

# Spirit of resistance now on display

BY RAYMOND BALDINO  
Staff Writer

Works by artists Marius Sznajderman, Jerzy Bitter, and Todd Weinstein, on exhibit at the Puffin Cultural Forum in Teaneck until Feb. 25, showcase the spirit of resistance during The Holocaust. The series of photographs, woodcuts and paintings commemorate the struggle to survive even under the darkest conditions and includes art addressing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943.

Sznajderman, a Hackensack resident and painter, said he composed his "Maquette for the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt" to contribute his interpretation of history.

"It's such a horror story, tied to treason. The people thought they would be saved. They were praying and hoping for a miracle" he said. "I wanted to give a symbolic history of the events."

The revolt led by 6,000 Jewish fighters, in response to the Nazi attempt to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto, resisted SS troops for a month, pitting pistols and Molotov cocktails against heavily equipped infantry and tanks. The rebellion was ultimately defeated, partly through the use of poison gas, and almost all of the insurgents perished in the fighting.

Sznajderman's maquette details aspects of that heroic struggle. In one corner of the piece, a terrified woman holding a young child seeks cover from a mechanical German soldier wielding a spear. Across the bottom of the painting, a narrow thin space depicts the sewers where many ghetto inhabitants sought refuge against the German onslaught.

Another painter featured in the exhibit, Jerzy Bitter, was a child when he was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto by his mother. He and his mother remained in hiding in a Gentile household for the



"Entombed"

duration of the war. Bitter said the experience of being saved might have helped him remain hopeful about life despite his traumatic experiences.

"I'm not depressed or sad when I think about the past," he said. "It was a horrible thing, The Holocaust... but there were beautiful people; a teacher saved us. There's always hope."

His paintings often incorporate Christian symbols as they address The Holocaust. Bitter said that his experience of being surrounded by

Christian symbols influenced his work, which has been compared to the expressionism of Edward Munch. He described a feeling of obligation to those who died in painting the themes of The Holocaust.

The photographic work of Todd Weinstein draws on Talmudic tradition to sound another hopeful note. According to a mystical story, thirty-six righteous people are always responsible for saving the world, even though they are unknown even to themselves. If

one of the thirty-six unknown were to disappear, then the world would end.

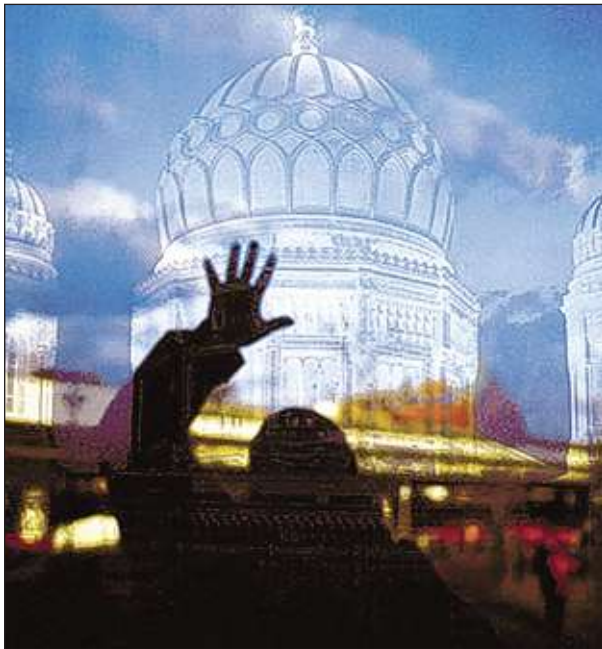
Weinstein's series of photographs "The Thirty-Six Unknown" features bricks, stone, sign posts and other subjects taken in places related to The Holocaust. As he traveled through Europe, visiting places such as Auschwitz and Birkenau, Weinstein began to see hidden faces and forms, which he connected to the unknown individuals, referred to in the Talmud.

"I had been photographing these stones and rocks on walls, and began to think—maybe they were the thirty-six unknown," he said "I kept asking myself what could have saved the world during that time of the war. When you stand in Auschwitz, and all these horrible places, and ask what could've saved the world? Nothing rationally came to mind."

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**The Chronicle**

210 Knickerbocker Rd.  
Cresskill, NJ 07626-1890  
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The Chronicle publishes every Friday. Offices are located at 210 Knickerbocker Road, Cresskill, NJ 07626-1890. Postage paid at Hackensack, NJ 07601 and at South Hackensack, NJ 07606. Single copy: 25¢

Postmaster: Send address changes to Community Newspapers of North Jersey Media Group, 210 Knickerbocker Road, Cresskill, NJ 07626-1890. We are not responsible for typographical errors.

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