

Fabric of Survival

The Art of Esther Nisenthal Krinitz

When Esther Nisenthal Krinitz was 15 years old in 1942, the Nazis ordered the Jews in her small Polish village to report to the train station for a journey they knew would take them to their deaths. But Esther was defiant, and with her mother's blessing, she and her younger sister adopted new identities as Polish Catholic girls and found refuge in a village where people were willing to take them in without papers. Esther and her sister were the only members of their family to survive the Holocaust.

It's a story that has been told many times by many people from many places, but never before through the eye of a needle.

By the time she was 50 and living in Brooklyn, New York, Krinitz was determined to bring to life her childhood experiences in a way that her daughters could see. **Rather than leave her memories in print, she tells her story in vibrant detail through the use of needle and thread.**

Employing different techniques of texture, from stitching to crocheting to embroidery, Krinitz's self-taught, quilt-like panels bring her

compelling story to life once again in memorable detail.



Among the most striking images is Krinitz's stitched image titled "Maidanek," which shows the concentration camp where she went after liberation in search of signs of her family. She found none, but what she did see were rows of cabbages growing in fields fertilized with human ashes, and she searched through piles of shoes looking for some remnant of her family. Said her daughter, Bernice Steinhardt, "They threw away the people and left the shoes."

Krinitz's fabric narrative begins with nostalgic memories of her childhood laced with scenes of village life and her family's Jewish rituals. Even though the fabric images remain bright, her images turn dark when the Nazis march into her life.

She takes us through her wartime odyssey, from the brutality of the Nazis to her nights of fear hiding in the woods and then, finally, to her immigration to America.

Fabric of Survival was created by Krinitz's daughters, Bernice Steinhardt and Helene McQuade, through their non-profit, educational and charitable organization, Art & Remembrance, whose mission is to use art and personal narrative to recognize individual courage and resilience, and to foster understanding and compassion for those who experience injustice.

TEMPLE MUSEUM

Fabric of Survival: The Art of Esther Nisenthal Krinitz, a collection of 36 fabric panels created and hand-stitched by Krinitz, will be on display at the Temple Israel Museum from March 16 – May 13, 2016.

Go to artandremembrance.org for additional details.