

## Shoa stories

### Kean events bear witness to the Holocaust

SUSAN BLOOM  
Special to NJ Jewish News

An artist's famed suite of Holocaust-inspired lithographs and a scholar's consideration of the role of German military chaplains were among recent highlights at Kean University's Holocaust Resource Center.

On display at Kean's Human Rights Institute Gallery this month is Jacob Landau's "Holocaust Suite," a series of black and white lithographs created in 1968 after Landau met with a group of Buchenwald survivors in New York City. It is on loan from its permanent home at Monmouth University.

Although Landau was not a survivor, the meeting "shook him to the core and changed his life forever," said David Herrstrom, president of The Jacob Landau Institute, which is based in Roosevelt, where Landau lived most of his life. "Landau believed that if he didn't witness and speak out against those events which hindered growth and humanity, he was 'dangerous' as an artist, and, while neither a Holocaust survivor himself nor the descendant of one, he became an 'imaginative witness' to the atrocity." Landau died in 2001.

Herrstrom spoke at a Dec. 3 reception for the opening of the exhibit — the first in Kean's Human Rights Institute Gallery to center on the Holocaust.

A humanist who fought in World War II, "Landau was affected by the suffering he saw and expressed that through his lithographs," said Stacy



Jacob Landau's "Holocaust Suite," on display at Kean's Human Rights Institute Gallery.



David Herrstrom, president of The Jacob Landau Institute, discusses the artist's work *The Question*, which is among the works in the "Holoc."

Schiller, acting director of the Holocaust Resource Center. "The works speak to the concepts of society as witness, man's inhumanity to man, and how society returns to humanity after such evil."

That same day, author and Holocaust scholar Dr. Doris Bergen described another kind of "witness," German military chaplains during the Holocaust.

In her lecture at Kean's Wilkins Theater, Bergen discussed the concept of morality and how the chaplains reconciled their own and the *Wehrmacht's* actions with their Christian faith. The

chaplains, said Bergen, "heard the atrocities, heard about them, saw them, and interacted with the killers every day, so what was the role of Christian churches in the transformation of a normal society into a genocidal one?"

Bergen, a faculty member at the University of Toronto, spoke as part of the Kean center's Murray Pantirer Distinguished Scholar Lecture Series.

In explaining their complicity in the crimes of Nazi Germany, Bergen said the German military clergy — largely a network of "old-fashioned German patriots" — often used such strategies as denial, an emphasis on German suffering, and pleadings of powerlessness to justify Nazi behavior and create what she described as a process of "moral inversion": portraying Jewish victims as perpetrators.

The clergy "weren't silent, but rather were reluctant and active partners," Bergen concluded, noting that "German military chaplains help us understand a terrifying point — that war introduces a terrible space for moral confusion."

#### If you go

**What:** "Holocaust Suite" exhibit by Jacob Landau

**Where:** Human Rights Institute Gallery at Kean University, Union

**When:** Through Dec. 20, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily (8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Fridays)

**Contact:** [www.kean.edu/~hrc/](http://www.kean.edu/~hrc/) or 908-737-4633

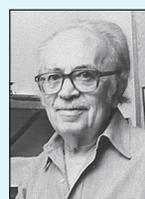
#### Passionate insight

IN HIS ARTWORK, Jacob Landau (1917-2001) explored the themes of human existence and morality with passionate insight. Born in Philadelphia, where he began his career as an illustrator, he lived most of his adult life in Roosevelt, founded in New Jersey in the 1930s as an agro-industrial cooperative for, primarily, Jewish garment workers from New York City.

Landau raised his family and immersed himself in the town's thriving artistic community, along with such noted artists as Ben Shahn. He became a distin-

guished professor at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and received a doctorate of fine arts from Monmouth University in West Long Branch in 1996.

The art he created included 10 monumental stained-glass windows for Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pa., and his works are in the permanent collections of such museums as The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern



Jacob Landau

Art in New York. Landau received numerous awards and grants, and his work has been exhibited extensively in Europe, Mexico, South America, and throughout the United States.

Growing up during the Great Depression and profoundly affected by the Holocaust, Landau grappled with humankind's cruelty to each other through the creation of provocative and seductive works.

— THE JACOB LANDAU INSTITUTE