

# Powerful evocation of the Holocaust



*Toronto  
artist  
invests  
portraits  
with  
layers of  
meaning*

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GAZETTE ART CRITIC

Two full-faced photo portraits of young children – shot in a misty, soft focus and drenched in a warm blue toner – confront viewers when they walk into the Galerie Vox.

Stamped in gold on the foreheads of the children, who exude innocence and contentment, are three Hebrew letters – aleph, mem and tuv – which spell the word “Emeth” or “the truth.”

Hanging on the opposite wall in a closely packed row is a series of muted, dark photos of prisoners of the notorious Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. The people are dressed in full prison garb; some are skeletally thin, while others look like they are new arrivals. All them wear an expression of terror that defies description.

Printed prominently on each face – again gold is the color – is a single Hebrew letter. Taken together, the letters spell out the words “rakhum

vekhanun” or “merciful and gracious,” two attributes of God, according to Jewish teachings, the wall panels explain.

These works are part of an exhibition by Simon Glass, a young Toronto artist. It is one of most moving exhibitions I have seen in a long time.

It is also one of the most difficult to understand as the artist has steeped his work with layer upon layer of meaning.

Just as the deceptively seductive surfaces of his works belie the horrors of the imagery, so does the way Glass infuses Jewish thought, philosophy and customs into each piece make it impossible to have a single, simplistic reaction to this art.

In the process, Glass has raised issues most of us would rather avoid. It is what makes this art so haunting, so disturbing.

■ *Yahweh!* by Simon Glass continues at the Galerie Vox, 4060 St. Laurent Blvd., until Feb. 11. The gallery is open Wednesday to Sunday, from noon until 5 p.m.

One of Simon Glass's photo portraits at Galerie Vox.