



### ***The Family I Never Knew***

This could be any family group. Under normal circumstances such groupings would constitute a celebration, a celebration of individuals within a group, a family unit. Most families have some such photograph somewhere. And as such it is something with which one can identify. As with many of the other paintings in the series, the gothic script at first is intended to look formal, familiar and even beautiful but as one becomes familiar with its content it subverts this role and in a neutral way threatens the image. And the element of threat has no human face, merely perverted authority.

The faces of the family members are no more three dimensional and no less two-dimensional than a postcard. No attempt has been made to endow them with corporeality.

#### **Nazi Texts:**

*Ohne Lösung der Judenfrage kein Erlösung der Menschheit*

Without solving the Jewish question, there is no salvation for mankind.

*Erst müssen Juden bluten, erst dann sind wir befreit*

First the Jews must bleed, then we can be freed.

*Die Juden sind unser Unglück*

The Jews are our misfortune.

The names in Hebrew are, from left to right,  
Shlomo (hanged in 1940 by the Germans, after organising resistance)

Yitzhak (murdered by Stalin 1941-42)

Shoshana

Sarah (murdered in Chelmno)

Pesach (murdered in 1940 by the Germans).



### ***Lebensraum***

A girl, a veil of coloured letters, light and joyful but also empty against a white background with a contour of Europe. She is dressed in yellow and beside her is a suitcase that looks too large, not the sort of suitcase one would associate with such a girl. She is slight and young yet, paradoxically, older than her years, weighed with cares she should not know. The map of Europe is separated from her by the word 'Lebensraum', repeated over and over, vertically and horizontally.

Why is she standing there? And what is she standing on? A platform, steps, a tomb- the edge of something. She is being driven out and is looking at us but without the gaze of a refugee or the pathos of the afflicted. It is more difficult to ignore her because it is more difficult to ignore the plight of an individual than the plight of an anonymous group or crowd or community. The flowers she holds are as incongruous as her presence there on the edge.

**Nazi Text :** (repeated) *Lebensraum*

Living space, terminology used to justify expansion and annihilation



### ***Bin gar kein Russe oder Jude...***

Can we define ourselves, or are we defined by others? What happens to us and to others when we define identity? Do we instinctively exploit such definitions? The phrase behind the man sitting is one that has been said before and said in many different ways and formulations. T.S.Eliot put the words into the mouth of Maria in *The Wasteland* Part I (The Burial of the Dead) where she says:

---

*Bin gar keine Russin stamm aus Litauen, echt Deutsch.* The bourgeois man sits solidly and stolidly, self-assured of his position in life and the world. We know he is on some in-between place or landing, stairs leading up and down and his assurance is false. **Text:** *Bin gar kein Russe oder Jude stamm' aus Litauen, echt Deutsch* I am not a Russian or a Jew from Lithuania but a true-blooded German.

---



### **Fremd**

What happens when we spotlight or isolate people?  
Attention/distance. Isolation from normal existence as potentially discriminatory. Age-prejudice. Gender prejudice.

**Text:** *Fremd* (repeated)

Strange, exotic, under Nazi Germany became distorted to mean 'undesirable'. (See Geoffrey Hill's poem *September Song*. "Undesirable/ You may have been..") Fremd: alien, perceived to threaten accepted norms defined by society.



### **Family shape**

An average family, without marks of distinction, ethnicity or religion. This is merely the shape of a happy family.

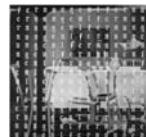


### **Aufräumung**

In a sense comforting as any repetition or grouping can reassure or simplify. Like Renoir's painting *Les Parapluies*. This is a group of hats with heads, bustling, active, agitated into a peculiar spiral. The hats on the periphery of the spiral are empty of heads. This painting links with *Vilna (umsiedlung)*.

**Text:** *Aufräumung*

Literally: mopping up.



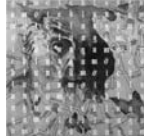
### **Entfernung**

A domestic scene, without people in the process of turning monochromatic.

*Entfernung* of the title refers also to the way in which we distance the subject by removing it from our own polychromatic world. It also relates to the unbridgeable distance, the gulf between the artist and the subject, however much he tries to approach it.

**Text:** *Entfernung*

Distancing. A euphemism for deportation and extermination.



### **Vilna**

Vilna map. Vishniak's photo of the old Chassid.

Viciousness of the understated euphemism *umsiedlung* - "resettlement". My own name (Ardyn) is enclosed within the names of one of the streets (Bernardyn) in the top right. Consciousness of the way in which a single item can permit an individual to identify with something, however trivial that element might be. Consciousness of the way in which people can form idiosyncratic patterns of empathy or interest.

**Text:** *Umsiedlung*

Resettlement – euphemism for expulsion and murder.



### **Grandparents and Great-Grandparents**



### **Balshazar's Feast**

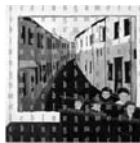
**Text** (in Latin, repeated three times):

*Civis Polonus sum et nihil civitatis Poloniae a me alienum puto.*

I am a Polish citizen and nothing pertaining to the Polish State is alien to me.

A Warsaw Jewish family from the late 1920's.

The writing on the wall (around the picture was the statement by Yitzhak Grunbaum, amended from the Latin:– "I am a Roman citizen and nothing pertaining to the Roman State is alien to me." In Grunbaum's statement he substituted the word *Romanus* with *Polonus*. His support for the Polish republic of Pilsudski was truly representative of the Jewish community. Grunbaum survived and later became a signatory of the Israel Declaration of Independence.



### **The Cheder**

The backdrop shows a deserted Vilna with the Dom (Cathedral), the homes emptying into white. The boys in the *Cheder* are sliding off the foreground and the picture. As with many of the other paintings in the series, the letters cover the surface of the canvas, like a web or veil, separating the viewer from the subject. Besides distancing them from us the letters point out the difficulty entailed in bridging the gap, the abyss between our experience and theirs, the difficulty of understanding another's experience of trauma or violence. The letters form the word *entfernung* are repeated over and over again.

**Text:** *Entfernung*

Distancing. A euphemism for deportation and murder.