

## A Triangle for a J

32" x 40", 2007. Acrylic on canvas, collage, fluorescent Plexiglas.

*David Feinberg, with drawing contributions from Holocaust survivor Margot De Wilde and artists: Caroline Kent, Malorie Binn, Veronica Williams, Lauren Haberly and Nile Eckhoff*

From the estimated 1,000,000 to 2,500,000 people who died at Auschwitz during the Holocaust, Margot De Wilde is one of few who survived. Margot tried to escape across the Swiss border by using counterfeit I.D. papers that omitted the J, which was an identifier for Jews. Unfortunately her attempt failed and she was taken to the concentration camps of Auschwitz.

The art team wanted to make a portrait of Margot, but she insisted that we make a portrait of her arm, which contained the tattoo of her numbers. Positioning her arm directly onto the painting it was traced and her numbers were drawn onto the outline.

The upside down triangle below the numbers became the new identifier that she was Jewish. Auschwitz and Birkenau were the only camps where identification numbers were tattooed onto the arms of the prisoners. All other concentration camps had the numbers attached on prison uniforms.

Margot had mentioned that on one side of the tracks sat the bricked village of Auschwitz where she was held and across the tracks was the expanded wooden camp of Auschwitz II (Birkenau). Unaware of the atrocities to come, at first glance Auschwitz I appeared to be a quaint little brick village and Birkenau in contrast appeared ominous with its rows of barracks for miles. In the painting the two camps are separated by the letter "J" which came directly from the identification card placing the Auschwitz camp above and the Birkenau camp below.

In the upper left hand corner of the painting, Margo drew a medical device. Her role in the medical unit allotted her to give injections to various individuals without truly understanding the reasoning behind who received them and why. This object has stayed in her mind ever since.