

From Archive to Print

The Diarist Victor Klemperer and the Isakowitz Family

Monica Petzal

Abstract

Monica Petzal is an artist, curator and writer with a particular interest in her German-Jewish background. Trained as a painter and art historian, she became a printmaker in mid-career, enabling her to explore more fully a rich family archive of images, texts and objects. In this article she explores the connection between the writing of Victor Klemperer and her maternal family in Dresden before the Second World War, her family archive and the artwork produced for two exhibitions, *Indelible Marks – The Dresden Project* in 2013–14 and *Dissent and Displacement* in 2020.

Keywords: archives, Dresden, exhibitions, Victor Klemperer, lithography, monoprinting, printmaking, reconciliation

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In the spring of 1995, my London phone rang. It was my cousin Ruth Levy Berlowitz from Tel Aviv in Israel. She told me a diary had been published in Germany with entries about my family who had been friends of the diarist, and that I had to read it. The writer's name was Victor Klemperer, and the diaries were called *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten – Tagebücher 1933–1945* (1995).¹

Ruth had good reason to be interested. Born in 1925, the only child of a German-Jewish dentist, she grew up on the Lukasplatz in the Südvorstadt of Dresden around the corner from my grandparents, Erich and Sofie Isakowitz, and my mother, Hannalore, born in 1915. In 1936 her family fled Nazi persecution and emigrated to Palestine. Determined to return to Europe, Ruth graduated in 1952 with a degree in interpreting from the University of Geneva, in English, French and Spanish, whilst also working in her two main languages: German, her mother tongue, and Hebrew, her second language.

In 1961 she was appointed to interpret simultaneously from Hebrew, English and French into German for the defendant, the defence, German journalists and observers at the trial of Adolf Eichmann. She translated the verdict in writing beforehand, before simultaneously interpreting its reading out by Judge Moshe Landau. This work ended on 29 May 1962. Exhausted, she vowed never to work again on Holocaust material, but eventually reconsidered given the significance of her work; in 1987 she interpreted from Hebrew into English at the trial of the concentration camp guard John Demjanjuk. In 2012 she donated her Hebrew and German copies of the verdict from the Eichmann trial to the Foundation for the House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn. So, Ruth, precise and formidable, was the ideal person to translate for me the pertinent content of the diaries about our family, as my reading of German was, at that time, poor. It was not until 1998 when the Martin Chalmers translation, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer*, was published that I was able to read the diaries fully for myself.²

I first went to Dresden in 1985. It was a deeply traumatic visit. My father Harry Petzal and my mother Lore Isakowitz were invited on a restitution visit to Berlin, my father's birthplace. They asked me and one of my two brothers, Peter, four years my senior, to accompany them. For her seventieth birthday my mother was determined to see her home city of Dresden again, as neither she nor her parents had returned since they fled in 1936. As this was before the German unification it took considerable paperwork to visit East Germany. From the moment we passed through the austere border controls at Friedrichstrasse, my mother was a nervous wreck. She had heard, quite wrongly, that although she had held a British passport for almost forty years, she was not protected as a British citizen in the country of her birth. She was convinced that the Dresden hotel rooms were bugged – they probably were. She was in despair at the state of her beloved city, the ruins of the Frauenkirche with their piles of numbered stones, the overgrown bomb crater where her home had stood and the bleak brutalist housing estates. She came home in anguish, went into considerable decline, and died the next year in a psychiatric facility under baffling circumstances.

Researching and Creating

I trained as a painter and an art historian and it was not until the time that I was reading the Klemperer diaries that I started printmaking, taking a part-time MA in Printmaking at Camberwell School of Art between 1998 and 2000. It was at this time and with a young family that I started

to explore the use of family archive documents and photographs in my work and to investigate the possibilities of monoprinting and photolithography. I was also doing the associated research both online and through resources such as the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) and the Weiner Library, London. I speak German but my reading, particularly of old script, is poor and I often required assistance.

The Klemperer diaries were a fascinating read. Originally mostly handwritten, they constitute perhaps the most detailed account of life in Germany, and specifically in Dresden, from 1933 onwards. At their start, Victor Klemperer was the Professor of Romance Languages at the University of Dresden, a Jew, (although converted to be a Lutheran) and married to pianist Eva Schlemmer, an Aryan. In his writing, Klemperer demonstrates the importance of keeping an almost daily record. He aspired to become a writer of contemporary cultural history. The diaries, which cover the years from 1933 to 1959, bring together detailed observation, linguistic mastery, and an educated and knowledgeable scepticism. These chronicles, with their mix of political acuity, domestic minutiae and unflinching self-reflection, have become a standard source for historians of this period.

As part of my research into Klemperer, I went to visit his former house in Dölzsch outside Dresden: there is now an informative plaque across the street, as the current owner does not allow access. I visited his and his wife Eva's grave in the local church graveyard, and many other locations in the city that he describes, some still standing, most destroyed and replaced with new buildings. I met his second wife, Hadwig, who was responsible for the publication of the posthumous diaries. More disconcertingly, I watched all 650 minutes of a TV drama *Ein Leben in Deutschland* (1999), a twelve-part reality-based series of the diaries. This programme features actors playing the roles of my mother and my grandparents, but these were entirely fictitious characters, with very different lives to those I had known about. In this series my mother was married and had a child before she fled in 1936, which was certainly not the case. Whilst some of the historical aspects about the era were seemingly accurate, the storylines were far-fetched and unbelievable.

I inherited my maternal family archive in many forms. Boxes of papers, photos and books. Objects, the doorplates from my grandfather's dental surgery in Dresden, family silver with embossed initials, drawings of my mother by German Expressionist Conrad Felixmüller (part of a larger collection by the artist who was a close friend of my grandparents). Rosenthal china, Bauhaus furniture, jewellery, table linen and much more. In this family archive, I could find little trace of the relationship with Victor and Eva Klemperer, just one photograph of my grandmother

in their car with Eva Klemperer. This car is frequently mentioned in the diaries. There are also my mother's university exercise books, possibly read, and corrected, by Klemperer but with no obvious signs of corrections or notes by another hand.

So how did I begin to translate or transform the Klemperer diaries, my research and my archive through imagery? I have tackled this matter twice in my creative work, firstly in 2013 and again in several prints in 2019, both as part of larger bodies of work, the first of which, entitled *Indelible Marks – The Dresden Project*, was made entirely in Dresden at the city printmaking workshop known as the Grafikwerkstatt. The second, *Dissent and Displacement*, was made after numerous visits to Dresden and following my new role as first Trustee and now Vice Chair of the Dresden Trust, working on issues of reconciliation.³

I consider that making art from such a wide range of sources requires a particular kind of immersion in the subject matter. It was important for the start of this project that I lived for six cold snowy weeks in January and February 2013 in Dresden, close to the river Elbe, working daily from 8 am to 4 pm in the Grafikwerkstatt, often walking to the studio along the Elbe and through undamaged parts of the city. The Grafikwerkstatt is situated to the east of the old city in the basement of the old so-called 'Ernemann Building', later known as the 'Zeiss Ikon Factory' and today as 'Pentacon Dresden'. This example of Dresden's industrial architecture from the 1920s is bound up with ground-breaking developments in camera and cinema technology, as well as with some particularly harrowing stories of secretive war production, slave workers and persecution during the Second World War. The building survived the Allied bombing and now part of the upper floors house a technical museum collection. The workshop is run by three men, highly skilled master printers, all of whom trained under the GDR regime and who, together with other artists working there, were able to talk to me a great deal about the city and its history. I was in Dresden that year at the time of the annual commemorative events for the bombing of the city on 13 February. It was a particularly violent commemoration that year, with running street battles between neo-Nazis and the students, a massive police presence and helicopters hovering overhead, much of which I witnessed. At calmer times I was able during this prolonged stay to walk the city extensively and become familiar with its streets and centres of culture, the museums, the Semper opera and concert hall. I was particularly drawn to visiting the Kupferstich-Kabinett, the Military Museum with its new wing designed by Daniel Libeskind and the German Hygiene Museum. So, I occupied myself with Klemperer and my mother's beloved city and became drawn into its complex and contradictory psyche.

Family References in the Klemperer Diaries

The first references to the Isakowitz family in the Klemperer book, *I Shall Bear Witness*, occur in March 1933 as my mother Lore, then aged seventeen, was about to take her Abitur, the school leaving certificate. Klemperer was horrified by the election of Hitler as Chancellor in January, contemplating that the events of 1918 were simply going to be played out again, but this time under a different symbolic flag. Commenting on how rapidly Germany was unravelling, he viewed what had gone on since January as just a foretaste of the horror to come:

1933: 10 March, Friday evening (p. 5)

30th January: Hitler Chancellor. What, up to election Sunday on 5th March I called terror, was a mild prelude. Now the business of 1918 is being exactly repeated, only under a different sign, under the swastika. Again, it's astounding how easily everything collapses.

Later that year, in August, Klemperer's colleague Stepun referred my mother to Klemperer for professional advice on how to become an interpreter. Reflecting on the fact that she was a Jewish student, that the appropriate institute, formerly in Mannheim, had relocated to Heidelberg and that the Jewish director Curt Sigmund Gutkind had been dismissed, Klemperer considered it doubtful that she would be allowed to study, even in Dresden on his courses:

1933: 10 August, Thursday (p. 26)

Stepun sent me a Fräulein Isakowitz for vocational guidance. She took her school-leaving certificate at Easter, father a Jewish dentist. She would like to become an interpreter. How? The institute in Mannheim has been moved to Heidelberg, Gutkind removed – who knows where – non-Aryans are not admitted. She wants to try and study here for one or two semesters. Questionable if she'll be allowed to.

Despite the ever-increasing restrictions, by November 1933 Lore did start studying with Klemperer and like all Jewish students was obliged to carry a yellow card, the forerunner of the Jewish star, whilst German students were identified by a brown card. Klemperer, who would ultimately be dismissed from his professorial post at the university, indicated the dwindling number of attendees for his courses, mentioning that for a Monday morning lecture on the French Renaissance he had five students, whilst four attended the session on Renaissance poetry and two the one on Corneille. My mother attended them all. By March of 1934 he concluded his Corneille course as he only had two students left: my

mother and one other who would eventually take his state exams under the supervision of Dr Heinrich Wengler, a non-Jewish academic.⁴

My mother was a keen student, and it became evident that Klemperer knew her father was a Jewish dentist and that she sometimes worked as his assistant: 'Since a week ago and for a long while to come much time lost, torment and expense because of dental treatment. I have unfortunately had to give up old Petri, upright but Aryan, to support Israel: Dr Isakowitz, father of my student Lore Isakowitz, who is sometimes his assistant' (1934: 9 January, Tuesday (p. 47)). As a Jew, Klemperer had indeed, by this time, to use a Jewish doctor and whilst it is not clear whether his non-Jewish wife Eva had to as well, he indicated that they both abandoned their former dentist Dr Petri to use Lore's father, my grandfather, Dr Erich Isakowitz. From this point on in the diaries, there are also numerous entries about the protracted and extensive dental work required by Klemperer's wife, and the demands this made on him, emotionally, financially, as well as academically, as it took his focus away from his research and writing on Voltaire, his main research topic in the early 1930s, on which he published several books.⁵

That being said, Eva's treatment began well, and Klemperer commented that his wife liked my grandfather and enjoyed the visits to his practice, which were often combined with some shopping or a light lunch or coffee. They were, however, short of funds and were relieved when the local bus started running and enabled them not to need taxis. My grandfather also began to give them a lift part of the way in his car. At one point early during Eva's treatment, Klemperer commented on her toothless state, equating it with his mood and that of German Jewry: 'Isakowitz – after the treatment it is by now usual for him to drive us in his car to the station, where Eva has a soup, today after the removal of her bridge fairly toothless – again expressed the mood of Jewry, and today, in fact, my own also' (1935: 16 January, Wednesday (p. 105)).

By the turn of the year 1934–35 it became evident that Klemperer was extremely worried about his finances, and was struggling to pay for his life insurance and Eva's dentist's bill. He realised that he would be forced to retire as he had no more students and that his income would be cut in half from 800 to 400 Marks. Klemperer originally received a good wage, and this represented a massive cut. Average monthly wages for blue- and white-collar workers in the Third Reich in 1935 were 142 RM. Government employees and teachers earned approximately ten percent better. Food prices were stable and didn't change much: from 1933 to 1937 the price for a loaf of bread was 0.33 RM, and from 1938 to 1945, 0.37 RM. The price for one litre of milk in the twelve years of the Third Reich was 0.23 RM, half a litre of beer was 0.39 RM.

By the spring of 1935 the professional relations between the Klemperer and the Isakowitz families were transformed, perhaps through adversity, into a friendship. Klemperer was offering to obtain books for Lore, who wanted to study at the School of Oriental languages in Berlin, and Erich was picking the couple up for a Sunday outing to the Saxon Switzerland countryside near Dresden. At this point in the diaries, though, Klemperer also made some rather derogatory remarks about my grandmother Sofie, both about her appearance and her intelligence. This is surprising as both comments, from what I understand, were quite far from the mark: Sofie was an educated, sophisticated and intelligent woman, whose prompt actions and persuasive skills enabled her family to flee to England.

All the while Klemperer was continuing to hand write and sometimes type his diary; my grandparents had lent him a small Erika typewriter which he found inadequate, however. He was then lent a typewriter by Dr Annemarie Köhler. Dr Köhler's actions were to be crucial to the endurance of the Klemperer diaries. Born in 1893 in Saxony, she received her licence to practise medicine in 1927, after studying in Leipzig. She then worked in a private clinic in Pirna near Dresden. She was friendly with the Klemperer family and Eva Klemperer entrusted Köhler with her husband's diary notes at regular intervals, as keeping them at home, particularly when they were forced to live in the Judenhaus in Dresden, was too dangerous. A discovery of the diaries by the Gestapo would have been followed by internment in a concentration camp. Köhler hid the notes in the 'doctor's books' of the practice – fully aware of the danger that this posed for her.

The autumn of 1935 saw Klemperer's diaries reflect increasingly on the situation in Germany, including through the eyes of my grandparents, who were now actively engaged in trying to leave Germany. One of the entries details how my grandparents invited the Klemperers to dinner on the occasion, unbeknown to them, of the Jewish New Year. Erich had just been to the synagogue, where the mood had been despondent and the Rabbi at this time of celebration had, most unusually, said the Kaddish prayer for the dead. The depressed atmosphere also prevailed at home, and Klemperer was obliged to join in the ritual at the table, to have his head covered, observe candles being lit and hear prayers said in Hebrew. The diary shows that Klemperer found this utterly disconcerting, complaining bitterly: 'I found it quite painful. Where do I belong? To the "Jewish nation" decrees Hitler. And I feel the Jewish nation recognised by Isakowitz is a comedy and am nothing but a German or German European' (1935: 6 October, Sunday (p. 128)).

From the same diary entry, it becomes apparent that my grandfather was depressed; his living was becoming unsustainable because as

a Jewish dentist he was unlikely to be allowed to treat insured patients: 'Isakowitz fears that at any moment he will no longer be allowed to treat insured patients and thus be deprived of a living. He has been considering emigration to Palestine for some time'.

Klemperer adds that an Aryan had long been trying to buy Erich's dental practice, a transaction with which he was reluctantly going to proceed, until at the last moment it was forbidden. My grandparents had been thinking of emigrating to Palestine, like Sofie's brother had done in 1933, but were discouraged by the high number of Jewish doctors who had already followed this course. Klemperer notes that Sofie had gone to Berlin to seek further advice from the Jewish town hall on Meinecke Strasse (number 10) in Charlottenburg, Berlin. This was a building bequeathed to the Zionist movement in 1924 by the Jewish surgeon Dr Friedrich Kabersky and was used by over thirty Zionist organisations offering advice and assistance to the German-Jewish population, in particular those who wished to leave for Palestine. For his part, Klemperer anticipates the emigration of the family with dread, and reiterates how it would heighten his own state of loneliness: 'In the course of this year, we won as new friends the Isakowitz family. That has turned into a really warm friendship with the father, mother and daughter. They will probably emigrate to England, and that would be a real loss for us' (Postscripts to 1935, noted down on 1 January 1936 (p. 138)).

Sofie Isakowitz indeed left for England in October 1935, where she petitioned the Home Office in perfect English for permission for Erich to work as a dental surgeon without having to take any examinations, an endeavour in which she eventually succeeded. After her return to Dresden, her experience of England is reported in Klemperer's diaries. That her non-Jewish landlady asked her why nobody had as yet murdered Hitler? That the rabbis encouraged a boycott of German goods, for men not to purchase German machinery and housewives not to buy Odol mouthwash (Karl Lingner the Dresden entrepreneur was widely known for the production of the mouthwash Odol, which became associated after his death with Nazi racial ideology). Klemperer reflected that he and Eva and in effect German Jews were captives without hope of release and that they were ruled by lunatics. The Nazi regime was only increasing in its hold over Germany and the Germans: 'the power of the Third Reich has only grown ever larger and more secure' (1936: 30 May, Saturday evening (p. 160)).

By mid-March 1936 Erich had received permission to practise in England: the family was understandably nervous, and the plans were for my mother and her mother Sofie to leave first and for Erich to return to complete Eva Klemperer's dental treatment and finalise the arrangements



Figure 1 Monica Petzal, *Dresden V*, 2013, lithograph over monoprint, 70 x 100 cm. Unique. © Monica Petzal



Figure 2 Monica Petzal. Left: *Dissent and Displacement*, 1F, 2019, lithograph over monoprint, 70 x 100 cm. Unique. Right: *Dissent and Displacement*, 2C, 2019, lithograph over monoprint, 70 x 100 cm. Unique. © Monica Petzal.

Klemperer in the back seat. It has been impossible to identify where this was taken. Surrounding it are documents which reflect the period of c.1935–36 when my grandparents were actively working on leaving Germany: letters to the UK Home Office, proof of address in the Dresden phone book, and the detailed list of all their possessions, which they had to pay to take out of the country. The print also includes a Bauhaus coffee table, a tall, stemmed wine glass and another piece of the treasured Rosenthal china. A notice from the newspaper of the Jewish community shows that Lore was teaching French, both written and conversational: after being unable to attend university in Germany, as Klemperer explained, she was sent off for a period to Montpellier in France to study French.

Each black and white image is created by scanning numerous separate images and using Photoshop to create a composite collaged image. I did at one stage title this article 'Photoshop as Metaphor' – it's pseudointellectual but it does have some truth to it. Photoshop, like our memories, allows layering, transparency, super-imposition, fading and hundreds of other properties. My aim is a balance, to retain something of the rough collage feel and not to employ too many devices. The processes of selecting what goes in each image are slow. It's about telling the story, including both the personal and the more widely recognisable, and it shifts interminably between the ideas and the formal image-making qualities. As I move images around on the screen, I am trying to find a resolution as to what I want to say and how to say it. I am careful to save files but, on occasion, I forget; it is prophetic, and I start again and find a different way forward. There is an element of chance as to what ends up on the image; unlike a book, which you can revise and revise, once you decide what is going on the image, it is final.

Each completed 'flattened' file is sent off to a specialist firm in London that uses high-resolution film to create a full-size transparency. Film allows for a very high level of pixilation, a level of fine detail which cannot be done digitally. When the large transparencies come back, I start to make the colour under printing which is a monoprint. This means I take a blank metal plate and put it on the press and a clean sheet of paper in the printing area. I pin the transparency on the wall in front of me and the press for reference and think about colour, texture and marks. For each transparency I make eight to ten monoprints because I know that neither all the monoprints nor the top black prints are going to work. I have a previously considered set of colour notes for each set of prints. I mix the basic colours using oil-based specialist lithographic inks which are quite sticky, adding a lot of transparent ink to make them translucent. They are mixed on a flat glass slab and once mixed are moved into jam

for the property and the safe shipment of their chattels, a considerable achievement given the fearsome customs examination. Klemperer wrote a compelling description of Erich's final visit to their house. My grandfather was exhausted and anxious but also in high spirits and as a consequence spilt a cup of coffee over a brand-new tablecloth. Despite his apprehensions, according to Klemperer, he felt he was making a new start, moving from a state of subjection and chaos to compassionate and enlightened conditions in England. Klemperer was rather condescending about my grandfather's philosophising that evening, but perhaps his entries were more about his final thoughts on their leaving. Hearing about their settling in London, Klemperer morosely compares their new-found lives with his own situation:

1938: 12 July, Tuesday, Eva's birthday (p. 250)

Frau Schaps writes of her children settling down in London and of contact made with Isakowitz the dentist. All these people have made new lives for themselves – but I have not succeeded in doing so, we have been left in disgrace and penury, in some degree buried alive, buried up to the neck so to speak and waiting from day to day for the last shovelfuls.

Printmaking Processes

My grandparents and their daughter, my mother, built up relatively normal personal lives in England, clinging to their cultural origins, religion and diet whilst trying to bury the traumatic aspects of fleeing their homeland. The research into Klemperer's diaries and their Dresden background gave me an insight into their hidden past; however, it is one thing to have archives and collections, but another to transform them into meaningful visual expression. I have described at some length the importance of working in Dresden, but much of the more recent work has been made in my studio, which is in a converted cow shed in rural East Suffolk. The studio is large, well-lit and equipped with a temperamental Polish offset lithography press and an equally difficult transformer to maintain the wavering electric supply on our farmland. The technicalities are important because they interfere with the processes, and delay and disappointment often give rise to reconsideration and change. Every part of my long making process intertwines the thinking and the making and each one interrupts the other in an ultimately meaningful way. For each series of work, I create a narrative and a layout plan. I use a mixture of scans, my own contemporary photographs and when

I do not own the image I require someone else's photograph, crediting where possible. To create each print, I surround myself with the available material and slow down. I am interested in access, engagement and understanding. I do not want to be insular or obscure in my search for meaning. I want what I make to be accessible to everyone who chooses to come into a public space to view my work, regardless of their nationality or viewpoint. The images together with the text need to reach out; they need to tell a compelling story. They can tell problematic stories, but they must not repel. They must engage not only through their content but formally through size, colour and strength of imagery. Size is crucial given the large museum spaces in which I exhibit my work, and the prints are to be approximately one hundred centimetres high by seventy centimetres wide.

For the print known as *Dresden V*, which I made in 2013, I used eight images (Figure 1). A portrait of my mother taken by her father aged seventeen. A portrait of Klemperer, probably older than he was at that date; there are only a few photographs of Klemperer available. The plaque on Klemperer's home in Weimarische Str 6A, Berlin, where he lived from 1906 to 1909, the first memorial to his work to be installed. A map owned by my mother of Dresden, showing the centre of the old city. A photograph from a family album of a sign saying: Jews are not wanted in our town / place. A piece of Isakowitz family silver, an Isakowitz Rosenthal cup and saucer, and a lace tablecloth probably made by my great grandmother, reminiscent of Klemperer's 28 June 1936 entry (p. 165): 'Isakowitz finally took his leave of us on Thursday evening; he was very tired and nervous – a new tablecloth suffered the consequences; in a single movement he poured a whole cup of coffee over it – but nevertheless in high spirits'.

For the later prints which were intended for the exhibition *Dissent and Displacement* (2020), commissioned by Leicester New Walk Museum, I was more concerned to make the viewer aware of the writer.⁶ For the first one (on the left-hand side of Figure 2), I selected seven images: a portrait again of my mother, slightly older, aged circa eighteen, a portrait of Klemperer this time somewhat younger, a picture of Victor and Eva Klemperer with a car (it is not clear if it is theirs or my grandfather's). An image of the University of Dresden where Klemperer taught my mother. The same plaque from Berlin, the cover of the first English version of his diaries, a page from the original *Tagebuch* and a fountain pen, all to underline that the diaries were often handwritten and were preserved through war and peace.

In the centre of the second one (on the right-hand side of Figure 2) is a picture of my grandmother Sofie standing outside her car with Eva

jars and labelled and can be kept. However, when I am working, I do not stick to the set mixed colours but like a painter work with them on a palette, which is a very large glass-top table.

I use rollers, brushes, rough cloth, wire brushes, sticks and anything else to hand with the inks working like on a painting, on the blank plate, and then run the press. The large rubber roller of the press moves to the far end of the press, then dips down across the plate to pick up the ink and then deposits the ink on the paper the same way round. Each monoprint goes through the press many times as I build up layers of thin colour; it must not be too dense, or the top layer will not be visible.

These monoprints take a day each and up to a week to dry. Once the monoprints are printed, I need to print the top collaged image. First, I process the plates, which means I put the transparency onto my large developer in the darkroom and expose it with a pretested precise amount of light onto a sensitised lithographic plate. I then pick it up and move quickly to a very large sink where I have the chemicals measured out and waiting in a plastic jug, ready to develop it. Careful to put gloves on first, I flood and then swab the plate with special pads and watch as miraculously the image appears. I dry it with a hairdryer and protect it with a thin layer of gum.

Printing the transparent black image at the scale of a metre by seventy centimetres can be problematic, not because I do not know how to do it, but because I do not have the physical reach. On the first large prints for *Indelible Marks – The Dresden Project*, such as *Dresden V* (Figure 1), I made the largest prints with master printer Torsten Leopold in Dresden on a press with automatic inking. Automatic inking means what it sounds like and there is no hand rolling. In the UK in my studio, I hand roll and I had a special roller made for hand inking up, seventy-two centimetres wide, just wider than the plate. However, the plate is one hundred centimetres high and I cannot stretch that far. If you stop the roller anywhere other than at either end, a line is left. I tried for a couple of months to make it work and then asked for help from my good friend and six-foot-plus master printer Simon Burbidge from Camberwell School of Art. The work of printing the translucent black image over the coloured grounds is successfully carried out over a period of months. Together with Simon, the best and most consistent pieces are selected, and the process moves to 'tearing down', which is removing the edges of the paper to give a deckled edge to the work. The final stages involve mounting the print on foam board, to allow it to stand proud of the background 'float mount', which gives the artwork room to 'breathe', then framing in hand-painted wooden frames with non-reflective museum glass, and preparing them with secure fixings for the exhibition.

The first set of work, *Indelible Marks – The Dresden Project*, was exhibited first in London at two venues, then in Dresden in January–February 2015 for the seventieth anniversary of the Allied bombing, and later that year at the Herbert Museum in Coventry for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the German bombing of the city. I also made a large installation for Coventry Cathedral. *Indelible Marks* was central to the commemorations in Dresden in 2015 and was attended by HRH the Duke of Kent, the British Ambassador, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of Germany. HRH the Duke of Kent also attended the commemoration in Coventry in part in his role as Royal Patron of the Dresden Trust of which I was by then a trustee. *Dissent and Displacement*, my exhibition commissioned by Leicester New Walk Museum, was a much larger, more complex and multi-layered undertaking. It opened at the beginning of February 2020 and sadly closed with the pandemic lockdown.

Since *Dissent and Displacement* closed and has no real prospect of being reshowed, I have been working on writing and a film script. I am considering the challenge of how to create exhibitions in the future with hand-made artworks rather than online images. I am deeply aware of how valuable the diaries of Victor Klemperer have become to our understanding of the history of his times, and perhaps writing will be a significant part of my future work. I reclaimed German citizenship in 2014 and am a frequent visitor to Germany, to both Dresden and Berlin. I organised the laying of *Stolpersteine* for my family in Dresden some years ago and we are laying seven *Stolpersteine* for the paternal family in Berlin in autumn 2022. All my work, both as an artist and an active participant in other spheres, such as the Dresden Trust, is about narrative and testament, identity and memory. It is about how we construct and interpret history and attach meaning. I believe that retelling our stories and the stories of others helps us to understand who we are, and it offers a space in which to consider how to move forward.

Monica Petzal is an artist, curator and writer with a particular interest in her German-Jewish background. Her recent exhibitions include *Indelible Marks – The Dresden Project* (Kreuzkirche Gallery, Dresden, 2014; Herbert Museum, Coventry, 2015–16) and *Dissent and Displacement* (New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, 2020) (<https://monicapetzal.com/>). She founded a gallery in 2006, Printroom (www.printroom.studio). Petzal is the Vice Chair of the Dresden Trust (www.dresdentrust.org).