



Head I

Isaac Celnikier

On display

Title/Description: Head I

Artist/Maker: Isaac Celnikier

Born: 1981

Object Type: Etching, Print

Materials: Ink, Paper

Technique: Etching

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 110 x w. 110 mm) Framed: (h. 420 x w. 380 mm)

Accession Number: 1210

Production Place: France

Thick, dark lines of ink form the contours of the head and face in this very graphic etching of a human head. Celnikier was born in Warsaw in 1923 and was sixteen years old when World War II started. He suffered terrible years of persecution in the ghetto of Bialystok, from which he was deported to the hell of Auschwitz. He survived, but the horrors of Auschwitz left a deep mark on his personality and his art. [1]

A painter as well as an etcher, Celnikier was obsessed with the idea of memory and omission. In his work, he was committed to passing on graphically the memory of all these tragic events. After the war, Isaac Celnikier started studying art in Prague from 1946 to 1951. In 1955, he was involved in the *Contre la guerre, contre le fascisme* (Against war, against fascism) exhibition in Warsaw. [2]

Celnikier settled in Paris in 1957 and ten years later he received the *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* from the French government. Two major exhibitions displayed his work: one in Toulouse (Musée des Augustins, 1991) and one in Montpellier (Musée Fabre, 1993). The artist was awarded the *Mémoire de la Shoah* prize in 1993 by the French Jewish Fondation. Isaac Celnikier died in Ivry-sur-Seine in 2011. [3]

2001 correspondence in the Sainsbury Centre Archives between Glenn Sujo of the Courtauld Institute of Art and Amanda Daley, Assistant Keeper at the Sainsbury Centre, tell us how this etching came to be in the collection. It reads,

'I have pleasure in enclosing one of Isaac Celnikier's remarkable etchings entitled *Head I*, 1981, which was among the small group of works looked at together during our visit. Isaac and I sensed an immediate kinship in this and many of the works in the permanent collection encountered during our tour of the 'living spaces', thus the decision to offer the work to the Sainsbury Centre.' [4]

Katharine Malcolm, February 2023

[1] https://www.askart.com/artist/Isaac_Celnikier/11191316/Isaac_Celnikier.aspx....read

[2] <https://www.mchampetier.com/Isaac-Celnikier-2135-en-others.html>

[3] https://www.askart.com/artist/Isaac_Celnikier/11191316/Isaac_Celnikier.aspx....read

[4] Correspondence from Sainsbury Centre Archives
