

Mechanical Nike. Resia Schor's Mixed Media Sculptures on Wars Past and Present

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ABSTRACT The article presents an analysis of a hitherto unresearched group of works by the Polish-Jewish artist Resia Schor (1910–2006) dating from the period 1979–1990. Born in Lublin, Schor studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw from 1930 to 1936. In 1938 she emigrated to Paris, from where she and her husband Ilya Schor were forced to escape after the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1941 the Schors settled in New York. It was only in the last decades of her life that Schor began to produce artworks that directly touched upon political topics; those were mixed-media sculptures commenting on wars past and present. By engaging the Benjaminian concept of memory, these works linked the artist's past – her personal experience of war and loss – with her reaction to contemporary acts of violence.

KEYWORDS war, anti-war art, modern sculpture, Jewish art, women's art, United States of America, American culture

ABSTRAKT *Mechaniczna Nike. Rzeźby Resi Schor na temat wojen minionych i obecnych.* Artykuł prezentuje analizę nieopracowanej grupy prac autorstwa polsko-żydowskiej artystki Resi Schor (1910–2006) z lat 1979–1990. Urodzona w Lublinie, w latach 1930–1936 Schor studiowała malarstwo w Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie. W 1938 r. wyemigrowała do Paryża, skąd musiała wraz z mężem Ilyą Schorem uciekać po wybuchu wojny. W 1941 r. Schorowie osiedlili się w Nowym Jorku. Dopiero w ostatnich dekadach życia zaczęła tworzyć prace w bezpośredni sposób dotyczące tematów politycznych – były to rzeźby w technice mieszanej o wojnach minionych i obecnych. Poprzez benjaminowską pamięć prace te łączą przeszłość artystki – jej osobiste doświadczenia wojny i straty – z reakcją na współczesne akty przemocy.

SŁOWA-KLUCZE wojna, sztuka antywojenna, rzeźba, sztuka żydowska, sztuka kobiet, Stany Zjednoczone, kultura amerykańska

I WAS able to reconstruct the biography of Resia Schor (Fig. 1) and examine her work largely thanks to her daughter, the artist and writer Mira Schor (Fig. 2). Our first conversations took place over email and Zoom in the spring of 2021, when I was working on an exhibition titled *Three Things I Love in Life – The Car, Liquor and Sailors. Untold Stories of Women Students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 1918–1939*¹ and, captivated by Resia Schor's art, decided to devote my MA thesis to her.² Three years later, in the spring of 2024, I visited Mira Schor in New York City and spent several days in her Upper West Side apartment, which used to belong to her parents and nowadays houses the archive of the Schor family. When I stepped into the space as a young scholar, I soon recognized that the archive's boundaries were unclear and seemed to extend beyond the plastic walls of indexed boxes. Remnants of the lives of Resia Schor and of her husband Ilya Schor (1904–1961), filled the whole apartment: her mixed media works had his brass sculptures next to them; abstract gouache paintings by Resia hung opposite Ilya's detailed graphics depicting the quaint life of the *shtetl*, there were books in English, Polish, French, and Hebrew, endless notebooks and objects collected by the couple. Among them were contemporary feminist works by Mira Schor, her delicate rice paper *Dress* from the 1970s alongside her parents' sculptures: Ilya Schor's *Warrior* (1959/1960) and Resia Schor's *Untitled (Blue Abstraction)* (1981). As I spent the hot late-spring days there, I began to intuit the apartment as a sphere that merged past and present, where everyday life was overlaid with memories that seemed almost tangible. One narrow room diverged from the rest: the artist's workshop, which remained virtually untouched from the last time she had

worked there in the 2000s, at that point for only two hours at a time, due to health issues, as her eyesight had been weakened by cataracts. In fact, the studio has not changed much since the 1960s, when Resia Schor began learning metalwork at her late husband's workbench. The maid's room, nowadays pervaded with a sense of stillness, is where Resia Schor, when she was in her seventies and eighties, created mixed media sculptures about wars past and present. Objects she used in her work remain in place. A large wooden worktop was crammed with old brushes, jewelry tools, half-empty tubes of gouache paint, and bottles of ink. Old metal pliers and burnt-out matches lay on a soldering board. Next to them were spectacles with thick lenses in plastic frames, placed as if the artist might at any moment return to her interrupted task (Fig. 3, 4).

In this article, I will present an analysis of a group of late mixed media sculptures created by Resia Schor between 1979 and 1990, which until now have been insufficiently studied from a theoretical point of view. Firstly, I will introduce the artist's biography, looking closely at her wartime experiences, with which her later work is intrinsically connected. While outlining this period of Resia Schor's life, I will focus on two conditions that uniquely shaped her identity as an artist. The first condition is being an *apatride*,³ living in exile for one and a half years. To better grasp this experience, I will reach for the memoir of another *apatride*, Lisa Fittko. The second condition is that of a survivor, a person who escaped the extermination of Jews, in which almost all her loved ones perished, and who lived beyond the war and had to deal with the loss that it brought about. Later, describing the circumstances of Schor's postwar life, in which she developed her artistic

1. *Kocham w życiu trzy rzeczy: samochód, alkohol i marynarzy. Nieopowiedziane historie studentek ASP w Warszawie 1918-1939 / Three Things I Love in Life – The Car, Liquor and Sailors. Untold Stories of Women Students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 1918–1939*, lokal_30 gallery, Warsaw, June 18 – September 15, 2021, curated by Dobromiła Dobro, Agnieszka Kalita, Hanna Kraś, Agata Ostrowska, Agata Plater-Zyberk, Katarzyna E. Trzeciak. The exhibition was based on research conducted in the Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and showcased fifteen women artists including Resia Schor. It featured five works by the artist: *Mezuzah* (1983), *Mezuzah* (1991), *Mezuzah* (1997), *Mezuzah* (2001), *Universe* (1987), and was the first and to this day only occasion on which Resia Schor's postwar works have been exhibited in Poland. Following the exhibition, with the involvement of Dr. Renata Piątkowska, Chief Curator of Collections at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Mira Schor donated two of her mother's works to the POLIN museum collection: *Universe* (1987, inv. no. MPOLIN-M1482) and *Mezuzah* (2001, inv. no. MPOLIN-M1481).

2. Katarzyna E. Trzeciak, "On the Life and Art of Resia Schor (1910–2006)," (Master's thesis, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 2021, supervisor: Dr. Marika Kuźmicz).

3. I use the French term *apatride*, meaning a displaced person living in exile, after Lisa Fittko, who used it to refer to herself and other refugees during World War II.



1 Resia Schor in the family apartment in the Upper West Side, New York, 1969, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

practice, I will describe her close relationship with her daughters, Naomi and Mira, and the impact they had on her work. By introducing Mira Schor's *War Frieze* (1991–1994), I intend to showcase the exchange of ideas and beliefs between the two women. Next, I will outline sociopolitical events in the context of which Schor created her pieces. As I argue, the group of works examined here merges remembrance of the past with the artist's response to the then ongoing acts of war, engaging a Benjaminian concept of memory. Therefore, they can be seen within what Rosalyn Deutsche describes as a war critique, built upon "art's ability to combine a concern for subjectivity with a concern about the subject of war."⁴ By applying the theoretical framework of Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, I want to showcase ways in which

Resia Schor's remembrance of war and the Holocaust served as a platform to articulate the subsequent acts of injustice and victimization she observed in the world around her.⁵ As I continue my exploration, I aim to prove that these works can be understood as a testimony to her disillusionment with war, and a deeply personal, yet political, protest against it.

While examining Schor's approach through this particular group of works, I will move between two time periods: the late 1930s and 1940s – the artist's youth, dominated by war; and the years 1979–1990, during which she was a naturalized citizen of the United States, mother of two feminist daughters, and observer of the organized violence of American militarism. While discussing the interrelations between the two time periods, I will reach for Griselda Pollock's notion

4. Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 7.

5. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.



2 Mira Schor in the family apartment in the Upper West Side, New York, 2024. Photo by Katarzyna Ewa Trzeciak

of “after-images.”⁶ Since Schor’s artistic practices weave together her experiences in both periods, I deliberately move away from situating her works solely within either the extensive discourses of art “after the Holocaust” or as anti-war American art of the 1980s.

Academic research on Resia Schor is scarce to non-existent. To this day, her mixed media sculptures have been exhibited only twice, for the first time in *Abstract Marriage: Sculpture by Ilya Schor and Resia Schor* (Provincetown Art Association and Museum, August 16–September 29, 2013), curated by Mira Schor, where they were shown in relation to Ilya Schor’s works.⁷ In the catalog text, Mira Schor raises the subject of the themes of militarism in her mother’s works and attributes them to the fact that Resia Schor “felt the

impact of war on innocent individuals deeply, and at the same time was attracted to powerful geometrical forms.”⁸ The second exhibition, titled *Resia Schor: War and Peace* (Satchel Projects, New York, April 11 – May 11, 2024), was a presentation of Schor’s mixed media works, among them some of the sculptures from the group considered in this article. The exhibition catalog contains an essay *Thought Objects* by Barry Schwabsky. The issue of war in her works, although mentioned in both texts, is not discussed at length, they rather focus on her interest in form, and the material aspects of the works. Furthermore, both essays situate Resia Schor’s works in relation to those of male artists – to Ilya Schor’s oeuvre, or in Schwabsky’s case, to figures from the art scene of that time. I will offer a perspective

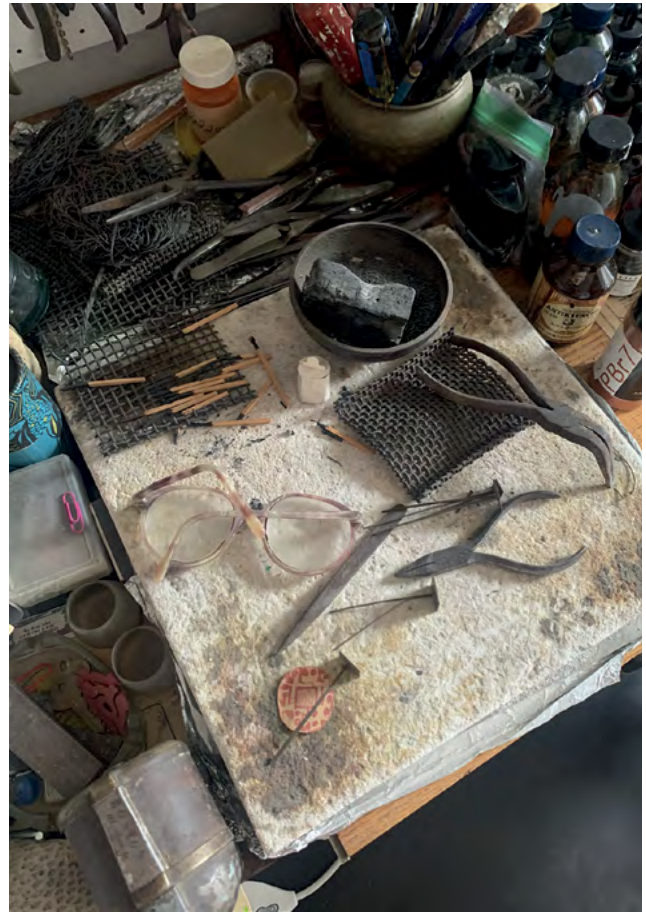
6. Griselda Pollock, *After-affects | After-images. Trauma and aesthetic transformation in the virtual feminist museum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

7. *Abstract Marriage: Sculpture by Ilya Schor and Resia Schor*, Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, August 16 – September 29, 2013, curated by Mira Schor.

8. *Abstract Marriage: Sculpture by Ilya Schor and Resia Schor*, exh. cat. (Provincetown: Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 2013), 8.



3 Resia Schor's workshop. Photo by Katarzyna Ewa Trzeciak



4 Resia Schor's workshop. Photo by Katarzyna Ewa Trzeciak

that moves away from binary comparisons towards an attempt at situating artworks within the context of the artist's personal experiences as a displaced person and survivor of World War II, and the resurfacing of those experiences in response to the political circumstances of the United States in the 1980s.

Resia Schor (née Ajnsztajn) was born in 1910 in Lublin, or possibly Łęczna, into an impoverished Jewish family.⁹ The family was religious, but assimilated

enough to have used a Polonized version of their surname and for Polish to have been the artist's first language.¹⁰ Her father, Lejb Froim (1889–1937), worked as a tradesman and Hebrew teacher.¹¹ Her mother, Fajga (1890–?), could be described by the Hebrew term *akeret bayit*, the “mainstay of the home.” As a homemaker, she fulfilled the role prescribed to women in Judaism, devoting her life to taking care of her family, herself receiving only a basic education. Resia Ajnsztajn had

9. There are a few discrepancies between Mira Schor's recollection of her mother's memories and information from archival material – testament to the complexity of every life story and the impossibility of recounting it in an unequivocal way. Resia Schor's birth certificate states that she was born in Lublin at Lubartowska 38. She herself claimed that she had, in fact been born in Łęczna, her mother Fajga Brucha's family home. Considering that her birth was registered with a nine-year delay, in 1919, it is possible that the information was inaccurate. Source: inv. no. 534, file 1383, State Archive in Lublin.

10. Resia Ajnsztajn file no. 1, collection of student files from before September 1939, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 2.

11. According to registries from the State Archive in Lublin, Lejb Froim worked as a tradesman. Mira Schor, however, claimed that he was a Hebrew teacher. It is possible that both facts are true. Lejb could have worked part time at one of the *cheders*, in Lublin or, later, in



5 Resia Schor (then Ajnsztajn) with her brothers, Moses (left) and Salomon Wolf (right), Warsaw, 1930s, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

two younger brothers, Salomon Wolf (1914–?) and Moses (1923–?) (Fig. 5).¹²

Although Resia Ajnsztajn was expected to follow a path similar to that of her mother, she was part of a generation which, due to modernization within Jewish society that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, had broader opportunities for education and for defining their own future. Access to education in public and private schools expanded the interests of young women and exposed them to a world beyond the Jewish community.¹³ Resia Ajnsztajn attended seven grades of the Humanities Middle School of the Society for the Establishment of Jewish Schools in Lublin (Gimnazjum Humanistyczne Towarzystwa Zakładania Szkół Żydowskich w Lublinie), where she studied

Polish, Hebrew, French, and Latin, and took lessons in history, physics, and math, as well as drawing.¹⁴ Resia Ajnsztajn knew that she wanted to study painting, as at the age of twenty she wrote: “I have had a talent for painting since birth and would like to devote myself to this branch of art.”¹⁵ Her father tried to dissuade her from her educational goals, while her mother fiercely supported her.¹⁶ The family moved to Warsaw, where Resia Ajnsztajn attended a preparatory school, the Institute of Fine Arts (Instytut Sztuk Plastycznych). In 1930, she applied to the Academy of Fine Arts and was accepted, studying painting under Professor Tadeusz Pruszkowski (1888–1942) until 1936.¹⁷ At the Academy, she developed friendships with fellow students – emerging artists and intellectuals, cosmopolitan in their

Warsaw, which would not necessarily be noted in any documents. Source: State Archive in Lublin.

12. State Archive in Lublin, Inv. no. 534, file 1383.

13. Renata Piątkowska, “A Shared Space. Jewish Students at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts (1923–1939),” in: *Art in Jewish Society*, ed. Jerzy Malinowski, Renata Piątkowska, Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia, Tamara Sztyma (Warsaw–Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, 2016), 17. See also: Renata Piątkowska, “Studenci wyznania mojżeszowego w Warszawskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych (1923–1939). Studia – debiuty – kariery,” *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 77, no. 4 (2015), 661–721.

14. Resia Ajnsztajn file no. 1, collection of student files from before September 1939, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 5.

15. Resia Ajnsztajn file no. 1, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 2.

16. Interview with Mira Schor, conducted by Katarzyna E. Trzeciak on April 10, 2021 (henceforth: Interview with Mira Schor, April 10, 2021).

17. Resia Ajnsztajn file no. 1, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 1.



6 From the left: an unidentified person, Resia Schor (then Ajnsztajn), Fiszal “Zber” Zylberberg, Fiszal Makover, Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, 1930s, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

7 From the left: Fiszal Makover, Resia Schor (then Ajnsztajn), Lisa and Jehuda Wermus, two unidentified women described by the artist on the back of the photograph as a sister of Jehuda Wermus and “Mina”, Ilya Schor, Fiszal “Zber” Zylberberg (standing), Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, 1933/1934, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

aspirations and politically left-wing. Among them were her future husband Izrael, later known as Ilya, Schor (1904–1961), graphic artists Fiszal Zylberberg (known as “Zber”) (1909–1942), and Jehuda Wermus (1908–?), sculptor Natan Rapoport (1911–1987), Franciszek Bartoszek (1910–1943), a member of the leftist anti-fascist group “Phrygian Cap” (Czapka Frygijska), and painter Abraham Freidman (1906–1941). The group of friends enjoyed taking photographs together – they dressed up in costumes, at times cross-dressed, and experimented with lighting and with poses.¹⁸ These images capture the joy of shared youth and friendship, but also portray the hope of the seemingly endless possibilities of self-creation, identities not yet settled but constantly shifting.

When they were together, in the safe space of the Jewish Student House¹⁹ or their circle at the Academy, societal norms were not burdens but costumes to try on and discard (Fig. 6, 7).

Meanwhile, the young people watched reality around them become increasingly hostile. Throughout the 1930s, the political situation for Jews worsened, with anti-Semitism permeating social life, including universities. Anti-Jewish protests and violent acts toward Jewish students took place in all major cities of the Second Republic of Poland; many universities and academies were seeking to implement *numerus clausus* or *numerus nullus*.²⁰ If the feeling of collective vulnerability had not been a part of Resia Ajnsztajn’s identity

18. Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor, photographs from the 1930s.

19. The Jewish Student House (Żydowski Dom Akademicki) was located at Namiestnikowska 7 in the Praga district of Warsaw. It was the place of residence for many Jewish male students, including Ilya Schor, and offered affordable accommodation and meals as well as studio spaces for the students to work in. There was no such space for Jewish women students, which made studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw less attainable for those from rural areas or other cities. See: Rafał Żebrowski, “O Żydowskim Domu Akademickim na Pradze,” in: *Odkrywanie żydowskiej Pragi. Studia i materiały*, ed. Zofia Borzymińska (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2014), 188–215.

20. On anti-Semitism at the University of Warsaw, where *numerus clausus* was introduced in 1937 by Rector Włodzimierz Antoniewicz, see: Monika Natkowska, *Numerus clausus, getto ławkowe, numerus nullus, “paragraf aryjski”. Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim*



8 Resia Schor and Ilya Schor in Paris, 1938, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

before that, the experiences of her studies in Warsaw must have reinforced it.

In 1938, following her father's death, Resia Ajnsztajn left Poland and joined her husband-to-be, the artist Ilya Schor, in Paris.²¹ At the Academy, he had studied painting under Professor Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski (1880–1948), but had learnt his main craft prior to that, as apprentice to an engraver and goldsmith in Złoczew. In 1937, Ilya Schor moved to Paris to work with his former professor on the decorations for the Polish Pavilion at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*. On their completion, Kowarski, out of concern for his student's professional opportunities, advised the young couple not to return to Poland, which was now perilous for Jews (Fig. 8).²²

By traveling to France alone, to live with a man to whom she was not married, Resia Ajnsztajn acted against gender and religious norms, taking agency over her life.²³ Together, the couple began to create a life of their own in Paris, where they lived in an attic flat at 10 Rue Charlot in the Marais, the Jewish quarter. They delighted in European art and the rich artistic scene of the city. Ilya attended the *École des Beaux-Arts*²⁴ and began to achieve his first successes as an artist, exhibiting at the Salon d'Automne in 1938 and receiving favorable critical responses.²⁵ Resia attended art history classes at the *École du Louvre*. They were surrounded by friends, as Zber and Franciszek Bartoszek also lived in the city at that time. Yet after the outbreak of the war, leaving Paris became inevitable. They did so in late May 1940, just ahead of the approaching German troops. Resia and Ilya were part of *l'exode de 1940*, the

1931–1939 (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1999); at Poznań University, see: *Wyparte historie. Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Poznańskim w latach 1919–1939*, eds. Maciej Michalski and Krzysztof Podemski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2022); at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, see: Natasza Styrna, *Żydowskie studenci krakowskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych*, in: *Polskie szkolnictwo artystyczne. Dzieje – teoria – praktyka. Materiały LIII ogólnopolskiej sesji naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki*, ed. Maria Poprzęcka (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, 2005), 133–144; at Vilnius University, see: Natalia Judzińska, *Po lewej stronie sali. Getto ławkowe w międzywojennym Wilnie* (Warszawa: Krytyka Polityczna, 2023).

21. Resia Ajnsztajn file no. 1, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, 55.

22. *Abstract Marriage*, 44.

23. As immigrants, they were able to have a civil wedding in Paris only after the German invasion of Poland, when they obtained resident status. Before that, they participated in a religious ceremony that was not recognized by French law. *Abstract Marriage*, 44.

24. Alfred Werner, "Ilya Schor. Modern Bezalel," *Jewish Heritage*, summer (1966), 20, Jewish Historical Institute Archive, S/346, Archive of Chaim Finkelstein, 1936–2002, 140.

25. Hanna Bartnicka-Górska and Joanna Szczepińska-Tramer, *W poszukiwaniu światła, kształtu i barw. Artyści polscy wystawiający na Salonach paryskich w latach 1884–1960* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2005), 222.

millions of civilians from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, who packed the essential belongings, left their homes, and began a journey south.

“The story of their flight was the fairytale of my childhood,”²⁶ Mira Schor told me, pointing to the fact that her mother retold the course of events so many times: they left all their belongings behind, packed only a change of shirt, socks, some sugar cubes and gas masks, and set off with a group of ten friends, from whom they separated at the Gare d’Orléans. The couple headed to Bordeaux. They were the only members of that group to survive the war.²⁷

Since little is known about the couple’s experiences during their months in exile, I will now call on the memoir of another refugee who followed a near identical route of escape as that of the Schors, Lisa Fittko (1909–2005). Born into a Jewish family in Hungary, Lisa Fittko (née Ekstein) moved to Germany at a young age. Before the war she became involved in anti-fascist resistance in Berlin, and later Prague, where she met her husband, Hans Fittko (1903–1960). In 1940, she, like the two artists, found herself in Paris.

Like Resia Schor, Fittko returned to her memories of war much later in life. Her first book, published in 1985, was *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, the testimony of an *apatride*, as she refers to herself. Millions were displaced; their paths were not straight lines, but rather, as Tabea Linhard suggests, labyrinths, which involved forged or stolen documents, broken rules, and help from more influential people.²⁸ Fittko would add to this list: constant attempts to find information on the whereabouts of family members and friends, waiting for news from the frontline, sleeping in refugee shelters, acute hunger, cold, fear, uncertainty.

In May 1940, when the Schors left Paris, Fittko was interned by the French army during the Vel d’Hiv

Roundup as a *ressortissant allemand* (German national; in this context, this means an enemy alien) and transferred to the Gurs camp.²⁹ She managed to escape from there in June 1940, and hid in Pontacq, a commune in the Pyrenees (as did Hannah Arendt).³⁰ Meanwhile, Resia and Ilya Schor also headed for the mountains; tens of thousands of refugees took the route towards Spain.³¹ The quaint Pyrenees villages became important points on the refugees’ itineraries, places where they could rest, gather information, and plan the next steps before heading for the border.

The Schors stopped in Salies-de-Béarn, and then crossed the demarcation line and reached Argelès-Gazost, where they stayed for six weeks.³² Only twenty-five kilometers separated them from Fittko, who described the atmosphere of the Pyrenees commune in the following way: “We wanted to hide ourselves temporarily in Pontacq, remote from the rest of the world. We’d thought of it like that, and that’s the way it was – for a few days. Paulette and I often sat on the bench in the village square. There wasn’t much to see, but it was pleasant in the cool shade under the trees. The main road cut diagonally across the square; occasionally a refugee or two went by. Sometimes small groups of soldiers in soiled uniforms, trudging aimlessly past. Only seldom did one see a vehicle.”³³ The reader is struck by the stillness of scenery amidst the horrors around. The view of the serene mountain town is disrupted by images from a different world, figures who do not belong there: the refugees and soldiers. The Pyrenees could not offer solace, only a moment of stillness.

It is possible that the Schors, like so many refugees, intended to cross the Spanish border illegally, since obtaining necessary travel documents involved a labyrinth of requirements.³⁴ Due to the rough terrain and climate conditions during winter, border crossing was

26. Interview with Mira Schor, April 10, 2021.

27. Interview with Mira Schor, April 10, 2021.

28. Tabea Linhard, “Moving Barbed Wire: Geographies of Border Crossing During World War II,” in: *Mapping Migration, Identity, and Space*, eds. Tabea Linhard and Timothy H. Parsons (London–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 117–118.

29. Lisa Fittko, *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, transl. David Koblick (Evanstone: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 7–21.

30. Ibid., 66.

31. Although exact statistics are hard to obtain, around 20,000–35,000 refugees crossed the border between France and Spain during the years 1940–1944. Linhard, “Moving Barbed Wire,” 124.

32. Interview with Mira Schor, April 10, 2021.

33. Fittko, *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, 57.

34. Ibid., 93–94.

hazardous and at times fatal.³⁵ Lisa Fittko facilitated such escapes, perhaps the most notable one being that of Walter Benjamin, whom she guided across the border in 1940. The tragic story of his escape with a manuscript, which he tried to protect at all costs, and his suicide only a few days after reaching Spain, is part of history.³⁶

Both Resia Schor and Lisa Fittko, now reunited with her husband Hans Fittko, changed their plans and did not end up crossing the Pyrenees border, but instead headed to Marseille, pinning their hopes on the city with the only overseas port that remained open and one that promised aid committees and organizations for emigrant support. Fittko recalled the atmosphere of the city as “apocalyptic,”³⁷ writing: “Everything, everyone, pressed toward Marseille. The city was crammed with refugees [...]. Maybe there, at the huge port, was a way out of the trap.”³⁸ Resia and Ilya stayed in Marseille for a year, most probably preoccupied with the same goals as every other refugee: obtaining a visa and money for travel. Eventually, they were able to do so with the help of Ilya’s older brother Abraham Schor, whom he had never met and who lived in the United States.³⁹ During their time in Marseille, Ilya was twice detained in the nearby French internment camp.⁴⁰

As leaving from Marseille turned out to be impossible, both couples fled through Spain to Portugal, and, remarkably, on November 11, 1941 they embarked on the same ship – the SS Colonial, sailing from Lisbon to the United States and then on to Cuba.⁴¹ Lisa Fittko wrote: “A little ship doesn’t even look like an ocean steamer. It allegedly once belonged to Kaiser Wilhelm. Incredibly crowded. We’re still in the bay, but the throwing-up is starting already. So many people one can hardly move. Among them many old people

and small children. Most of them are Jewish, only a few “Aryans” in between. We sleep way below deck in [the] dark, enormous room without hatches, normally used to stow baggage. Men on one side of the ship, women and children on the other. Almost all are seasick; we others are nauseated by the stench.”⁴² Fittko’s recollection of the trip – she and her husband were going all the way to Cuba – is constructed in short, telegraphic sentences, pointing to her emotional detachment. It is hard to imagine the psychological distress of the refugees whose journeys led them to the SS Colonial, not to mention their exhaustion.

During the voyage, divisions started to appear among the passengers, as the first- and second-class travelers tried to forbid those from the third class from accessing the deck or the salons, since the former had paid more for their tickets.⁴³ At times, the conflicts escalated into fights, and prejudices surfaced; “You Eastern Jews, I know you!” the chairman of the Jewish Committee from a southern German city shouted at Hans Fittko.⁴⁴

The passengers, themselves victims of oppression and exclusion, carried out those same acts against each other. Having avoided Nazi extermination for the past three years, they oftentimes faced situations where changing moral codes was imperative to their survival. Fittko described this: “In order to get through, one had to learn to slip through the cracks and loopholes, using every trick and stratagem to slither out of this labyrinth, which was continually taking on new configurations. *Faut se débrouiller*: one must know how to help oneself, to clear a way out of the debacle – that’s the way one lived and survived in France back then. *Faut se débrouiller* meant: buy counterfeit food stamps, scrounge milk

35. Linhard, “Moving Barbed Wire,” 124.

36. The manuscript was never found. Fittko, *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, 103–115.

37. Ibid., 105.

38. Ibid., 93.

39. Interview with Mira Schor, April 10, 2021.

40. Most probably Camp des Milles. Several artists and intellectuals were interned there, including Max Ernst, Hans Bellmer, and Lion Feuchtwanger, who wrote a memoir about his time at the camp. See: Lion Feuchtwanger, *The Devil in France: My Encounter with Him in the Summer of 1940*, transl. Elisabeth Abbott (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2009).

41. They were among 400 passengers of the same ship, but it is not known whether they met. “SS Colonial sailed November 11, 1941. Alphabetical List of Passengers,” Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

42. Fittko, *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, 210.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 211.

for the children, obtain some – any – kind, of permit – in short, manage to do or obtain what didn't officially exist. For many that also meant to do or obtain such things by means of going along with officialdom, by *collaborating*. But for us, the *apatrides*, everything we did revolved around avoiding the concentration camps, not falling into the hands of the gestapo.”⁴⁵

The Schors had escaped Europe, and with that, avoided the concentration camps. Resia Schor's feelings at the moment of her private liberation, as she disembarked the SS Colonial and set foot in New York City on December 3, 1941, are impossible to discern. Though the future remained uncertain, she had reached safety and freedom. At that point, in winter 1941, she probably still held onto the hope of the survival of her loved ones. Although some information must have reached her, she was unaware of the extent of the massacre she had escaped.

The first news about the extermination of Jews circulated the world in 1942, initially vague reports that many did not believe and rejected. Importantly, the Nazis had foreseen such a reaction and, as Hannah Arendt noted in 1950, “were quite convinced that one of the best chances for the success of this enterprise lay in the extreme improbability that anybody in the outside world would believe it to be true.”⁴⁶ One can imagine that Resia Schor's first reactions, when she understood what had happened, were shock and rejection. This was

certainly true of Fittko, who, after hearing the news in 1942, while she was in Cuba, frantically noted: “Extermination? No, that can't be true. Certainly, the Nazis are capable of every crime. But this monstrosity is inconceivable – no. I know that the pictures I paint to myself are only feverish fantasies. The black uniforms with the death's-heads exterminating millions of humans, just as I exterminate the *cucarachas*, the cockroaches in our kitchen. I spray insecticide on them and watch how they writhe grotesquely and then collapse – oh, this is insane, I must think of something else. But I can't. I have to pull myself together; I try, but it doesn't work.”⁴⁷

When the news about the death of her loved ones reached Resia Schor is not known. Most likely it was not a single moment, but rather a process of holding onto threads of hope and, one by one, letting them go. Zber died in 1942 in Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁴⁸ Franciszek Bartoszek fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and was killed in 1943, during the “Społem” Bank combat action.⁴⁹ Jehuda Wermus, according to Schor's written note, was murdered in 1938 or 1939.⁵⁰ Abraham Freidman found himself in the Białystok Ghetto, where he worked at a workshop that created copies of Old Masters paintings.⁵¹ He was killed during one of the first Nazi roundups in the ghetto in 1941.⁵² I was unable to find any information about the artist's mother and brothers after the outbreak of the war. On September 3, 1992, she filled out Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony for

45. Ibid., 113–114.

46. Hannah Arendt, “Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps,” *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 1 (1950), 54.

47. Fittko, *Escape Through the Pyrenees*, 213.

48. At the outbreak of the war, Fiszyl Zylberberg, like Resia and Ilya Schor, lived in Paris. He left the city in May 1940 with the Schors but decided to return. Zylberberg was imprisoned in the Beaune-la-Rolande internment camp and transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1942, where he died. See: Renata Piątkowska, “Świadectwo miejsca i czasu. Rysunki Fiszyla Zylberberga (Zbera) z obozu internowania w Beaune-la-Rolande (departament Loiret we Francji),” in: *Ars inspiration. Studia dedykowane Profesor Eleonorze Jedlińskiej* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2024), 269–292.

49. Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny konspiracji warszawskiej 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1987), 36–37.

50. A graphic work by Jehuda Wermus with a note by Resia Schor: “Wermus our best friend in Warsaw perished in Stalin's cleansing of Jews in 1938/39 in Moscow [?].” The last word is hard to decipher. Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

51. The workshop, run by an officer Oskar Steffen, employed many accomplished Jewish artists from the Białystok ghetto, including Izaak Celnikier (1923–2011), Stanisława Centnerszwerowa (1889–1943), and the twins Efraim and Menasze Seidenbeutel (1902–1945). The paintings were later sold in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and other occupied countries. See: Joanna Tomalska-Więcek, “Pracownia kopii artystycznych w białostockim getcie,” *Studia Podlaskie* 31 (2023), 43–56.

52. Tomalska-Więcek, “Pracownia kopii artystycznych w białostockim getcie,” 47.

all three, declaring them as murdered in the *Shoah*.⁵³ Under “circumstances”, she wrote: “unknown.” Almost everyone she loved had perished. To her knowledge, Resia Schor was the last of her family.

For the artist and her husband, who arrived in an unknown, faraway country with nothing to call their own, there was no other choice than to, using Fittko’s words, “pull themselves together.” In the years following their arrival, Ilya returned to his craft in order to establish a career and support his family, while Resia Schor – together with other refugees, many of whom were intellectuals and artists – worked in a factory that produced hand-painted ties.⁵⁴ Soon Ilya began to make a living through selling ceremonial objects, jewelry, paintings, and graphic works.⁵⁵ His works presented the Hasidic world of prewar Europe and garnered attention from both assimilated, post-reform, and Orthodox Jews, providing “the imagination for a contemporary Jewish community seeking a visual link with its past.”⁵⁶

Her husband’s success allowed Resia Schor to leave her factory job and devote herself to family life. The couple had two daughters: Naomi (1943–2001) and Mira (b. 1950). Although Ilya was providing financially for the family in the following years, Resia did not

abandon her creative work. During the 1950s she created gouache abstract paintings, and in 1958 had a solo show at Workshop Gallery in New York City under the pseudonym Resia Ain.⁵⁷ By choosing to exhibit under her abbreviated maiden name, she established herself as an independent artist, separate from the work of her husband.

In some ways her paintings evoked the modern artistic language of the time and place – the New York School – to which the couple had links, if only through their close friendship with the painter Jack Tworkov (1900–1982). In New York, the Schors surrounded themselves with intellectuals and artists, mostly Jewish immigrants, like Emmanuel Mané-Katz (1894–1964), the theologian and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972), the violinist Leon Temerson (1904–1988), and their old friend Natan Rapoport (1911–1987), one of the few of their Warsaw group who survived the war. The couple connected to their Jewishness through culture and community, despite not being religious and raising their daughters in a secular manner.

In June 1961, the year of the Eichmann trial, Ilya Schor died. The two events coinciding seems to have been significant; Mira Schor remarked on her father’s

53. Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, pages of testimony, items ID: 1226149, 1226489, and 1226436.

54. *Abstract Marriage*, 17.

55. Ilya Schor was an acclaimed painter, sculptor, engraver, and creator of Judaica. His works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Jewish Museum, New York; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Great Synagogue, Jerusalem; Sydney Jewish Museum and others. He made woodcut illustrations for *The Earth is The Lord’s* and *The Sabbath*, the writings of philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was his friend. Ilya Schor’s posthumous retrospective exhibition took place at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1965. For more on Ilya Schor, see: *Abstract Marriage*; Alfred Werner, “Ilya Schor, Modern Bezalel,” *Jewish Heritage*, summer (1966), 19–23; Chaim Finkelstein, “Ilya Schor – In Memoriam,” *Reconstructionist*, vol. 32, no. 16 (1961), 14–19. Despite the recognition Schor garnered for his artistic practice, there has been very little academic research into his work.

56. *Ilya Schor*, The Jewish Museum, New York, July 8 – September 12, 1965, exh. cat., unpaginated, Jewish Historical Institute Archive, S/346, Archive of Chaim Finkelstein, 1936–2002, 144.

57. The show received positive, if lackluster, reviews. Some of the critics’ words, for example “a sensitive and modest hand” (see: *The New York Times*, May 8, 1959), might be indicative of a bias stemming from the then popular rhetoric around the New York School. Whitney Chadwick writes: “The critical language of Abstract Expressionism that developed alongside Pollock’s drip paintings of the late 1940s isolated and celebrated certain features – notable among them scale, action, and energy – using terms that became, as art historian T.J. Clark noted, part of an informing ‘metaphorics of masculinity.’ The gendered language that opposed an art heroic individual struggle to the weakened (i.e., ‘feminized’) culture of postwar Europe positioned women outside an emerging model of subjectivity understood in terms of male agency articulated through the figure of the male individual.” Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (London–New York: Thames & Hudson, 1990), 320.

death: “[M]y sister and I had independently come to the same conclusion – he died of Eichmann.”⁵⁸ The extensive media coverage of the capture and trial of the German Nazi official forced the world out of silence around the Holocaust. Prior to it, the US, not ready to confront the painful past, threw itself into a postwar boom.⁵⁹ The nine-month trial was a pivotal moment in the history of Holocaust memory and consciousness – *Shoah* reinforced itself as part of the collective Jewish identity.⁶⁰ The proceedings became a topic of public debate worldwide; for the survivors, however, the trial carried, first and foremost, personal importance – for many, it was a cathartic experience. During the trial, over a hundred witnesses were called to the stand and told their stories. The unspeakable began to be spoken about. The year 1961, therefore, has a twofold significance in Resia Schor’s life and creative practice; it was the year that broke the silence around the horrors of the past, as well as that in which she suffered yet another loss, that of her beloved husband, and thus her final link with the prewar world was broken.

What followed Ilya Schor’s passing was, as her friend Jack Tworkov described after seeing his widow in the summer 1961, “unbearable grief.”⁶¹ Physically, Resia Schor collapsed into illness that lasted for about a year.⁶² However, the demands of her changed circumstances – the need to support not only herself but also her two daughters – could not be ignored for long. At fifty-one, Resia Schor had to find a way to stand on her own. To do so, she sat down in Ilya’s workshop in their Manhattan apartment, picked up his tools and began teaching herself her husband’s craft. She started with simple tasks – finishing works left by Ilya, taking advantage of his customer network built over the years. Soon she began to create her own pieces – silver jewelry

and mezuzas. What distinguished her works was their abstract quality, carried over from her painting. She focused on aspects of form and materiality, which gave the functional and religious, small-scale objects a sculptural quality. For the next decades, Schor was able to make a living by selling those pieces, which she also at times exhibited.⁶³ This is another sphere of Schor’s unique artistic practice that is yet to be the subject of academic studies.

It was only when Resia Schor was in her seventies and eighties that she began to engage with directly political subjects in her work. Between the years 1979 and 1981, she created sculptures dealing with violence: *Heartbreak* (1979) and *Nike* (1981 – two versions), and at the end of the decade returned to the topic, this time military and terrorist themes being the focal point of the works: *Nike* (1989), *B-2 Stealth* (1989 – two versions), *A-6 Intruder* (1990), *Lockerbie* (1990). What leads me to consider these as one, rather than two separate groups, is the figure of Nike, significant for Schor’s historical imagination, appearing in work from both periods and creating a link between them.

Looking at the works in relation to her biographical experiences reveals the artist’s relationship with the past. In her practice, personal memory of war does not function as a barrier separating her from the surrounding world; she does not situate her own loss and pain in competition with contemporary acts of violence. On the contrary, by reaching into her past, Schor can see current events with greater clarity – her own experiences of victimization become a platform for representing American military violence and terrorism. This model of remembrance that emerges in her late sculptures can be seen within the framework of “multidirectional memory.”⁶⁴ Michael Rothberg argues that collective

58. Mira Schor, “Engraved memories.” *A Year of Positive Thinking*, June 7, 2020, accessed September 1, 2024, <https://ayearofpositivethinking.com>.

59. As Deborah E. Lipstadt wrote, “Americans were engaged in obtaining material goods and achieving goals they never had before and, in many cases, never dreamt would be theirs, e.g., college educations, homes, cars, and televisions. Everything, including babies, was being mass produced.” See: Deborah E. Lipstadt, “America and the Memory of the Holocaust, 1950–1965,” *Modern Judaism* 16, no. 3 (1996), 197.

60. See: Françoise S. Ouzan, “The Eichmann Trial and American Jewry: A Reassessment,” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol. 19, no. 1–2 (2007), 25–38.

61. *The Extreme of the Middle. Writings of Jack Tworkov*, ed. Mira Schor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 123.

62. Interview with Mira Schor, conducted by Katarzyna E. Trzeciak on March 13, 2021 (henceforth: Interview with Mira Schor, March 13, 2021).

63. For a full list of the artist’s exhibitions, see: *Abstract Marriage*, 44–46.

64. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

memory, especially in relation to the remembrance of the Holocaust, is often understood as competitive, “as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources.”⁶⁵ Instead, he suggests looking at it as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing, as productive and not privative.”⁶⁶ In this model, memory of the Holocaust can function as a platform for articulating contemporary forms of violence, as well as leading to the development of new visions of justice and solidarity.⁶⁷ To reference Mira Schor’s words once more – her mother “felt the impact of war on innocent individuals deeply [...]”⁶⁸ The artist’s memory of war is what shaped her empathetic approach toward other victims of violence and forced migration, creating a trans-historical solidarity, which became the foundation of Schor’s anti-war critique. Through her artwork, she voiced a protest against violence.

As Rosalyn Deutsche recognizes in her book *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War*, subjective, private narratives of war critique were often seen as inferior and as holding less political power. Deutsche, borrowing Benjamin’s term “left melancholy,” describes a mood in art criticism that emerged in the 1970s and attempted to divide the public and private spheres. By forming an attachment to the ideas around the golden age of protest, that is, the Vietnam era, left melancholy expressed impatience toward poetic, artistic, and feminist explorations of the meaning of the political, as if those were to diminish resistance to war.⁶⁹ Deutsche attributes this to heroic masculinity, to which, according to Freud, the mind regresses during a state of war.⁷⁰ “Warlike antiwar criticism’s division of public and private is a weapon wielded, in the service of a fantasy of mastery, against uncertainty in the self and the exposure to otherness in public space,” she states.⁷¹ She sees art as

a sphere that can resist those discourses and “combine a concern for subjectivity with a concern about the problem of war.”⁷² Resia Schor’s works can be seen as expression of the two concerns.

What seems pivotal for analyzing the group of works is to understand why the artist created them at that specific point in time. To answer this question, I will outline both personal and political factors that impacted her artistic practice, and which might offer significant information for future studies on this subject. Firstly, the sculptures are among the few works in her oeuvre that were not intended for sale. After Ilya’s death, to adapt to the challenges of her new life, Resia Schor took on many roles: a single parent, sole provider, craftswoman, professional artist. Her sketchbooks and notes from the 1960s and 1970s are scattered with numbers and calculations – traces of her financial worries.⁷³ Mira Schor has a distinct memory from this period of the muffled sound of her mother counting in Polish, trying to figure out if they had enough money to get through the month.⁷⁴ It was in the 1970s that Resia Schor began to attain financial stability through her work. For the first time she had the security and time to take on new artistic challenges – she began to shift away from abstraction, her works became larger and increasingly political. In 1969 Schor bought a house in Provincetown, where she would spend her summers for the next four decades.⁷⁵ She arranged a studio for herself in a small room downstairs, with Ilya’s old worktable transported from their flat in New York. Her daughters joined her – Naomi during breaks from teaching at Brown University,⁷⁶ and Mira for the whole summer. They worked every day, Resia downstairs, Mira in a room upstairs.⁷⁷ Although they did not talk at length about their pieces – Resia kept to herself when it came to her art – they were

65. Ibid., 3.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., 5.

68. *Abstract Marriage*, 8.

69. Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 1–7.

70. Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” after: Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 3.

71. Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, 5.

72. Ibid., 7.

73. Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

74. Interview with Mira Schor, conducted by Katarzyna E. Trzeciak on May 29, 2024 (henceforth: Interview with Mira Schor, May 29, 2024).

75. Ibid.

76. Naomi Schor was a professor at Brown University from 1978 to 1989.

77. Interview with Mira Schor, May 29, 2024.

9 The Schor women: Mira, Resia and Naomi, 1983, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor



aware of each other's current projects. When they were not together, they corresponded. The letters between the artist and her daughters – those written by Mira Schor sealed in hand-painted envelopes – describe the everyday life of the three women, in which they were all keenly interested. Her daughters' letters start with "Dear Mama" – a thread reaching back to the artist's Polish origin.⁷⁸ What they wrote about unfailingly, was their work: where they were working, how much or how little time they could devote to it, what it meant to them. In 1967 Resia Schor wrote to Naomi: "The only salvation for me is my workshop and work, it keeps me quiet."⁷⁹ In a letter from the late 1960s, dated March 10, she says: "I am working as usually, have a few orders and this is the most important thing, what a great thing that I can work, it fills out my days that I do not feel so much how the time is going, and how empty is the time – without work."⁸⁰ The artist encouraged her daughters' growth and urged them to be financially independent from others – a lesson derived from her own experience. The intimate bond they shared encompassed their work; the ideas the artist and her daughters were engaging with transferred between their practices (Fig. 9).

Resia Schor was sixty-nine years old when she made *Heartbreak*, and eighty when *A-6 Intruder* and *Lockerbie* were created. She was approaching the end of her life, a time which, for many, is connected with the need to look back at one's history, to make sense of it. Reaching into the past, re-telling stories, was Resia Schor's frequent practice. This was not just a habit, it pierced through her imagination and the way in which she related to the outside world. It was an intrinsic element of her artistic expression. A glimpse of this thinking can be seen in a video recording of the artist in summer 2002, created by the filmmaker Antonio Ferrera and the artist Mimi Gross in Provincetown.⁸¹ Resia Schor is ninety-one in it, she has a thick eastern-European accent and exudes a quiet confidence. She is also very chic, with her self-made jewelry and slicked back white hair. She says little, seems uninterested in empty pleasantries and brushes over the questions which she does not find relevant. At one point, when showing us around her studio, she says, unprompted: "Now I'm going to build a book of names." She proceeds to show the filmmaker a collection of small, square paintings with gold initials on them, each representing a different member of

78. Ibid. The pronunciation used for the word "Mama" was Polish.

79. Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

80. Ibid.

81. Mimi Gross (b. 1940) is the daughter of Renee Gross (1909–2005) and sculptor Chaim Gross (1902–1991) who, like the Schor's, were Jewish immigrants living in New York City. The families were friends.

ARTISTS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS

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Peter Bandieri	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Robert Barry	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Charles Barth	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Jennifer Barton	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Edie Baskin	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Linda Baxton	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Mark Baum	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Harold Baumbach	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
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Jack Bear	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Richard Becken	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Leigh Behrke	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Andrew Belag	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Linda Bengalis	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Karl Benjamin	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Sally Benson	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Linda Berger	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Anthony Berlant	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Janet Bernstein	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Robert Bertin	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Jake Bertold	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Natasha Bhowan	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Janice Biala	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Edward Bihman	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Robert Birman	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Elmer Bischoff	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Isabel Bishop	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Ronald Blackman	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Nell Blane	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Peter Blane	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Al Blument	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Ross Blockner	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Ronald Block	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Veronique Boghosian	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Erin Bogen	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Power Bothe	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Elena Bortstein	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Robert Bourdon	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Nancy Bowen	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Vivian Bower	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Martha Bowler	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Maria Boyle	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Jack Boynton	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
Mary Bradman	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Diane Brandsky	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine
Joseph Brindel	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Marja Valla
Nancy Brett	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Elaine Verris
John Brewster	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	Tatiana Vevers
Farell Brickhouse	Joan Seamus Carl	Edith Dugmore	Sheldon Figman	John Halkar	Robert Nardin	Minam Schaefer	De Wain Valentine

JOIN THE JUNE 12 RALLY in support of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament. The march starts at 9:30 am between 47 & 52 Streets, and 1 & 3 Avenues. (Artists will meet at 51 Street between 1 & 2 Avenues.) The Rally will convene at the Great Lawn, Central Park (81 St.) at noon. For more information call Rally Committee (212) 460-8980. Artists Against Nuclear Arms, P.O. Box 431, Canal St. Sta., N.Y. 10013.

10 Artists Against Nuclear Arms Manifesto, "The New York Times", June 6, 1982

her lost family. The artist explains: "This is my father, Lejba Ajnsztajn – Lejba Froim Ajnsztajn, and this is my grandfather, my grandfather was Weisman, and his first name was Srul [...]" Then she adds: "It will be the family, all New York will be a book [...] and after will be Paris, and after Warsaw. All the people." This attempt

to narrate her life through a personal registry of loss shows the artist's deep connection to the past and her identity as a survivor. During her final year, Resia Schor more than once shared with her daughter the notion of being "cursed with life."⁸² She was the one who lived to remember and tell the story, and *The Book of Names*

82. Correspondence with Mira Schor, September 26, 2025.

was her way of commemorating the memory of those who perished too soon.

In Schor's works, her personal chronicle of loss is intertwined with observations of the world around her. The artist closely followed current events, cutting out pictures of military machines from the "New York Times". She passionately watched the news and listened to the radio, often during the nights when she could not sleep.⁸³ The best reception she could get was a conservative radio station, presumably WABC, which at that time broadcast *The Rush Limbaugh Show*. The show increased in popularity at the time of the Gulf War, of which Limbaugh was a keen supporter.

The turbulence of the 1970s, with the Vietnam war, the OPEC oil crisis, and the Iran conflict, ended with a re-escalation of the Cold War. After a period of *détente*, an easing of tension, political rivalry with the USSR became the main focus of American foreign policy during the 1980s. In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a move that the West strongly condemned. Conflict between the two superpowers intensified, as Ronald Reagan, elected US president in 1981, implemented a strategy of containment, with the intention to combat Soviet expansion.⁸⁴ One of the objectives of the new president's policy was building up America's nuclear arsenal. The impending threat of nuclear war underpinned the social climate of the 1980s.⁸⁵

Anti-nuclear protests took place all over the USA, two major ones in New York City: on September 23, 1979, and three years later, on June 12, 1982. The second protest started with a march from the junction between 47th and 52nd Streets, and 1st and 3rd Avenues, and culminated with a rally on the Great Lawn of Central Park. The event, which gathered over one million people, was considered the largest disarmament rally in the history of the United States. Activists from all over the world, and people of different backgrounds, congregated in New York City. The anti-war cause brought together the artistic community, who walked together in the march,

Mira Schor among them.⁸⁶ Resia Schor supported the cause but stayed at home. The Sunday issue of the "New York Times" from June 6, 1982, contains a paid advertisement turned into a one-page manifesto. The headline reads: "ARTISTS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS," and below: "We protest the worldwide production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the diversion of resources from human needs. We support immediate and imaginative negotiations toward a mutual freeze and reversal of the arms race."⁸⁷ Underneath, along with the names of the most renowned American artists of the time, are Mira Schor and Resia Schor. It can be assumed that the loss of loved ones in the extermination of Jews had shaped Resia Schor's deep understanding of the threat of mass nuclear destruction (Fig. 10).

Resia Schor's political engagement not only drew on personal memory, but was also carried out in the domestic sphere. The Upper West Side apartment and Provincetown house were places from which she worked and voiced her anti-war protest. She learnt about political developments from newspapers, TV, radio – also from the private space of her home – as well as through her daughters. As mentioned earlier, Schor's works have rarely been exhibited and have mostly existed in the context of her home. Her participation in the public sphere as an artist was hampered by the gender role she assumed, which for many years tied her to the home. Added to this was the language barrier, the age at which she began her career, and perhaps also a feeling of displacement stemming from her experiences as an *apatride* and survivor. Following the still prevailing discourse that uses Hannah Arendt's understanding of politics as actions that take place in the public realm, Resia Schor's political engagement could be easily discarded.⁸⁸ This brings us back to the division of public and private, which, as Deutsche has argued, has diminished the significance of subjective, artistic explorations of the political, and which feminist activists and theorists have challenged for decades, by

83. Interview with Mira Schor conducted by Katarzyna E. Trzeciak on May 27, 2024 (henceforth: Interview with Mira Schor, May 27, 2024).

84. See: Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 105, no. 3 (1990), 373–395.

85. Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary* (July 1977), after: Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," 379.

86. Interview with Mira Schor conducted by Katarzyna E. Trzeciak on May 28, 2024.

87. "Artists Against Nuclear Arms," *The New York Times*, June 6, 1982, 29.

88. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959).



11 Resia Schor, *Heartbreak*, 1979, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor.
Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

declaring that *private is political*.⁸⁹ Resia Schor's war critique should not be overlooked for its lack of presence in the public sphere; on the contrary, there is great value in being able to access a voice previously excluded from that context.

Heartbreak (1979) is different from other works in the group, with no elements of figuration or overt military references (Fig. 11).⁹⁰ It consists of two parts that make a whole, even though they are not joined in a permanent way. Resia Schor often created her larger works in modules, most likely because smaller sheets of metal were easier to handle. Although from the 1960s onward her works increased in size, she continued to utilize the same tools intended for precise jewelry

work. Traces of her craft are still present in the hand-cut, decorative rivets used in *Heartbreak*. The piece is made with Schor's unique technique of layering various materials, creating a multidimensional, heterogeneous construction. This thinking may have derived from the artist's methods of designing jewelry. Her brooches and pendants also consisted of layers – Schor planned them out by creating sketches on tracing paper, which she later superimposed one on another.⁹¹ The materials she used in *Heartbreak* and other pieces from the group – gouache paint, metal, gold leaf, Plexiglas – are links to her past work in painting, jewelry, and Judaica. As a base for the structure, measuring 30.5 × 61 cm as a whole, she used a square piece of brass, to which

89. For a critique of the public/private division, see: Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in: *Public and Private in Social Life*, eds. Stanley I. Benn and Gerald F. Gaus (London: Routledge, 1983), 282–303; for a more recent voice in the debate, that touches on the subject of disability activism, see: Johanna Hedva, *Sick Woman Theory* (2020), accessed May 17, 2024, https://www.kunstverein-hildesheim.de/assets/bilder/caring-structures-ausstellung-digital/Johanna-Hedva/cb6ec5c75f/AUSSTELLUNG_1110_Hedva_SWT_e.pdf.

90. The authorship of the title is uncertain. It might have been given by Mira Schor when curating the exhibition *Abstract Marriage*, perhaps following a conversation with her mother. There are no sources indicating that the title was used by the artist herself, and Mira Schor is unable to recall its origin.

91. It is worth noting that the artist continued to create jewelry throughout the time she worked on the group of sculptures, and it remained her main craft until the end of her life; another unanalyzed part of Schor's oeuvre. See: Richard Howard, "Jewelry by Resia Schor," *Crafts Horizons*, vol. 26, no. 4 (1966), 9–11.

she attached the other layers – a rectangular sheet of gold leaf, a diagonal strip of paper painted with red gouache, smears of yellow paint, completed with a piece of clear Plexiglas. The latter first appeared around 1970 in the *Mezuzahs* – the works in which she first used her layering technique. Plexiglas was affordable, came in vivid colors and, most importantly, it could be drilled through. The construction is held together by brass rivets with round but imperfect heads. The reverse of the work reveals metal wires – necessary construction elements that create an accidental, visually engaging landscape. On the front, towards the side, the artist attached triangular brass rivets in an irregular pattern, which are themselves constructed with two layers of brass joined with smaller, round nuts. These not only add to the multidimensionality of the work, but also reinforce its emotional quality.

The title of the work evokes a variety of associations. However, when we consider the artist's political sensitivity, *Heartbreak* could be seen as a resurfacing of her experiences as a survivor. The triangular elements bear similarity to the badges worn by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, where her family and friends perished. The marking system of colored triangles was meant to identify prisoners of different categories. Yellow, which prevails in the work, was worn by Jewish prisoners. The unevenly distributed paint, pressed down with Plexiglas, creates a visual suggestion of tarnish or decay. Red, the color of political prisoners, also carries significance in Schor's work. The triangles in the central part of the work are placed irregularly, sometimes overlaying each other, creating a sense of anxiety. The rivets are not securely attached – they tremble when the work is moved. In a way, they resemble bodies crowded together.

In *Heartbreak*, human figures are reduced to simple geometric forms, a gesture repeated in the *Nike* pieces. No longer human, just shapes or objects, they epitomize the politicized *bare life*, the central notion in Giorgio Agamben's analysis of Nazi biopolitics: the *bare life* is that which "may be killed and yet not sacrificed."⁹² Agamben sees the concentration camp as the fundamental

paradigm of Western history.⁹³ Similarly, in Schor's works the processes of violence and war are ever-present, they can be recognized not only in her lived history, but also in the events happening before her eyes.

Heartbreak is perhaps the first instance of Schor approaching the subject of the Holocaust in her work, and she did so almost forty years after arriving in the United States. Griselda Pollock offers an insight into this delay. Pollock analyzed similar instances of traumatic past resurfacing in artistic practices in the work and life experience of Alina Szapocznikow (1926–1973), a Polish-Jewish sculptor and survivor of the Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps: "She hung onto life but then had to live that life imprinted by what she had endured and seen, smelt and touched."⁹⁴ After outlining Szapocznikow's experiences during the war, Pollock proposes that her sculptures should not be read as testimonies of those experiences, but rather as "traces of the *encryption* of trauma [...] that nonetheless leaked from its psychic entombment and 'surfaced' over the twenty-eight years of her practice as a sculptor in a way that radically altered the sculptural form [...]"⁹⁵ This is due to psychic trauma's "perpetual present," which translates into its capacity of surfacing at any point in time in the shape of traumatic residues, or "after-images."⁹⁶ *Heartbreak* might be seen as an after-image, prompted by the violence of the present time. Moreover, acknowledging that "psychic trauma knows no time"⁹⁷ does not explain why Schor began to engage with political themes at a later point in life, but it moves us toward better understanding it.

Nike, a subject Schor used twice in 1981, reappears in a sculpture from the late 1980s. Years later, in the 2000s, the artist was still sketching *The Winged Nike of Samothrace* in her notebooks, which reveals its significance for her.⁹⁸ The figure of *Nike* seems to be key to understanding Schor's historical imagination – it creates a point of contact between the 1980s, when the works were created, and the late 1930s, the period of her youth in Paris. When Schor lived in the capital of France, she enrolled in an art history course at the

92. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

93. Ibid., 181.

94. Pollock, *After-affects* | *After-images*, 191.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 2.

97. Ibid.

98. Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.



12 Resia Schor, *Nike*, 1981, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

École du Louvre and, between 1938 and 1939, she twice a week attended classes in the Musée du Louvre and passed *The Winged Nike of Samothrace* (c. 190 BC) at the top of the main staircase.⁹⁹ The years in Paris were the last ones before the outbreak of war and the loss of her loved ones in the Holocaust. The work signifies a concept of history and remembering that prevails in Schor's work, in which the past and present coexist, or rather, the past is fulfilled in the elusive present. It is a definition of history close to that of Walter Benjamin, captured in the famous *Angelus Novus* allegory, written after he fled from Paris and shortly before his suicide.¹⁰⁰ "The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. [...] For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably," wrote Benjamin.¹⁰¹ Schor's works

could be seen as images of the past recognized in her present. By depicting contemporary acts of war, she is also looking into the past – at wreckage hurled in front of the angel's feet.

Schor's first depiction of the Greek goddess from 1981 is the smallest, measuring 30.5 × 30.5 cm (Fig. 12, 13). The artist created it using the same layering technique as for other works. To a square piece of brass, she attached gouache on paper, overlaid with clear Plexiglas. The last element – another layer of brass with cutouts – is on metal cuboids and is offset. The shape bulges out, its edges sharp. On it, the artist performed one more operation – she cut circular holes, in which she placed metal tubes, creating a space of both convexity and concavity. The work portrays the goddess in the form of the Louvre sculpture – a mutilated woman with no arms, only with wings. Her figure is reduced to a simple, geometric shape; she resembles a machine rather

99. Resia Ajnsztajn's student card, Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

100. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

101. *Ibid.*, 255.

13 Resia Schor, *Nike*, reverse, 1981, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor



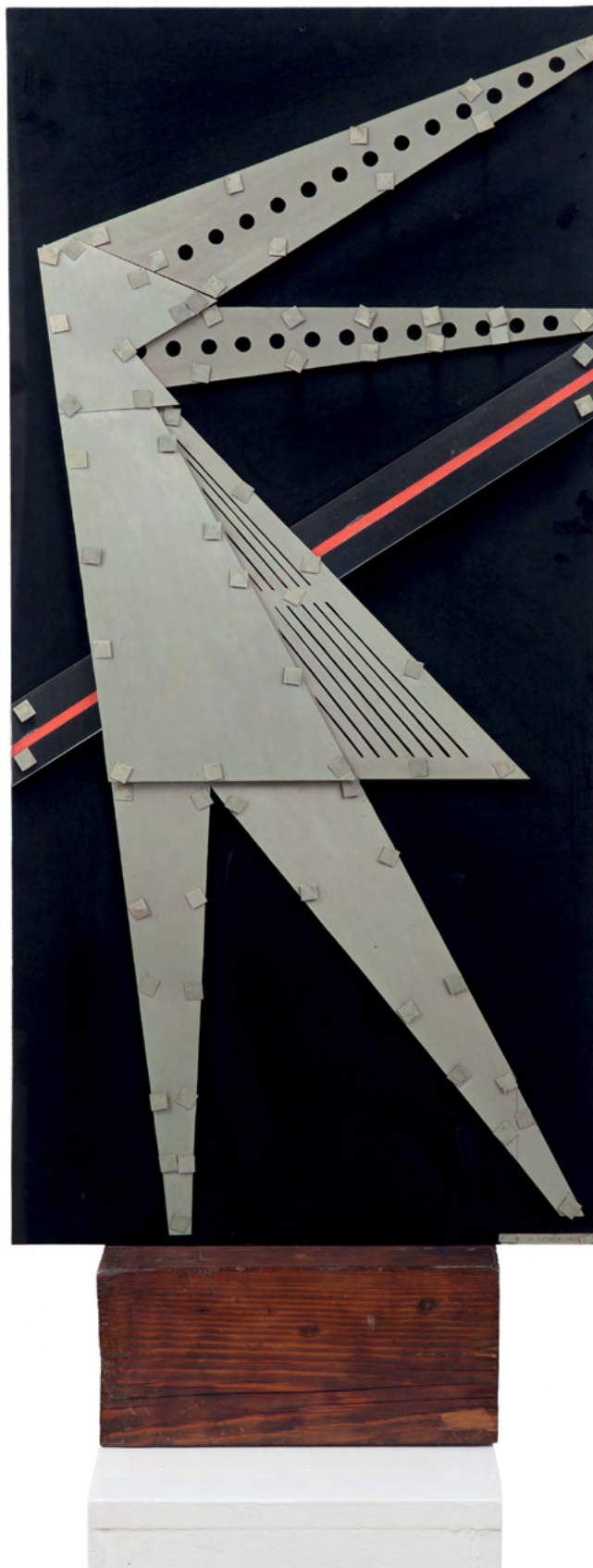
than a human. The cutout holes, perhaps reminiscent of a row of airplane windows, reinforce this effect.

Nike, the goddess of victory is most often depicted as a young, beautiful, naked or semi-naked woman with a muscular body. *The Winged Nike of Samothrace*, both sensual and strong, conforms to those norms. Schor's machine-like *Nike* does not. No beauty nor grace can

be found in warfare, she seems to say. *Nike* signifies the artist's utter disillusionment with war.¹⁰²

Behind Nike, two red lines cut through the darkness of the gouache-painted background. At first sight, framing the mechanical goddess, they resemble searchlights, a technology widely used in World War II for anti-aircraft defense during night bombings – possibly

102. For the Polish viewer, another obvious point of reference for those works is the *Monument to the Heroes of Warsaw* (1964), better known as the *Warsaw Nike*. The monumental bronze sculpture by Marian Konieczny was the result of a long-standing search to find a visual way to remember “all patriots who fought and died for Warsaw, and – this must be particularly emphasized – regardless of their affiliation or political beliefs.” “Interview with Janusz Zarzycki, Chairman of the Presidium of the Municipal National Council of the City of Warsaw,” *Życie Warszawy*, no. 181 (July 31, 1956), after: Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, *Polska rzeźba pomnikowa w latach 1945–1995* (Warszawa: Neriton, 1995), 66. What was eventually settled on, in a highly controversial choice, was a hybrid of two symbols – the Mermaid of Warsaw and Nike. On the negative reception of the sculpture, see: Grzesiuk-Olszewska, *Polska rzeźba pomnikowa w latach 1945–1995*, 87–93. The sculpture depicts a falling woman with her back arched in a dramatic curve, hands thrown overhead. In one of them, she holds a huge sword. Her open lips are frozen in a silent cry – a depiction of mad heroism in an unwinnable battle. It is unclear whether Resia Schor was aware of the statue, but it is likely that she heard of it as the international competition for the monument was a major event for the postwar Polish artistic community. The two Nikes, one brass, the other bronze, can both be seen as symbols of remembrance, monuments to the losses caused by war.



15 Resia Schor, *Nike*, 1989, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

← 14 Resia Schor, *Nike*, 1981, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

signifying an after-image from the artist's time in occupied France. The lines reappear in all three of the *Nike* sculptures, as well as other late works, always diagonal and situated behind the figure, creating an image of Nike *crossing* them. They remind us of borders, conventionally presented on maps as thick red lines, reminiscent of those appearing in Schor's work, although they are "neither mere lines on a map nor permanent boundaries, but rather volatile and permanently changing political and social manifestations."¹⁰³ The figure of *Nike* becomes a platform for evoking the form of an *apatride*. Notably, in the Louvre statue the goddess stands on the prow of a ship, creating a further link to Schor's time in exile. As Linhard has stressed: "Border crossing is not a single event, but a circuitous and enduring action that shapes the lives and deaths of migrants; people not only cross borders, borders cross people."¹⁰⁴ She points to the mark that living in war and exile leaves on the life of refugees – we can imagine that it includes trauma, morbidity, feelings of displacement, fear, secrets, shame. It is the personal experience of the artist, who in order to survive had to cross borders and has *taken them with her*. At the same time, however, it also represents the political present – violent military attacks and invasions always lead to civilians crossing borders, seeking refuge, endangering their lives in the process.

In the second *Nike* of 1981, Schor reiterates the structure and ideas of the first work in a larger format, 86.5 × 30.5 cm (Fig. 14). She introduces more color by adding pieces of paper painted in gouache behind the metal figure, creating a red-and-blue shadow. This *Nike* is more intricate and multidimensional, consisting of several separate pieces of brass. What sets the work apart is a patina developed over the years, the exposed parts of brass tarnished with time and a lack of conservation – a visual reminder of the absence of

institutional interest and care. However, part of the brass background, covered with Plexiglas, has retained its original finish, where Schor etched the metal, causing a glimmering effect. Here, as in all the *Nikes*, she once again reaches for metal rivets to hold the multilayered structures together. Their reverse – sheets of brass scattered with metal wires – could function as separate works, with their minimal but affective forms.¹⁰⁵ This attention to the back of the work can be traced to her jewelry making, and even further back to pieces created by Ilya. The duality of their works, and the loss that came with it, was described by Mira Schor in the video, *The Tale of the Goldsmith's Floor* (2003): "Every piece has an unseen side that is often just as ornamented as the front, so that no matter how beautiful the image, there is always a sense of loss inherent to the construction of the work. Some part is always just outside our field of vision, always lacking, despite the exhilaration of its existence."¹⁰⁶

Focusing further on the political atmosphere of the time, it is significant to note the issues that directly affected American women. As Susan Faludi analyzed in the acclaimed *Backlash* (1991), the 1980s in the US were a time of "undeclared war" against women's rights.¹⁰⁷ Faludi showcases the ways that feminism was weaponized by politicians and the media, framed as the cause of women's unhappiness, leading to an increase in resistance to women's rights in popular culture. From the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981, his administration's reduction of the number of women working in the federal office and targeting of feminists, the defeat of the anticipated Equal Rights Amendment in 1982, to the anti-abortion movement – women were being shunted away from the public sphere. Although the artist did not participate in feminist politics in a direct way, she became acquainted with its ideas through her daughters, both of whom were engaged with feminist

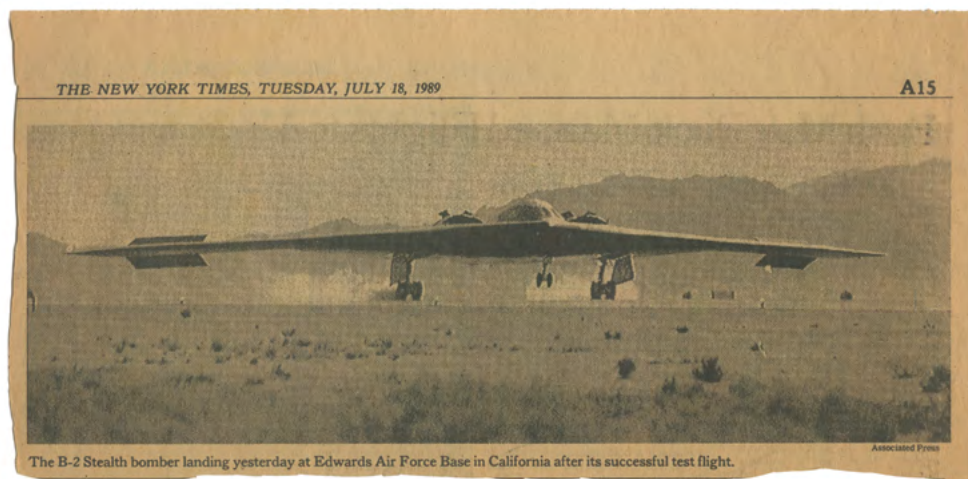
103. Linhard, *Moving Barbed Wire*, 118.

104. *Ibid.*, 122.

105. It remains unclear whether the artist herself thought of them that way. In some cases, for instance in *Heartbreak*, she signs both sides, which may indicate that she saw them as equivalent. In others, *B-2 Stealth* or *Lockerbie*, Schor treats the reverse in a utilitarian way, writing the titles in pencil or marker and drawing arrows.

106. Mira Schor, "The Tale of the Goldsmith's Floor," originally produced for the *differences* and Brown University conference "The Lure of the Detail," held in honor of the late Naomi Schor in April 2003. "The Tale of the Goldsmith's Floor: Illustrated video script excerpts," appeared in "The Lure of the Detail: Critical Reading Today," *differences* 14, no. 3 (2003): 136–161.

107. Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992).



16 Newspaper clipping cut out by Resia Schor from the New York Times, July 18, 1989, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

thinking and whose work she always supported. The two generations of women shaped each other's worldview. The daughters' interest in feminism was, as Mira Schor recalls, rooted in witnessing their mother's life, while Resia Schor was influenced by the Women's Liberation Movement, which she discovered through her daughters' involvement. Naomi Schor, who routinely challenged conventional understanding of gender, wrote on feminist psychoanalysis in the 1980s¹⁰⁸ and worked on an in-depth study on the historical female gendering of detail.¹⁰⁹ In the 1970s, Mira Schor joined the CalArts Feminist Art Program, an experimental collective project by women for women, run by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. The mid-1980s were a period of transition in Mira Schor's practice, both in terms of technique and thematic content. From this point, she began working in oil and her works became prevailingly gender-related and political, in a more direct way than previously, seen for instance, in the impactful *Patriotism on the Blood of Woman* (1989).

At the end of the 1980s, Resia Schor revisited the female figure of *Nike*, using different materials: white metal, black Plexiglas (Fig. 15). She constructed the 91.5 × 43 × 2.5 cm work in a similar way to the previous

Nikes and repeated certain elements – holes through the wings and the recurring red line. The artist cut into the metal, creating slim, regular gaps reminiscent of vents – a difficult and physically demanding task given her tools and age. This effort pushed Nike further away from the human form, toward that of a machine.

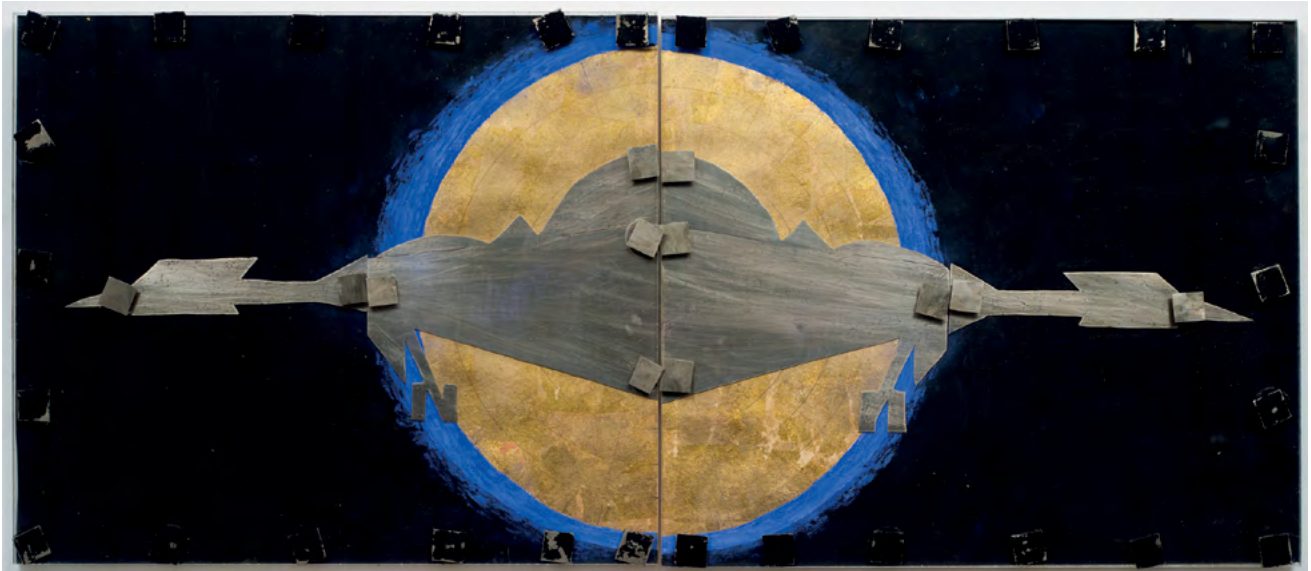
In July 1989, the Northrop B-2A Spirit completed its first test flight. The event was extensively covered in the media – work on the bomber had been carried out by the Northrop Corporation since the early 1980s. Initially, the aircraft was designed with the intention of penetrating the sophisticated Soviet air defense during the Cold War. The so-called “flying wing” was the first bomber to use the revolutionary stealth technology, making it immune to electronic detection. The “New York Times” reported on this event and published a picture of the aircraft taken from below.¹¹⁰ The B-2 – a perfect, symmetrical form depicted triumphantly against the sky – America's power reaching beyond Earth. The headline read: “A Decade and \$22 Billion Later, the Stealth Bomber Takes Off” – pointing to the enormous cost of developing the B-2, which amounted to around \$2 billion per aircraft, making it the most expensive airplane of all time.¹¹¹ In a second published

108. See, for instance: Naomi Schor, “Female Paranoia: The Case for Psychoanalytic Feminist Criticism,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 62 (1981), 204–219, and ead., “Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand,” *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1–2 (1985), 301–310.

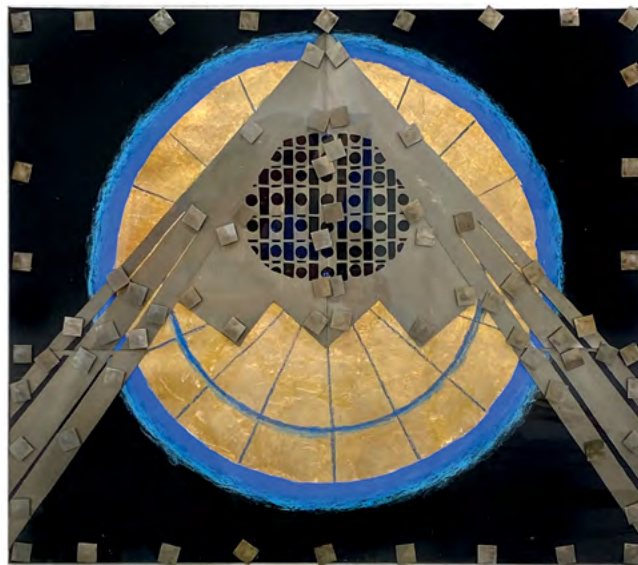
109. See: Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York–London: Methuen, 1987).

110. Newspaper clipping from *The New York Times*, July 18, 1989, 1, Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.

111. Jacopo Prisco, “B-2 Spirit: The \$2 billion flying wing,” *CNN Style*, January 29, 2020, accessed August 18, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/b-2-spirit-stealth-bomber/index.html>.



17 Resia Schor, *B-2 Stealth*, 1989, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor



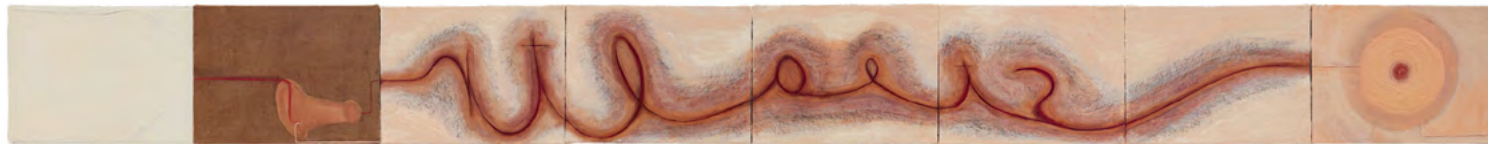
18 Resia Schor, *B-2 Stealth*, 1989, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

picture, the aircraft is shown in the moment after landing (Fig. 16).¹¹² There were no concerns – the trial was completed, and the US Air Forces’ multi-billion dollar project was a success.

Resia Schor saved both of those clippings. Based on them, she created sketches, and later developed those ideas into two works, both titled *B-2 Stealth* (Fig. 17, 18). These sister sculptures were created using the same materials as those of the *Nike* group: gouache, pastel,

paper, gold leaf, white metal, and Plexiglas. One of the works, measuring 53.3×61 cm, was created as a single piece, the other consists of two separate elements, together measuring 30.5×71 cm. Both are signed on the back “Resia Schor Provincetown 1989,” which means they were most likely created during the summer, shortly after the test flight. In the single-piece *B-2 Stealth*, the artist has cut out a pattern on a circular plan from the middle of the metal form. The rhythm of the cutouts

112. Newspaper clipping from “The New York Times” (July 18, 1989, 15), Family Archive of Resia and Ilya Schor.



19 Mira Schor, *War Frieze XI: Stealth*, 1993, Lyles and King Gallery, New York City

gives the work an almost decorative, unassuming quality. The shape is a direct visual reference to the black-and-white “New York Times” photograph, which shows the underside of the plane. The circular shape is the location of the bomb bays. When the aircraft is above a chosen target, the doors of the compartments open and bombs are dropped. The photograph shows the doors from below – a rare view, the implications of which are truly harrowing, as the stealth technology of B-2 planes means it is impossible to predict their attack. Arranging the newspaper images into layered sculptural forms, Schor destabilizes them. Both works are, like others from the series, held together by rivets. Here their dense and chaotic arrangement cannot be explained as being simply for practical reasons of holding the elements together. Against the golden sun that upon close examination reveals itself to be a shooting target, they look like bullet holes.

The sight of a bomber was likely familiar to the artist, as was its sound. At the beginning of their exile, on the evening of June 19, 1940, Resia and Ilya Schor arrived in Bordeaux. That night, a German attack by twelve Heinkel He 111 bombers led to the destruction of part of the city center – an area where the artists had intended to sleep but changed their plans owing to the masses of refugees there. Sixty-five people were killed and another 160 injured. The artist must have heard the haunting sounds of the attack, trying to decipher its proximity and the direction of the bombers. The next day, the Schors witnessed the city in ruins, images of Bordeaux from before the destruction still fresh in their minds. In *B-2 Stealth*, after-images and after-sounds from the artist’s past intertwine with a critique of contemporary US military violence.

At the beginning of the new decade, the US once again faced the threat of large-scale war. On August 2, 1990, Iraq, in a surprising act of aggression, invaded Kuwait, and within twenty-four hours gained control of

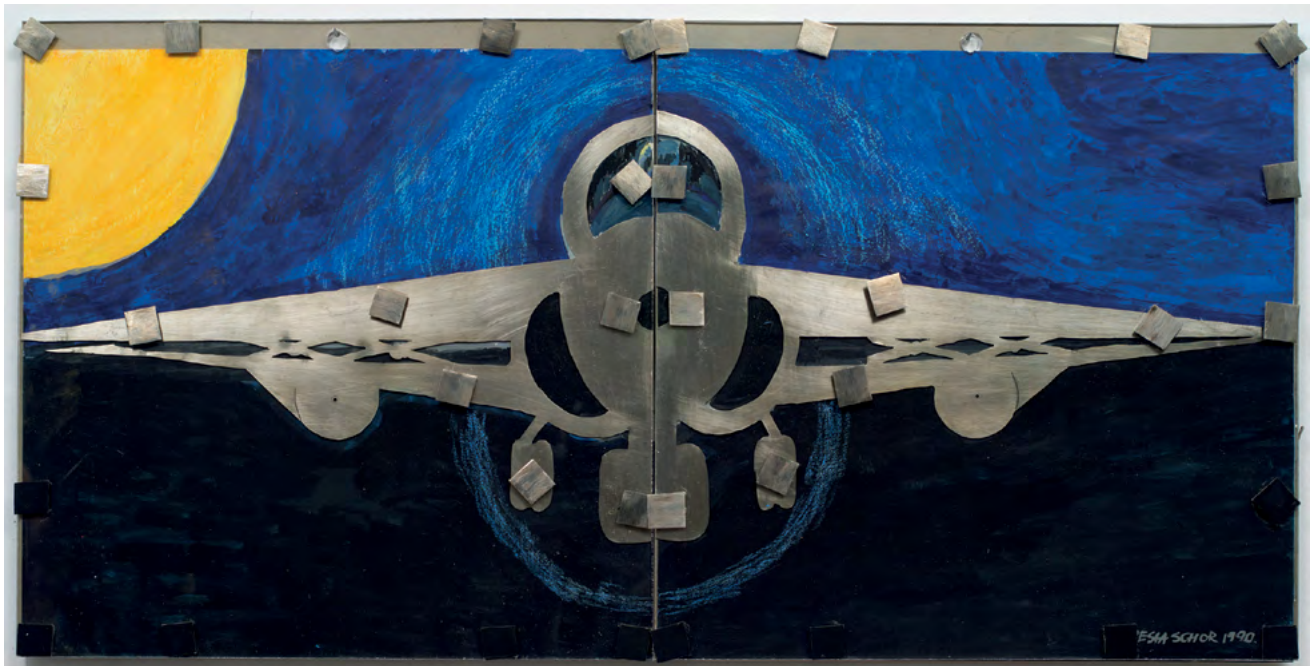
the small, oil-rich country. The action was condemned by the UN, and after ineffective economic sanctions were enacted, a US-led coalition of thirty-six countries expelled the Iraqis from Kuwait in a military operation named Desert Storm (1991). During the six-week air combat, America launched new military technology, which was seen as one of the determinants of success in a war that the media described as “sanitary” and “smart.”¹¹³ US defense spending, criticized by the anti-war movement, was a means of signifying political power. Called a “television war,” the conflict was broadcast daily, using images created by satellite technology.¹¹⁴

One of Mira Schor’s most important pieces was made in response to those events. *War Frieze* (1991–1994) is a twenty-nine-meter-long painting about war, patriarchy, and language (Fig. 19). Its form was inspired by chyrons on news channels during that time, giving an unceasing report on the war. What the artist saw when she watched the news was “endless militarism and aggression.”¹¹⁵ The work, created over three years, consists of modules, small 30.5 × 40.5 cm canvases, depicting phrases appropriated from the news: “area of denial” – referencing a type of weapon developed by the US that exploded above ground, denying oxygen to all living beings below, “Undue Burden” – cited from the Supreme Court abortion decision, finally “stealth” – the revolutionary technology and symbol of US military power. The word “stealth” flows from an erect penis to a breast – language communicated between gendered body parts. The term “stealth,” itself an element of public debate, is shifted to the private sphere and depicted within an intimate part of the body. The work is a comment on political discourse, gender politics, and the transmission of power in society, the phrases spelled out in bodily fluids or embedded in the skin. Public and private are conglutinated, political discourse penetrates the vulnerable human body. This

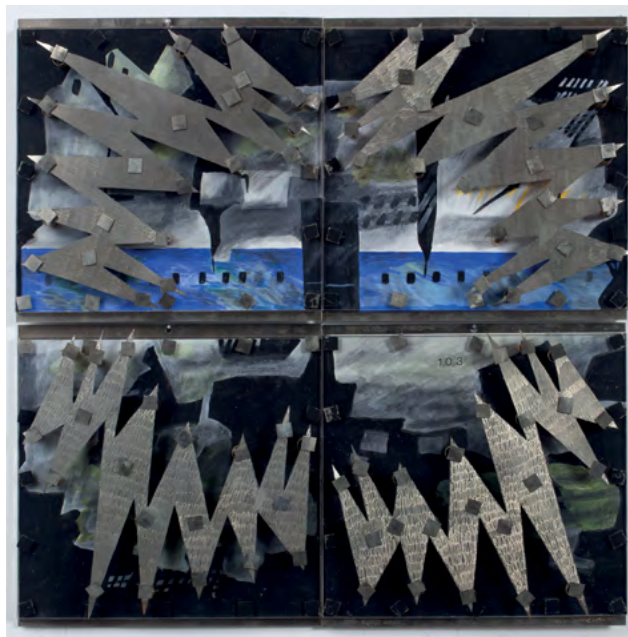
113. John Carlos Rowe, “The ‘Vietnam Effect’ in the Persian Gulf War,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 19 (1991), 123–124.

114. Stewart Purvis, “The Media and the Gulf War,” *RSA Journal* 139, no. 5423 (1991), 735–736.

115. Interview with Mira Schor, May 28, 2024.



20 Resia Schor, *A-6 Intruder*, 1990, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor



21 Resia Schor, *Lockerbie*, 1990, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor, 1967. Photo: courtesy of Mira Schor

sentiment is perhaps most pronounced in a fragment consisting of five modules spelling out in hirsute letters: *pub(l)ic*.¹¹⁶

In the work of both mother and daughter, violence and war are ever-present, continuous. The two artists

break down the opposition between public and private spheres – Resia Schor by engaging her individual memory, Mira Schor, by relating to the corporeal and gendered. Their works have one more similarity: the modular form – an expression of the desire and

116. Mira Schor, *War Frieze V: Pub(l)ic hair*, (detail), 1992, oil on linen canvases 30.5 × 40.6 cm (each), 30.5 × 284.5 cm (total).



22 Resia Schor, 1967, from the archive of Ilya Schor and Resia Schor, courtesy of Mira Schor. Photo by John Lefebvre

ambition to create large-format works, contained by the limitations of the domestic environment in which they both worked.

At the onset of the Gulf War, before Mira Schor began working on *War Frieze*, Resia Schor once again depicted military aircraft in the sculpture *A-6 Intruder* (1990; Fig. 20). The two-part work, measuring 30.5 × 61 cm, consists of gouache on paper, white metal, and Plexiglas; the subject is depicted frontally, in a way similar to the *B-2 Stealths*. The attack airplane was deployed during both the Gulf and Vietnam Wars, creating a link between conflicts past and present. The golden sun from the *B-2 Stealths* reappears, but is shifted, only partly visible in the corner of the work. The metal form of the aircraft is more detailed than in the previous works, with cutouts and incisions. The material, at times unevenly finished, seems to carry the traces of the eighty-year-old artist's effort in handling it.

That same year Resia Schor created her most brutal sculpture. *Lockerbie* was named after the small Scottish town which on December 21, 1988, became the site of

disaster when a Boeing 747, Pan Am flight 103 en route from London to New York, exploded thirty-eight minutes after takeoff, right above the border town. All 295 passengers and a crew of sixteen aboard the aircraft died. Debris from the explosion killed a further eleven people on the ground. The loss of life made it the deadliest terror attack up until that day. The disaster shook the United States – the tragedy happened just days before Christmas, among the victims were thirty-five Syracuse University students, and the youngest passenger was two months old. As Mira Schor recalled, the details of the attack – bodies were found still strapped in their seats – “seemed to have a kind of eeriness to it.”¹¹⁷ Pain, experienced in response to the incomprehensible loss of young life, afflicted Resia Schor; through it, she was able to look at the personal tragedy of the Lockerbie disaster with deep understanding.

Lockerbie (1990) consists of four modules, measuring 61 × 61 × 2.5 cm as a whole (Fig. 21). The artist used white metal as the base for the work, onto which she layered gouache paint and clear Plexiglas. The last parts of the structure are jagged pieces of metal, thrusting out from the work on metal tubes, all held together by rivets. This makes it Schor's most multidimensional sculpture. Using gouache, she depicts the remains of the aircraft, unmistakable with the blue stripe a row of airplane windows – a sight captured on one of the most well-known and reproduced photographs of the tragedy. The fractured, metal pieces attached to the work are perhaps what make it so compelling. The fragments, likely signifying the deadly debris, are dangerously sharp. The artist left them raw and jagged, and the surface scratched.

Lockerbie is the only work from the group that was exhibited during the artist's lifetime, as part of *My Mother Is an Artist*, curated by Sheila Pepe in 2003 at the Educational Alliance, New York. The premise of the exhibition was to showcase the practice of two generations of artists – mothers and daughters. *Lockerbie* was paired with an oil painting by Mira Schor, *Fog* (2003). As she recalls, installing her mother's sculpture was challenging; it became obvious that the artist had not considered how the work might be exhibited – the heavy, sharp pieces have no handles, and the four modules are not linked together.¹¹⁸ This affirms Mira's often expressed view that Resia Schor created the group of

117. Interview with Mira Schor, May 27, 2024.

118. Ibid.

sculptures with no intention of exhibiting or selling them. In this sense, the most political of the artist's sculptures prove to be her most intimate.

Schor portrayed the act of war in many guises, used the same artistic language to depict organized militarism and a terrorist attack – she did not distinguish between them nor attribute more value to either one of them. Through her sculptures, Resia Schor (Fig. 22) was able to explore the personal dimension of war, and

the inalienable mark it left on her life. Her multilayered, heterogeneous works can be seen as visual representations of her own overlaid experiences of exile, loss, and violence. Those experiences were activated by the artist's present, making her vigilant to forms of victimization in the modern world. They are a depiction of the ongoing nature of war – the history of which did not end with World War II, nor in the early 1990s, when the artist created the final sculpture from the series.

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NOTA BIOGRAFICZNA

Katarzyna Ewa Trzeciak jest badaczką oraz kuratorką wystaw poświęconych artystkom. Jest doktorantką w Szkole Doktorskiej Nauk Humanistycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, gdzie pod kierunkiem prof. Agaty Jakubowskiej prowadzi badania nad historią żydowskich studentek Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie oraz Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie w okresie międzywojennym. W 2021 r. uzyskała tytuł magistra historii sztuki na Wydziale Zarządzania Kulturą Wizualną Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie.