

## **“Roll of the Dice”**

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.***

Bruno Chaouat, the son of Sarah Chaouat, a woman who was born in occupied France during 1940, grew up hearing stories about his mother and grandparents during World War II. Although Bruno did not experience the war directly, the devastating effects of the war still linger in his psyche because of the collective memories that he and his family share. For instance, Bruno says that he can still hear the sound of marching boots, hence the fragmented image of a Nazi boot on the left side of the piece, taken from *Book of Alfred Kanter*. Along with the images representing Bruno’s family and the war, Bruno is pictured as a child innocently playing on the beach on the upper right side of the artwork, further signifying that he grew up wholly immersed in images and memories of the war.

Bruno’s grandmother, a member of the French Resistance during the war, is pictured in the middle of the piece. During the war, she orchestrated and led the daring escape of her husband, who was being held in a Gestapo prison, with the help of the underground Resistance. Bruno’s grandmother went into the prison and threw blood on her husband in an attempt to claim that he was ill. The Gestapo allowed Bruno’s grandfather to go to the infirmary. It was during this transfer from the prison to the infirmary that Bruno’s grandfather escaped and was rescued by the French Resistance. The placement of Bruno’s grandmother in the middle of the piece illustrates the significance of her role in Bruno’s grandfather’s escape.

Bruno’s mother grew up living in an isolated house directly across from a train station where she watched many soldiers come and go. Bruno chose the railroad tracks and the train station that appear in the piece because they represent powerful images of escape. However, Bruno says that survival during the war had little to do with intelligence, but rather was akin to the roll of a dice like the ones seen rolling along the sides of the piece.

The Star of David that is reflected in the mirror is a photograph of the patch that the Nazis made Jews wear. Bruno has it framed in his home and he shows it only to select visitors. Although the memories and stories of his family and the war are very much part of Bruno's life, very few of his colleagues know about his family's involvement during WWII, which is why the yellow star is only seen in a mirror reflection.