



### **“Erased Memories”**

The inspiration for this series of photo-constructions is the Holocaust--in part as a historical event, but also as a piece of my family history. When confronted with the documentation of this event, the effect can be a horror so stunning, that the faces and stories of the individuals are obscured. The witnesses of the event, erase many memories too painful to recall. Out of this fog arise images, still shrouded in questions and mystery, portraits of men, women and children all affected by these cataclysmic events.

My work brings these metaphoric portraits to life. The collages are framed by the weight of statistics and hard facts. Among the materials I use are tattooed numbers, endless lists of names, and the architecture of the death camps. Within this structure, we catch a glimpse of a person, as if half-remembered. They are the sisters that died, the sons who escaped, and the children never born.

While the Holocaust provides much of the inspiration for this work, its message of human vulnerability is not limited to this event. Each face of “Erased Memories” could be anyone caught in the maelstrom of history, whose fate is decided by some unknown force. These anonymous images provide a bridge back to the past, but the bridge can also be extended forward to our time--an era when the individual is so often forgotten in the crush of numbers, drowning in a sea of faces, a digitized identity that denies the “flesh and blood” story underneath. The viewer is asked to remember and recognize that the face in the frame of events may be anonymous but is not quite erased from memory.

**Audrey Bernstein**