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Fresh out of graduate school, burdened by a mountain of debt, the last thing I was primed to do was buy original artwork. I was slowly emerging from the lifestyle of a graduate student into the existence of a young assistant professor. I had a good job and was beginning to indulge in some material comforts. Though my small apartment was decorated with posters, I had actually framed some of them. No longer did my bookshelves consist of wood bought directly from the lumber yard and bricks scavenged from haphazard sites. Those had been replaced with real bookcases. Even the old broken-down second hand sofa was gone and a nice new one in its place. One thing, however, that was not even remotely included in my budget was original artwork. Yet there I stood in a gallery in Seattle looking at a drawing and I knew I had to have it.

A few weeks earlier Marika Frank had come to the University of Washington to talk to the students in my course on the Holocaust. Shortly before the semester began I had seen her at a social event. When she mentioned that she was a survivor, I impetuously said: “Will you come speak to my class?” She hesitated long enough for me to wonder if I had committed a *faux pas*. Then, in a tone that could not be described as enthusiastic, she said: “Yes, I will do it.” She sat before the class and in a still small – almost flat -- voice described her journey from a comfortable family home in Debrecen, Hungary to a “tour” of concentration of camps that included Birkenau, Bergen Belsen, Buchenwald, and Magdeburg.

As she spoke of family loss and of intimate details – how women stopped menstruating in the camps -- the class listened in riveted attention. Many of them, it was clear, had never heard a survivor speak of their experiences. This was in 1976, before courses on the Holocaust or, for that matter, museums and memorials had become almost commonplace. No one was creating video archives of survivor testimony. There were few high school or college teachers asking survivors to come to their classes. And, for that matter, there were few survivors anxious or even willing to come speak.

Though her time in the camps long predated her training as an artist, even then Marika had a natural eye for detail. She told us about the barracks, the topography, and even the weather. She spent some time describing the “*Appel*,” when all the prisoners had to stand muster as attendance was taken. It began before dawn and sometimes stretched for hours until the sun was high in the sky. The hardest moments came in the lull between the end of night and the rising of the sun. Even though streaks of yellow already marked the sky, this was the coldest period Marika said. It was colder than the sheer black of night. Standing in their threadbare dresses and mismatched clumsy shoes, Marika and the other women shivered and sometimes even shook from the cold. In a few short months she had come a terribly long distance from her parents’ comfortable home. Her description of these moments stayed with me.

In her quiet voice, Marika continued to tell the rest of her story. Towards the end, when discussing her life after the war and her emergence as an artist, she stated quite emphatically. “I never paint about the Holocaust.”

When the bell rang signaling the end of the session no one moved. Finally, after a few awkward moments, I stood up from my chair to signal that class was, indeed, over and it was OK to leave. As the student departed, they approached her and said with more tenderness than one usually hears from a college student, “Thank you for telling us your story.” When the last student had filed out she turned to me and said “Well that wasn’t too bad for the first time.” Only then did I learn that she had never told her story publicly before.

A few weeks thereafter I received an invitation to her art show. I walked around gazing at the various pictures. I was struck by their beauty. I could imagine them on my walls but, given the realities of my situation, I did not even consider buying them. Then I came upon a small drawing. It was composed of different shades of grey. There were rows of sharp angular shapes along the bottom half. Atop these figures a large band of yellow stretched across the painting. Above it was a couple of grey stripes and towards the very top a smaller band of yellow flecked with grey. Had I not heard Marika’s story, I might have thought the angular shapes were trees in deep winter when everything had been stripped from their branches. But I knew that was not what I was seeing. This was the *Appel* at the moment when the sun was beginning to rise. This was the coldest and most difficult moment.

I went looking for Marika. I asked her to look at the picture with me. When I told her what I saw, she smiled and said: “I don’t paint about the Holocaust.” Unconvinced, I bought the drawing. It has hung in my house for the last thirty years. Each time I look at it I see the *Appel* Marika has so vividly described.

I think of how she has subsequently told her story to countless students in the intervening years. I think of how she never aggrandized or spoke dramatically but just stuck to the “facts.”

But I don’t only think of her suffering and what she has endured. I think of what she has accomplished, of the amazing life and career Marika has built since those cold, dark mornings. Nothing can return to her the family members who were killed. Nothing can mitigate the horrors of her experience. Yet the beauty of the work she has produced in the ensuing years is a testimony to the way in which she has embraced life with a resiliency, dedication, and grace.

Out of the dark, cold mornings of the *Appel*, she has made this world a far more beautiful place. For that we are very grateful.