

For Immediate Release

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**Holocaust Museum Houston Commissions
“Gathering Stones” Exhibit**

On March 7, 2002, Holocaust Museum Houston will hold the opening reception for its first commissioned exhibition. *Gathering Stones: An Interactive Installation* by noted filmmaker and media artist Alan Berliner, will be on display in the Josef and Edith Minberg Gallery, Morgan Family Center, through August 5, 2002. A participatory video installation, *Gathering Stones* incorporates portrait photographs from Holocaust Museum Houston’s archive and local private collections and projects them in a series of orchestrated sequences onto the “pages” of a monumental photo album represented by a bed of stones. The stones are meant to recall and evoke the Jewish ritual custom in which cemetery visitors place a small stone on a grave marker as a symbol of remembrance, signifying a connection with Jewish history, memory, and community; between the living and the dead. At the entrance to *Gathering Stones* is a supply of small white stones, acknowledging this tradition. As a gesture of participation and commemoration, the visitor is encouraged to take one of these stones and add it to any one of the five rectangles of the “album,” thereby slightly altering the “screen” on which the changing images are projected. This activity transforms the book of remembrance into a ceremonial site,

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intended to give renewed dignity to the memory of the people in these archival photographs and to acknowledge an enduring bond with them—then and now—as our collective ancestors.

Presented in conjunction with the photographs are the names of the people pictured along with many more names for whom no image exists.

“This commission is an exciting indicator of things to come for the Museum,” said Susan Llanes-Myers, the executive director of Holocaust Museum Houston. “It shows our maturation as a growing educational and cultural institution.”

As Berliner describes, “For me, the intentional anonymity and open-endedness of the photographs in *Gathering Stones* invites each viewer to invent his or her own way of measuring the distance between private and collective memory, between family member and stranger, between the living and the dead.”

“Berliner’s installation also comments on the attempt to preserve fading memories,” suggests Amy Duke, director of changing exhibits at Holocaust Museum Houston.

As a self-described “keeper of memory: family archivist, historian, and guardian of virtually every photograph and family document,” Berliner’s *Gathering Stones* persists in this theme. Another version of the this installation was featured in *To the Rescue: Eight Artists in an Archive*, a traveling exhibition sponsored by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

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Although Berliner's audio and video installations have been widely exhibited, his award winning documentary films have been his primary focus. Among these is the documentary *Nobody's Business* (1996), a portrait of his father that received the International Film Critics Association Prize at the 1997 Berlin International Film Festival and "First Prize for Innovation" at the 1997 Festival Dei Popoli in Florence. This film will be shown at 7:00 PM in the Brown Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on March 9, 2002.

Holocaust Museum Houston's commission of *Gathering Stones* is made possible by the generous support of Charlotte and Pete Berkowitz. The opening reception begins at 7:00 PM on Thursday, March 7, 2002 with a special appearance by Berliner himself. The evening also welcomes the installation of *For Most of It I Have No Words: Genocide, Landscape, Memory*, and a photography exhibition of photography by Simon Norfolk showing in the Central Gallery.

The joint opening reception for both exhibitions is free and open to the public. For more information, please call 713.942.8000, extension 100 or visit the Museum's website: www.hmh.org.