

EMBLEM AND ARTIFICE: WITHERED SYMBOLS OF THE WAR

Photography by J. Jason Lazarus

Exhibition reflection essays by

Erin Gratz, MLIS

Librarian of Web and Instructional Technology and Associate Professor

Jason Neidleman, Ph.D.

Professor of Political Science

Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography
October 24 through December 16, 2016



Camp Triangles, © 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

A reception for the photographer will be held in the Carlson Gallery
Thursday, November 10, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

J. Jason Lazarus describes this work...

1945: In a world ravaged by the Second World War, wounds ran deep. Seemingly permanent, the trauma inflicted and lessons learned from this global conflict were etched into the minds of the millions who suffered its effect. The horrors, the heroism, the defeats, and the victories were carved into the collective psyche of a generation. Surrounded by reminders of this conflict, these brutal memories were similarly imprinted onto all manner of remaining artifacts: from a fallen soldier's uniform to the flag of an oppressive regime. Most potent were the symbols that had defined the conflict itself: icons of fear and hope, oppression and resistance. These rival concepts were often embedded within the same symbol, even though history tends to remember only one perspective. Coupled with the memories of a world on fire, these symbols were emblazoned with the regrets as well as the hopes of all.

Looking back seventy years later, the turbulent and strong-willed WWII generation has nearly passed on, and with them their painful memories. Those once-formidable symbols representing the collective regrets of a generation have begun to wither and we find ourselves foolishly retracing the paths of our prior mistakes. As much as history holds lessons for us to learn, its narrow perspective often defines regrets shallowly, failing to remember the depth of our mistakes. This series of faded symbols, collected from dozens of sources and a year of research, intends to shed light on their meaning while reflecting on the lessons learned. To appreciate a symbol of hope, we must first understand why people feared it. To understand an insignia of hate, we must understand how and why it inspired a following. No reflection is complete without understanding its source. Thus with each emblem, there exists an artifice.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” – George Santayana

Process: Using Kodabromide Paper that expired on August 1, 1945—five days before the Hiroshima bombing—the paper is coated with a resistant topcoat and the design cut into the coating. Exposed to light, the paper is then alternated between developer and fixer (one print starts in the developer while the other starts in the fixer, and then alternated), allowing the chemistry to eat away the resist, exposing the paper to the chemistry. This action creates rust-like, decaying patterns of alternating exposed and undeveloped (yet “fixed”) areas. Once the entire resist is washed off, the print is fixed completely and washed. For this exhibition, the images presented are archival inkjet prints based on digital scans and enlargements of the original images.



-J. Jason Lazarus
October 24, 2016

About J. Jason Lazarus...

Early on, I used photography simply as a way to document my excursions around Alaska. Having lived in the Arctic for the last twenty years, I have seen my fair share of moose, mountains, and aurora. These conventional “Alaskana” photographic subjects held little interest to me. With a passion for history, archeology and navigation, I quickly sought out early maps of the local area after moving to Alaska. The maps of the Tanana Valley, peppered with the names of hundreds of abandoned Gold Rush towns, piqued my interest in investigating these hidden elements of local history. With my camera in tow, I went exploring, hoping to find something left that was worth rediscovering. Over the past decade, the mines of Alaska have served as a constant muse for me, as I have sought to tell their stories in my recently-completed graduate project, *Stories Fading Fast: Capturing the Remnants of the Alaska Gold Rush*. This project pairs photographs of forgotten personal artifacts with apparitions of past miners, intending to imbue the neglected buildings and ephemera with the faded stories of our pioneer past. By doing so, I hope to convey the importance of these spaces and these artifacts as we continue to evolve as a state.

While creating *Stories Fading Fast*, I continued my work at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, serving as an adjunct professor and darkroom manager for the Communication and Journalism Department since 2005. After starting to pursue my MFA in Photography in 2010 at the Academy of Art University, I was inspired to create a variety of short-form and seminar-based classes in alternative photography and historical photographic processes. These analog-focused, hands-on processes have not only become part of my thesis work, but are now the focus of research I have taken on since graduating with my MFA in 2014.

My early focus on overlooked stories and neglected narratives in *Stories Fading Fast* follows me still in my latest body of work, *Emblem and Artifice*. Similarly influenced by my passion for history, *Emblem* is inspired by a visit to Dachau Concentration Camp at age nine. Touring the gas chambers of the death camp and staring into the ovens of the crematorium left an impression on me that was never forgotten. As with all of my work, I inspire to use photography’s narrative power to provide insight and reveal the hidden elements of the world around us.

-J. Jason Lazarus
October 24, 2016

Jason Neidleman
Professor of Political Science

J. Jason Lazarus calls this exhibition *Emblem and Artifice: Withered Symbols of the War*. For the project Lazarus used materially withered Kodabromide paper—which expired days before the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima—to capture morally withered emblems of World War II, such as “Arbeit macht frei” (which tortured prisoners of German concentration camps with the false hope that they could one day be set free), Executive order 9066 (which ordered the internment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry), Tokkō Tai, commonly referred to as the “Kamikaze” (pilots persuaded to commit suicide by flying their planes into enemy targets), and the Swastika itself, which the German Nazi Party adopted as its symbol. Some of the emblems represented in the photographs are not particularly withered, such as the star of David (which Jews continue to proudly embrace), the White Rose (which still symbolizes resistance to oppression). All of them are connected by the fact that they played some role in World War II.

Lazarus’ use of long-expired Kodabromide paper serves as a palpable evocation of the past. The effect is to contextualize the images so as to transport the audience back in time, while simultaneously problematizing the question of what it might mean to recapture the past in the present. We, of course, have access to many artifacts from the War, some of which are marked by the very emblems that Lazarus has selected for this exhibition. (Few were more scrupulous record keepers than the Nazis.) But this project does something different, something more. Lazarus’ work is not only a representation of the past; it is a reflection on *how* artists might evoke the past in ways that resituate the audience toward the events and emblems represented in the present.

The hue of the images evokes for me not only something that is likely quite old but equally something that is likely to have been exposed to damaging influences. One might even imagine that items recovered from bombing raids in Germany or Japan would resemble the images Lazarus has created for this project. In this way, the spectator might experience viscerally the relationship between the symbols installed on the gallery walls and the terrible violence for which they have become emblematic.

For me, the primary experience of this exhibition has been to open a window onto an extremely significant period in history. The events of World War II now stand at the edge of living memory, but that war is still in many ways point of origin for the way we understand ourselves and organize our societies today—our emphasis on human rights, our revulsion toward the idea of total war, our dedication to non-proliferation, and our understanding of evil. As the war begins to fade from living memory, it will be more important than ever that artists and scholars continue to remind us of just how horribly wrong things can go if we do not remain vigilant in our commitment to justice.

-Jason Neidleman
October 24, 2016.

Erin Gratz

Librarian of Web and Instructional Technology & Associate Professor

When light reflects on the water, pockets of illumination and darkness form. The same occurs when light shines on metal. Lazarus's work using Kodabromide paper and the chemical process does the same. Areas of lightness morph into areas of darkness creating the background to feature symbols of some of humanity's more tragic and turbulent times. Lazarus invokes history through symbols and iconography, of time not all that long ago, to stress the fear and hope during World War II. He delves into a global history that is simultaneously rooted in our local history of a Japanese internment camp. His process repurposes something from the past to give it new life, thus transforming expired photograph paper into art.

You may be familiar with Protestant Pastor Martin Niemöller's historical quote ending with "Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me." His World War II era statement served as a call to speak out against injustice and persecution. Out of the fear and the hate of World War II, people continued to find hope to end oppression through the resistance movements. These groups spoke out and worked to reject the social norms of the day and bring an end to the tyranny. Lazarus represents the symbols of hope, resistance, and freedom in his works: *Kotwica*, *Paperclips*, and *Die Weisse Rose*. *Paperclips – Norwegian Resistance* is such an innocuous symbol, the paperclips are illuminated and seemingly almost glow in Lazarus' work. This image holds the hope of the past while speaking to the hope of the future. It is a call that hope must persist. Today, resistance groups and social movements continue to speak out against injustice and work to end racial, LGBTQ, and economic oppression within our communities.

Lazarus uses the symbol of the chain link fence to represent the 1942 order to detain Japanese Americans in internment camps in *Executive Order 9006- United States of America*. I did not learn about this part of American history until I was in my mid-twenties. A friend of mine illustrated a young adult book about an Aleut girl living in an internment camp outside Ketchikan, Alaska (where I was living at the time). I was stunned and horrified that the American people and the United States government perpetrated these egregious acts. As I continued to learn more about Executive Order 9066 and the camps, I discovered a temporary detention center was located at the L.A. County Fairgrounds in 1942, only blocks from where I grew up. History can feel distant and removed from us, yet very quickly it can become intimately local and relevant. The University of La Verne Archives has a collection of diaries from people who were in these internment camps and later moved to La Verne, emphasizing the local repercussions of World War II and Japanese American internment. We are now approaching the 75th anniversary of the signing of 9066, what have we learned as a society from our history? Lazarus reminds us of twentieth-century philosopher George Santayana's statement, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

J. Jason Lazarus's discovery of Kodabromide Paper could have resulted in many actions, including ignoring it as old and expired, and therefore discarding it. Lazarus found inspiration in this paper with an expiration date so close to the bombing of Hiroshima, and decided to use it in order to make a powerful statement. The paper became a way to resuscitate and bring to the forefront of our memory a painful time in history. As neither a photographer nor chemist, I have very little understanding of the technicalities that went into his process to make these images. However, there is power in the creative process that is built on ideas, works, or experiences of the past to create something new.

-Erin Gratz
October 24, 2016



Atomic - American Forces

© 2015 J. Jason Lazarus

Harnessing the power of the atom was a symbol of hope for many. It promised a quick end to the conflict in the Pacific. Perhaps this was a grim thing to hope for, but it was seen as a solution, nonetheless. In the years following the conflict, the atomic age promised clean and abundant energy from this new resource. Often ignoring the catastrophic potential, scientists, politicians and propaganda worked together to promote peaceful uses of our atomic resources. Multiple plans were drafted to start using the atom bomb as an alternative to traditional construction methods. In Alaska, Operation Chariot hoped to use the bomb to create new ocean harbors while Operation Carryall planned to use controlled nuclear explosions to cut I-40 through California's Bristol Mountains.

Meanwhile, the destructive power the bomb had on the population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was covered up and ignored by many. Between 90,000-140,000 people died in Hiroshima, and another 39,000-80,000 died in Nagasaki. Many died in the initial flash of the bomb while others lingered for days, weeks, months, and years. The survivors were heartlessly studied by outside observers that often treated the affected as lab rats.



*Executive Order 9066 -
United States of America*

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Executive Order 9066 established internment camps and rounded up American citizens of Japanese decent. Legitimized by the fear that these citizens may sympathize with Imperial Japan and commit sabotage or espionage against their new home, over 120,000 Japanese-Americans were quickly rounded up and taken to hastily constructed camps. Many family businesses were lost, looted, or taken over by neighbors. Most who were imprisoned reacted to this order peacefully and made do with life within the fences. It is only recently that those who were interned have started to speak out about these atrocities. No Japanese American was ever found guilty of sabotage or espionage.



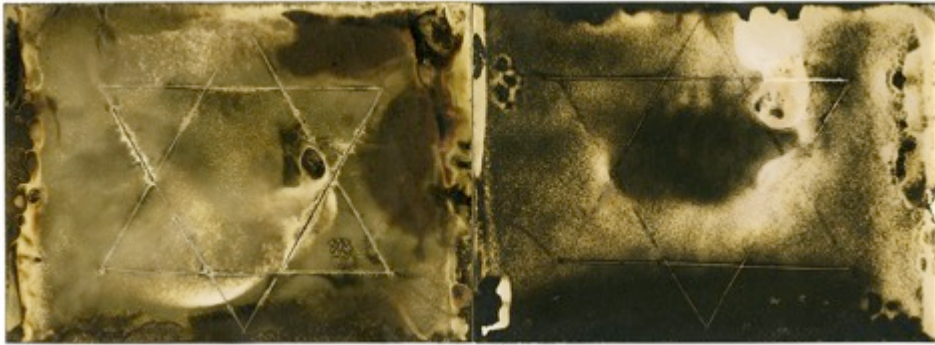
Luftwaffe - Third Reich
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Bombarded by the massive air power of the Luftwaffe, the British People lived under the near-constant terror of aid raids by German Forces. America's distance from both the European Campaign and the Pacific Front made it easier to ignore the ongoing conflict, delaying their entry for years. Were the threat more real, how many lives could have been saved?



"Shikata Ga Nai" - Japanese / Japanese-Americans
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

"*Shikata Ga Nai*" translates to "It cannot be helped" and embodies a key element of Japanese culture, one that focuses on looking past the moment and tending to what is important rather than being overly emotional. Japanese-Americans who were evicted from their homes and interned in barren, desert camps often used it, knowing that anger and hostility would not solve their problems. Similarly, even those that experienced the destruction of Hiroshima were known to use it in the weeks and years following the bombing as they struggled to find medical care, repair their homes, and find their remaining family members, often living as an outcast. It is not hard to draw the conclusion that Americans took advantage of this distinct cultural difference to intern the Japanese-Americans and to study bomb victims as they did.



Judenstern - Third Reich

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

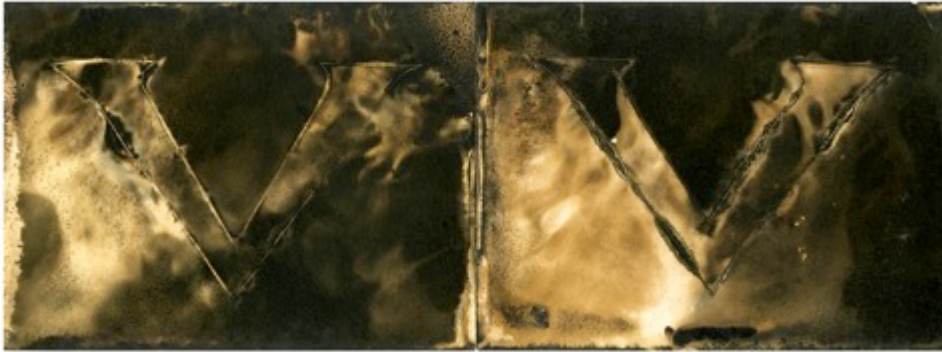
Perhaps one of the most recognizable symbols out of the series, the Star of David was cruelly used by the Third Reich to brand European Jews. All Jews were required to wear the yellow star on their clothing. Jews found themselves experiencing a new wave of antisemitism during WWII, as they came under attack for a wide range of alleged crimes, including causing Germany’s economic decline. For the Jews, the star took another meaning as it segregated them from their communities, targeted their families for random attacks and, eventually, would lead to the death of over six million Jews in Hitler’s “Final Solution.”



Tokkō Tai - Imperial Japan

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Tokkō Tai, more commonly referred to as the “Kamikaze,” represented a revolutionary, albeit terrifying, tactic in modern warfare. Japan’s military defenses had no quick answer to the might of the Pacific Fleet and were struggling to take down air carriers, which represented a huge threat to mainland Japan. Taking advantage of their own soldier’s fervent support of the emperor, this plan used their own citizens as sufficiently sized bombs. This strategy was unnerving to the Americans, who had no answer to such a drastic attack. The Kamikaze raids, however, had minimal effectiveness and often involved most planes being shot down before they ever reached the carriers.



V for Victory - Allied Forces
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Simply put, for each victor, there is also someone who has lost. This massive conflict saw demoralizing losses on both sides, drastic strategies used against both sides and, of course, outcomes and solutions that both sides would come to regret in the years to come. How sweet was this victory?



Die Weisse Rose - German Resistance
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

It may be easier to assume that the German people were unified under the Third Reich—perhaps blind to their atrocities—but nonetheless complicit. The historical record, however, says otherwise. Where the resistance efforts of France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Poland were certainly well-documented, the efforts of the White Rose happened under Hitler’s nose: right on German soil. The leaflets distributed by this little-known resistance group preached freedom. As a result of their opposition, they were quickly stamped out. A thorn in the side of the Third Reich, these efforts gave hope to all suffering under an oppressive regime: no matter how small your voice is, it deserves to be heard.



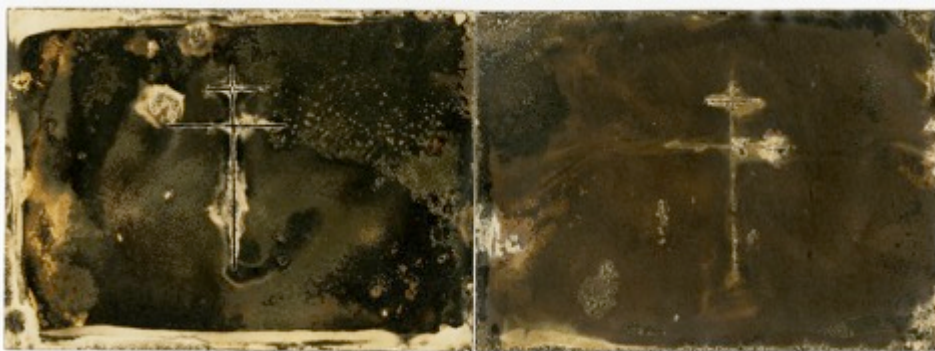
“Reisan” / Zero Fighter - Imperial Japan
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

The Zero Fighter defined the Pacific Conflict. Its involvement in the attack on Pearl Harbor was a call to arms for the United States and drastically changed the playing field. Its evolution, from fighter to Kamikaze attack vehicle, would be seared into the memory of many American sailors.

*Zyklon B - Third Reich*

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Zyklon B was the terrifying solution to dwindling German troop morale at the concentration camps. Tasked with the disposal of prisoners no longer deemed useful, German troops initially formed firing squads, killing thousands upon thousands of prisoners in this manner. This direct involvement in the murder of prisoners and the subsequent body disposal was not only demoralizing to German troops, but was also terribly inefficient. Hastily constructed gas chambers allowed hundreds to be murdered with only a skeleton crew of German soldiers, while a unit of prisoners called the *Sonderkommando* handled body disposal. Mass extermination by gassing was soon used as a way to thin the crowd of new transports to many of the concentration camps. Elderly and the young were immediately eliminated. This terrifying new reality was one that European Jews, political prisoners, and other detainees had to come to grips with as they were transported on cattle cars to death camps throughout Central Europe.

*Croix de Lorraine - French Resistance*

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

The effort of the French Resistance stands in stark contrast to post-war misconceptions of the French people: painful stereotypes that perpetuate today. The versatility of this resistance group—from perpetrating sabotage to publication distribution, as well as assisting in the Normandy invasion—is worth remembering.



Hakenkreuz - Third Reich
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

I avoided creating this piece for a long time, knowing the horror this symbol communicates for those who suffered under it. I did not want to take it lightly or to naively use this symbol of hate and let it pollute the intent behind the entire series. Because of this, I only represent part of it, weary of displaying it in any way at all.

Without a doubt, the Hakenkreuz (more commonly called the Swastika) looms over the entire war with a frightening power. Seen as a powerful emblem for nationalism at a difficult economic and social time for Germany, this symbol unified many under the disturbing rhetoric of the Nazi Party. Once the full extent of the wartime atrocities were understood worldwide, this symbol quickly morphed into an emblem of shame for many Germans. For those that lived under this banner, the fear and swift action it brought with it was cataclysmic and those memories continue to scar German families decades after the fall of the Third Reich.

There is much to be learned from how this symbol came to be and how the Nazi Party rose to power. Finding parallels between pre-war Germany and what is happening in the world today is both sobering and terrifying.



Hammer and Sickle - Soviet Union
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Looking back, it is difficult to imagine that differences between Russia and the rest of the West were once put aside for the greater good. Aligning with Russia gave the United States a powerful ally in the war, and one that America significantly bolstered with projects like the Lend Lease program. This program saw American-made planes flown by dozens of teams through the Canadian Arctic to Alaska, then rebadged as Soviet planes and flown toward Siberia as part of the war effort. Once the Nazi Regime was extinguished, tensions between the West and Russia exploded into the Red Scare and the Cold War.



Italian Fascism - Italy

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Often overshadowed by the overwhelming power and dangerous rhetoric of the Nazi Party, Italy struggled with its nationalistic identity during World War II as well.



Kilroy - Allied Forces

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Kilroy was often regarded as a super soldier who always found himself in front of the Allied troops as they advanced through Europe. Used as a morale-boosting device, Kilroy reassured all those that followed him that they, too, could succeed. As for the other side, Kilroy's advance must have signaled the end.



The Motherland is Calling! - Soviet Union

© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

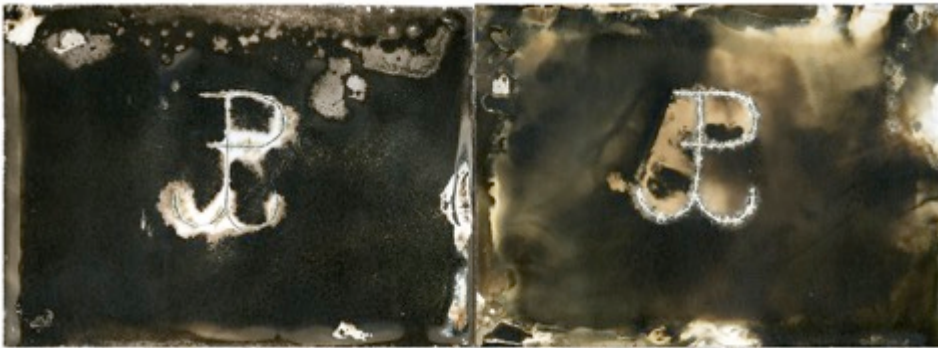
This slogan, among hundreds of others from dozens of countries, represents a call to arms for the Soviet people. Propaganda held center stage as a major tactic of both sides used it to inform, inspire, distort reality, and outright lie to target populations. These inspirational or demoralizing messages provide unique insight into the conflict, revealing perspectives often hidden from the textbook version of history. Although such fervent inspirational messages seemed to have faded from the limelight of more modern conflicts, they still exist and should be cautiously observed.



Paperclips - Norwegian Resistance

© 2015 J. Jason Lazarus

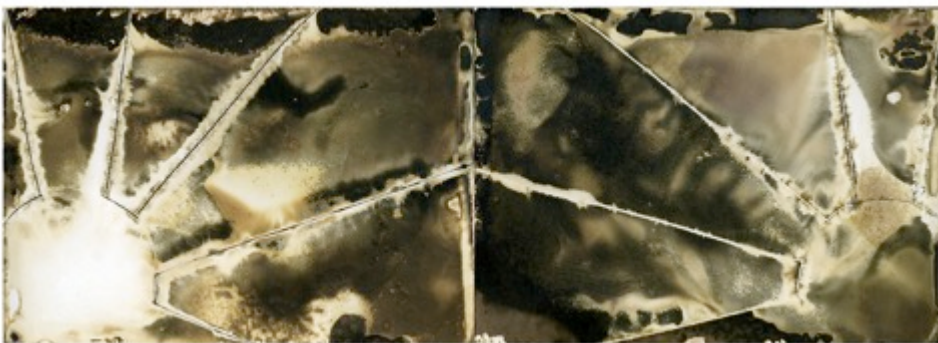
Resistance groups often needed to use passive symbols of opposition to the occupying force. These emblems of hope often remained hidden in plain sight. The paperclip was that symbol for Norway, coming from an inaccurately attributed creation of the paperclip by a Norwegian citizen. Even symbols as innocuous as these were eventually recognized by the occupying regime and snuffed out.



Kotwica - Polish Resistance

© 2015 J. Jason Lazarus

Although there were many early movements that signaled war, the German and Soviet invasion of Poland was the defining blow that initiated the war. Placed between two occupying forces, the Polish people did not take the occupation lying down.



Rising Sun - Imperial Japan

© 2015 J. Jason Lazarus

Unlike the symbol-rich European Theater, the Japanese military might was unified behind one overarching symbol: the Rising Sun.



Camp Triangles - Third Reich
© 2015 J. Jason Lazarus

The Judenstern, or Star of David, often is remembered as the symbol that all concentration camp prisoners wore, and although certainly the Jewish people suffered terribly within these camps, the black and white photographic records of the camps don't tell the entire story. Separate, overlapping triangles were used to identify other groups of prisoners: red triangles for political prisoners, purple triangles for religious prisoners, pink triangles for homosexuals, etc....



*"Arbeit Macht Frei" - Work
Makes You Free - Third Reich*
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Emblazoned on the gate of many concentration camps, consider what this simple saying would come to mean for those on opposite sides of the fence.



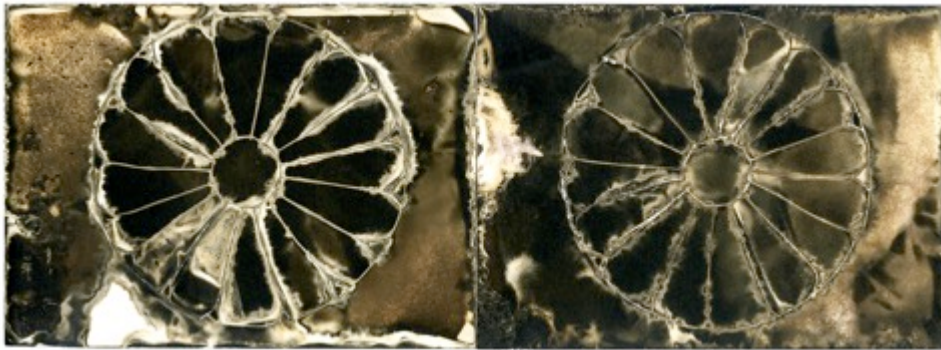
Schutzstaffel - Third Reich
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus

Out of Hitler's troops, the SS were the most feared. Their atrocities included Gestapo Raids, the terrorizing experiments of Mengele and the mass execution of the Jews. The SS oversaw the implementation of the Third Reich's most diabolical plans. Seen from Hitler's perspective, the "Final Solution" was a way to rid Germany of its social and economic problems by eliminating the Jewish People.



*“B-San” / B-29 Superfortress
- American Forces
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus*

The B-29 Superfortress was well known to the Japanese people for its routine bombing raids that reigned terror from the skies. Familiarly regarded as “B-San” by Japanese children, there was an odd mix of awe and respect for this war machine. To the Americans, the Superfortress represented yet another impressive representation of its vast armament.



*Kikumon (Chrysanthemum
Seal) - Imperial Japan
© 2016 J. Jason Lazarus*

Reverence and obedience toward the Japan’s god-like emperor was a concept that must have felt foreign and difficult to understand to many Allied troops. Propaganda inspired young men to serve for their country—and millions did so valiantly—but it is difficult to match the fervent devotion to country that Japanese soldiers held. Banzai charges and Kamikaze attacks are sacrifices many Japanese willingly chose and in the service of their Emperor.