

Impact Statement

Coco Tang, Grade 12

***Miracles Under the Seagull's Wings*, 2025**

Watercolor on paper, 22 x 18 inches

Seckinger High School, Buford, GA

Unsung Hero: Meva Mikusz

Louder than bombs broken upon earth, the fractures of bones harmonized to the clicking and whirring of guns and whistles; Meva Mikusz, a young Polish girl, the whetstone for a Jew of only two years old, yet only a teenager of fifteen years herself. Meva, “Seagull,” bore the wings of salvation, carried the fallen Star of David, and to that girl of two years, Inka, the divine protection, and shield of David himself. When rivers ran with the stench of iron, the metallic tang of bitter, vile, and unsolicited hatred; when grass gave life to landmines, and silver petals blossomed when touched, then cut, then killed; when Buddha’s footprints were vandalized, and it’s warmth distorted to burn; Meva persisted through it all. The option of preservation weighed against the expectation of death when protecting an individual— she then, with no doubt, chose to defend.

In the myriad recollection of the Unsung Heroes, Meva’s resilience and fortitude infatuated the heart of Soteria, the deliverer of a child to her family and the preservation of life. Beyond the fury incarnate manifested through the Nazi regime, and against the odds that she may herself be targeted for harboring an individual of interest, Meva represents the humanity lost in that time; she was the Seagull that soar the flag of resilience, the harbinger of safe tidings and hope.

My admiration for Meva is not for her specific actions, for I cannot relate to such a time. Instead, Meva shows what can be done by any single person wanting to make a difference, and that to impact the world and plant the trees of future peace, one must water the plants that surround them. For the gardeners of a new world, one mustn't peer into the lands beyond their feet, for what we can touch with our hands we can affect, and what we can affect we have the ability to raise from the ground. That is the epiphany of Meva; help the world one person at a time.

In my artwork, I wanted to focus on symbolism. Though it’s difficult to capture the entirety of Meva, encapsulated in the room are several objects that describe Meva and Inka’s relationship. They are underneath the floorboards, hidden from the heavy stomping and large strides of the Nazis... the dust settles on them, yet, even in the dark, there are candles and lamps to signify that Meva was Inka’s light. Meva says “Mach keinen Laut” to Inka, meaning “don’t make a sound” in English to hide her from danger. The books are to represent Meva’s teachings, the 2 o’ clock hand constitutes

the passing of time in hiding and the brutal killings of 2,000 Jews on June 17, 1943. In the top right corner of the room, a mezuzah is present: Meva accepted both her and her culture. The light will only be lit if both are present, and if one is without the other, it will vanish. I used watercolor to communicate the gentle nature of Meva, the soft movement and radiance of the water representing the warmth that she gave. In order to emphasize Meva's comfort, primarily revealed by orange hues, the harshness and cold nature of blue entwined in the boots of the Nazi and their shadows work to contrast and juxtapose her figure.

I sought to communicate Meva's story to my school by submitting my work into our yearly art exhibition and wish to further invest into my artwork in hopes of reaching out to others, just as Meva was able to reach out to Inka and influence her life in a positive way. I want to give back to my community through my artwork and inspire others to act as Meva did. To nurture, to give, and to sacrifice; strung together are the orchestrations of a world in which the seagulls will fly above the heads of children, and the saplings of forests will witness the warmth of the sun; we who live now are the descendants of hope.

References:

"Home." *Under the seagulls' Wings*, undertheseagullswings.pl/.

"Meva Mikusz: Under the Seagull's Wings: About the Hero." *Lowell Milken Center*, 5 Feb. 2024, www.lowellmilkencenter.org/programs/projects/view/under-the-seagulls-wings/hero.