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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**"Celebrate Life"
The Sculpture of Gizel Berman
Monotypes by Arthur Secunda
January 11 through March 8, 2008**

On January 11, 2008, West Valley Art Museum will open a major exhibition of sculpture entitled "Celebrate Life" by artist Gizel Berman who was a Holocaust survivor and author of the book "My Three Lives: A Story of Love, War and Survival".

Berman created the Holocaust Memorial that stands in a courtyard at the Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island, Washington, outside Seattle. While many works through out her career dealt with Holocaust themes, the majority of her output had more to do with life and the living. This exhibition is strongly representative of those themes.

Of the thirty-four works on display, twelve are ceramic sculptures. The rest are bronze castings. The figures themselves range from generalized renditions of animals and people to abstract works, some very organic in nature; some, as in the monument and a few others tend to have a more rigid and defined structure. Often those are based on letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Jewish faith and canon weave a tapestry of feeling in this collection of life expressions. Family, children, motherhood and love all contribute to the central theme; the fragility of life and the need to celebrate the triumph of faith over despair.

Though the Holocaust is not blatantly present in most of the work, it still has defined the artist. Of a one-winged bird piece of hers, she once said, "I am that bird. I will always be a wounded bird, a bird with one wing. The war did that to me." The Mercer Island monument, standing over 12 feet tall, is made up of angular, bronze letters that form the Hebrew word "Lo Tishkach". Never Forget.

Copies of "My Three Lives" will be available in the Museum Store during the exhibition which will run through March 8. The exhibit also contains a video of Berman talking about her life, educational materials on Jewish history and related art from the Museum Collection and a special contribution of Old Testament themed monotypes by artist Arthur Secunda. Secunda's works represent the latest print series by this significant Arizona artist who's reputation is worldwide. Monotypes are singular one of a kind works on paper made using printmaking methods.

West Valley Art Museum is open 10 AM to 4 PM Tuesday through Sunday. The Museum is located at West Bell Road and 114th Avenue. With five exhibition galleries, a Museum Store, *Classic Café*, and regularly scheduled education programs, the Museum welcomes all visitors. There is an admission charge for non-members. \$7 adults, \$2 students, ages 5 and under are free.



“Holocaust Monument” Mercer Island, Washington



“Mother and Child” bronze



“The Struggles of Slavery”
monotype by Arthur Secunda



“Upside Down
Hebrew Letter”
bronze

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