"Born Into Darkness"

2013.   Mixed media wall construction, collage, and Plexiglas. 23"w x 23"h x 5.5"d.

David Feinberg and Beth Andrews, with contributions from Bruno Chaouat and his mother, Sarah Chaouat, and from artists Rowan Pope, Emily Weber, Dylan Hansen, Antony Lakey, Michele Coppin, Rachel Quast, Sabine Darling and writer Carissa Hansen.

Sarah Chaouat was born in 1940 in German-occupied France. Her father and mother posed as Catholics while being members of the French underground. During the war, Sarah's mother sewed Resistance armbands, which is why an image of a French underground armband is pictured on the right side of the piece with a sewing machine underneath. Oddly, the mayor of the town Sarah grew up in knew that her parents were part of the Resistance, but he didn't report what he knew even though his wife was working voluntarily as a Nazi official.

In the center of the piece, Sarah placed a fraction of her mother's picture juxtaposed next to an almost full picture of her father, making one image. Sarah felt compelled to make this artistic move because, as she says, "My father thought he was in charge but it was really my mother in charge."

In 1944, a German soldier on a search mission kicked the door open to Sarah's home while her mother was sewing French Resistance armbands. Sarah, just 4 years old, approached the soldier and said, "boots, rifle, helmet, you must be a soldier." The soldier admired the child and did not proceed to investigate the sewing machine and left. Unbeknownst to her, Sarah innocently saved her entire family from torture and death. Sarah chose the figurine of the WWII German soldier featured in the piece because the pose of the soldier is exactly how she remembers it.

Sarah frequently goes back to visit the town she grew up in, in an attempt to get a better understanding of what transpired there during the war.