



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE CORKIN SHOPLAND GALLERY, TORONTO

For Barbara Astman's *Clementine, Part I*, the artist attached a single, locket-sized anonymous portrait to each bulb in a strand of lights to create a 50-foot visual narrative about loss and suffering.

TORONTO

# A light on survival, loss and the future

## *The Clementine Suite*

Barbara Astman  
The Koffler Gallery  
To Feb. 19

Five years ago, artist Barbara Astman saw a 1947 picture in this paper of a group of 20 Jewish orphans on their way from Europe to Canada. Though the children must have been exhausted from the trip and still reeling from the horrors of the war, they were all smiles, pictures of joy and perfect health.

For Astman, this contradiction — between photographic reality and historical fact — became the basis for *The Clementine Suite*, a series of memorial-based installations opening today at the Koffler Gallery.

For the project, Astman, who has been making and showing photographic-based work since the 1970s, designed lighting systems to project the faces from anonymous portraits, like the smiles from the 1947 photograph of the children, throughout the gallery. The project uses other images, too, mostly from the 1930s and '40s from private and public collections, including the Ontario Jewish Archive.

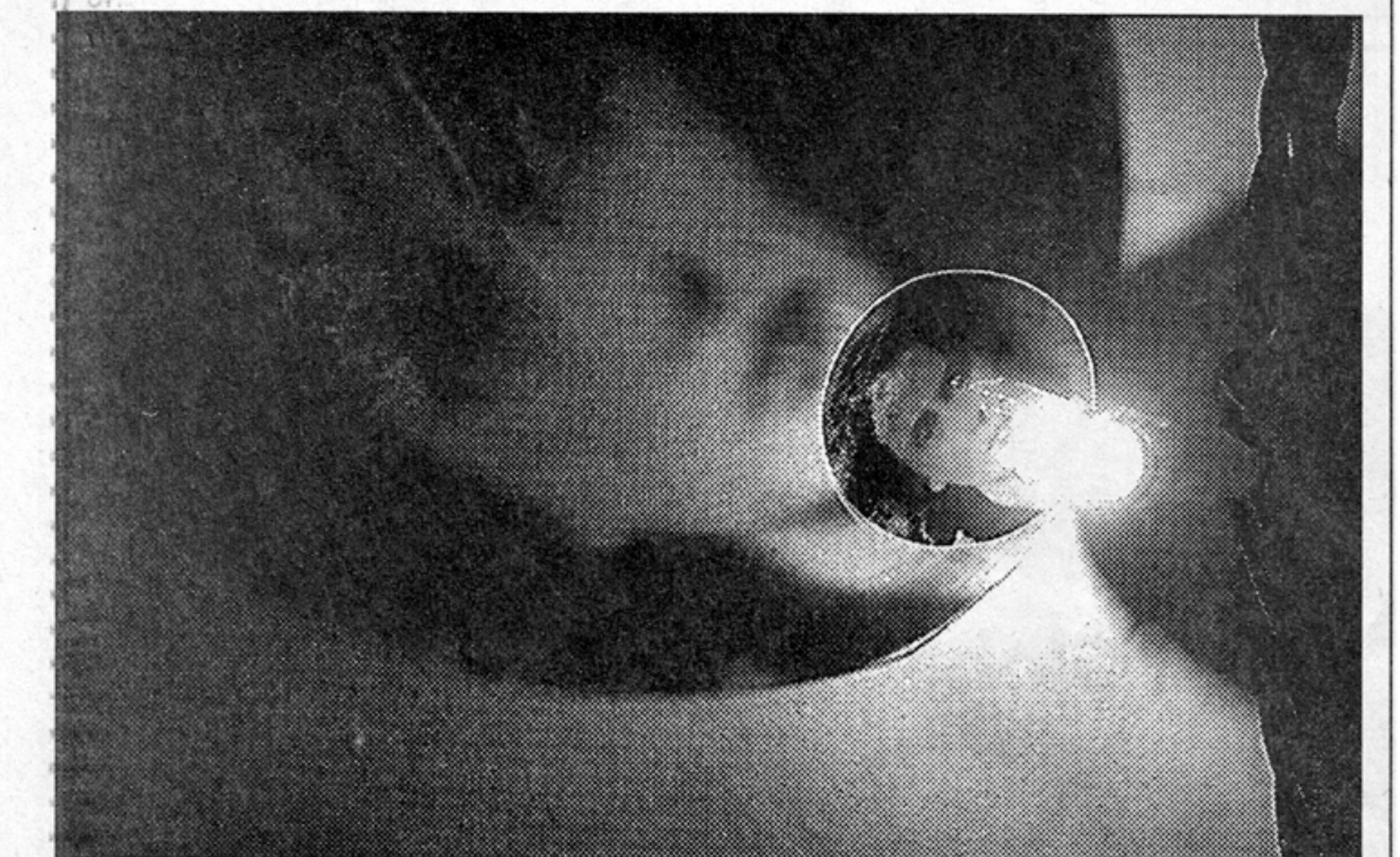
The Suite itself is divided into three parts. *Clementine, Part I*, is made from strands of festive lights in which each bulb is affixed with a single, locket-sized

portrait — the strand spanning the length a 50-foot-long gallery wall. *Clementine, Part II*, combines a series of lanterns and revolving black disco lights with faces projected through frosted mylar shades. For *Clementine Part III*, Astman attached a single portrait to the ends of several toy battery-operated flashlights, available for visitors to hold and project at will throughout the darkened gallery space.

Light is a powerful symbol of celebration, mourning, death, even transcendence. Using it in this way, as a medium with as much presence as the photographs themselves, heightens the power of these portraits, symbols in their own right of transcendence from individual experience to collective memorial.

With *The Clementine Suite* Astman is building a visual narrative about loss and suffering that is as much about ways of accessing the past as it is about recollection for the future. At the same time, her glowing memorial is a testament to survival and, not atypical of most of her work, a celebration of the human spirit.

*The opening reception for The Clementine Suite is from 7 to 9 p.m. tonight. A gallery tour and talk by Astman is scheduled for 7 p.m. Located at the Bathurst Jewish Community Centre, 4588 Bathurst St. 416-636-1880 or [www.kofflercentre.com](http://www.kofflercentre.com).*



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE CORKIN SHOPLAND GALLERY, TORONTO

A detail from *Clementine, Part I* by Barbara Astman.