

Dennis Farber *Solo Show*

Friday, January 28–Sunday, March 13

Reception: Friday, January 28, 5–7pm

Maryland Institute College of Art

Bunting Center: Pinkard Gallery

The five albums bind together images both found and made. Some of the images are from Jewish archives. Some are cabinet cards of obscure provenance. Some are my own photographs, both straight and manipulated, and some original collages. None are intended as documentary; rather, they invite visual and narrative connections, stories to be imagined, and questions to be asked.

As we turn the pages of these albums, we don't know what happened to the subjects of these photographs. We search for clues to what their lives may have been—happy, difficult, productive, cut short—and wonder what combination of illness, violence, happiness, or happenstance they encountered at the end.

As Amy Eisner, whose poems accompany this exhibit, commented, “the albums are a place of peace for those who died violently and a disturbing place for those who died peacefully.”

Though clear allusions to the Holocaust other atrocities are referenced, the images as a whole do not speak to a specific historical event. The people in these albums who represent untold numbers more are neither relatives, nor friends, nor acquaintances, yet they are a part of our history and therefore a part of who we are.

In photographs, it is possible to see how generations past and present are connected, calling up notions of ancestor, family, and clan. But when so much has happened in the world, when entire populations have been lost, images also have a way of remaining vague, almost fugitive, each one obscuring another as in a palimpsest, each page of the album turning on the next.

Memory connects us to the past, but even more, it keeps those who are no longer alive from vanishing altogether. In the aftermath of genocide, keeping that memory alive can be a staggering proposition. The dead, in their vast numbers, call into question the very possibility of preserving the memory of an individual. And yet we must try—morally, ethically, and for the sake of our humanity.

Dennis Farber





At first any surface could be marked: pond by stone, wave
by glint by cloud by bird
intervening

a beard showing gray
above the burned-out whiteness of a star

yet there was no blankness on the face of things.

The need for a blank
is called not remembering.

from *Five Albums* by Amy Eisner

S., d.4.1.38.

Dear Master and Missie Wright!

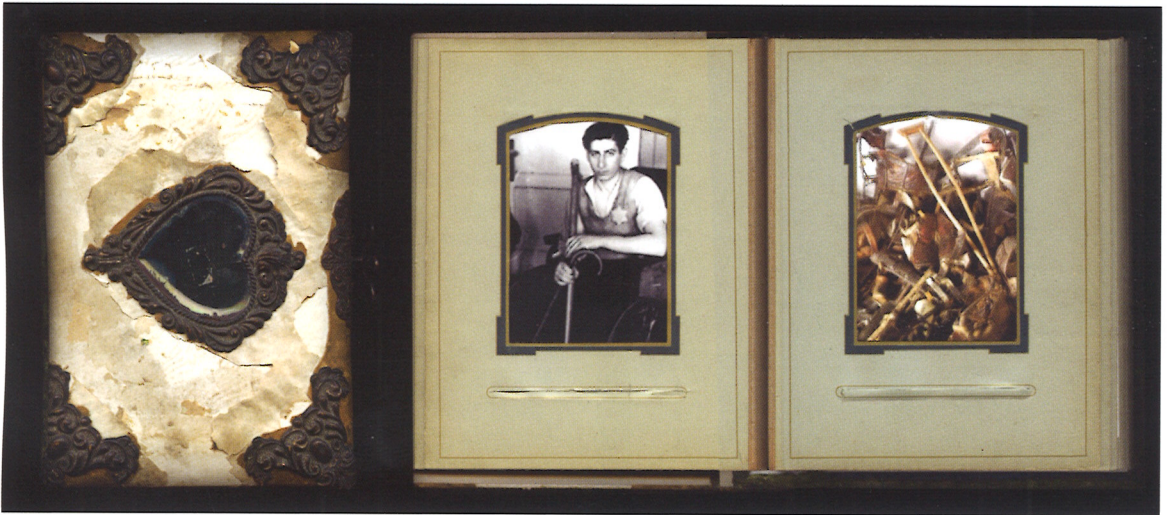
By Mrs Philipp I got your address and the information, that you would have the kindness, taking our only beloved child in your house and your protection. I am very gratefull for your kind intention and I allow me to give you details about the child and us. Ruth is born on the 30th 4th of September 1922. She visited a private lyceum untill half a year before the end, for the school was obliged to cease existing. For half a year she absolved a housekeeping school and now she is going through a commercial school. In the afternoon she is with a little boy of 5 years and a half, who is loving her with all his little heart. Ruth is the whole content of our life and we would be very happy, knowing her in the shelter of a good and noble family. If you are interested, of getting more details, you may take connection with my brother, who was our family physician, till a quarter of a year ago, when he left Berlin and went to London, to pass there the examen for England. My husband was wholesale merchant, what is now beyond any possibility, he lost our great fortune by the consequences of inflation. I myself am the daughter of a physician and married 26 years ago. Ruth is very late and she is the happiness of our life. She has a decent character and you can depend upon her. She knows very well housekeeping and loves children very much. She can make herself understand in English and French and knows typewriting and shorthand writing.

Will you allow me, to ask you some questions? Mrs. Philipp informed me, that you would invite Ruth, accompanying you to America? How long would you stay there, and when would you start? We hope, that we can be staying ourselves in London in some time and wait to have Ruth in the same time.

I would be much obliged of your answering me very soon.

My and my husbands best compliments.

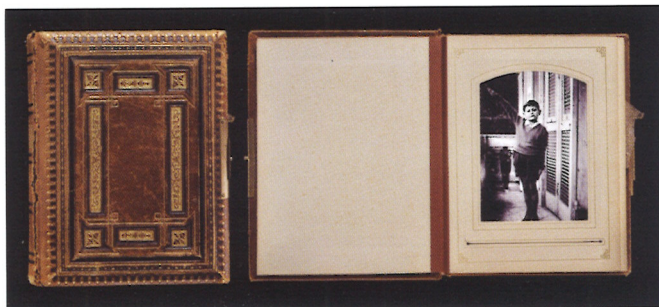
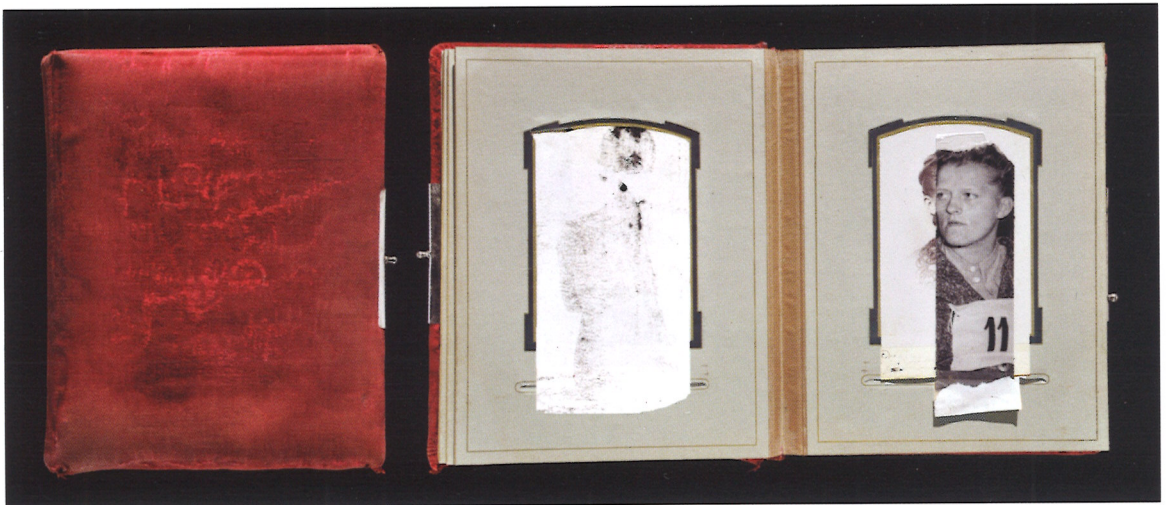
yours
sincerely



“Ruth is the whole content of our life and we would be very happy...”
 But careful, don’t ask where the child will be taken.
 They may not take her far enough away.

A beast inside a beast, and inside those, the animals and all the women and men
 locked down by an angel turning the key—

from *Five Albums* by Amy Eisner



(All images) Dennis Farber, *The Album Project*, collage, cabinet cards, and inkjet, 2010.

MICA

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