 among numerous international awards.

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