

YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND THIS

by Nora Sternfeld

Anja Salomonowitz portrays three women in her family who were young girls during the Nazi regime. All three have influenced the education of the director. They stood on different sides during the war and have their own interpretation of facts and history which reflect various collective memories. Hanka Jassy, the Director's great aunt, survived Auschwitz. Gertrude Rogenhofer, her nanny, was a socialist and supported her uncle in the Resistance. Margit Kohlhauser, her grandmother, lived in Graz during the war. She did what the majority of citizens did about the terror regime of the Nazis: nothing.

The movie confronts the story of the family, examining the effects of history and the mechanisms of how it is passed on from one generation to the next. While the grandmother insists to have forgotten what happened, Gertrude Rogenhofer remembers the blank spots that were left by deported Jewish acquaintances. She tells us that: "of course people knew about the deportations". Hanka, on the other hand, is unable to express what she cannot forget.

Anja Salomonowitz confronts herself and her family with their various memories. Her film and commentary reflect the filmmaker's contradiction of standing as much in the genealogy of the collective of victims and also of the collective of perpetrators. The Director reveals her attachment to her family as well as her effort to visualize the mechanisms of defence, denial, and story-telling and concealing. In putting her grandmother in the film and asking her questions, she is as much a granddaughter as she is a descendant of survivors.

