

Linda Jean Fisher  
*Six Million and 576*

### Introduction

**What is a “volume project?” What great story from the early postwar era influenced the creation of this art making system?**

A “volume project” is a designated number of works of art that must be completed within a certain time period while adhering to specific regulations. The sum of the works and the duration of time for which I create a production schedule are drawn from history or personal living experiences. The rules I follow were established to sustain the output of the production schedule. Each project is divided into three parts: the works themselves, the production schedule, and the paper called “The Support Document.”

The story from the early postwar era that influenced the creation of the “volume project” is the Berlin airlift. I read **Berlin in the Balance** by Thomas Parrish in December 2004. I used a flatbed scanner to reproduce a paragraph from this book. I printed out two copies. One is hung at eye level on the door of my refrigerator, which is located in the kitchen of my live/work co-operative apartment. The other is hung just above eye level on the wall to the left of my worktable at the custom frame shop to which I’m employed. I work a minimum of 40 hours at both places. This means I am coerced by the tone of this passage a minimum of 80 hours a week.  $\pm 80 \text{ hours a week} \times \pm 52 \text{ weeks in a year} = \pm 4,160 \text{ hours}$ .

***The actual operation of a successful airlift is about as glamorous as drops of water on stone. There’s no frenzy, no flap, just the inexorable process of getting the job done. In a successful airlift you don’t see planes parked all over the place; they’re either in the air, on loading or unloading ramps, or being worked on. You don’t see personnel milling around; flying crews are either flying, or resting up so that they can fly again tomorrow. Ground crews are either working on their assigned planes, or resting up so that that they can work on them tomorrow. Everyone else is also on the job, going about his work quietly and efficiently. The real excitement from running a successful airlift comes from seeing a dozen lines climbing steadily on a dozen charts—tonnage delivered, utilization of aircraft, and so on—and the lines representing accidents and injuries going sharply down.***

This small part of **Berlin in the Balance** made me understand that *I work for ‘the work’ and not for ‘the me’* in many aspects of my life. The “volume project” was my solution for **getting the job done** when it comes to my creative process.

### How I Got the Idea for *Six Million*

On Saturday, 25 June 2005 I was working at my job as a custom picture framer. After I eat a meal, I must thoroughly clean my teeth because of conditions that exist in my mouth that are conducive to accelerated tooth decay. During this nine-minute forty-second process, I may think about various art projects I’m working on or come up with ideas for new ones. On this particular afternoon, I asked myself the following three questions: “What is enough? Will I ever feel like I’ve done enough work? What is too much? Within seconds this inquiry brought back a brief conversation from the year 2001. I was on my way to see a performance by the singer/songwriter Dan Bern with my friends Beverly Army Gillen and Fred Gillen Jr. We were all discussing the prophetic content of Dan Bern’s lyrics. Beverly added, “He’s even referenced the number six million in several songs” and cited this verse from “**Ballerina**”:

***Every day I seem to fire  
Three more people  
And every time I do  
Eleven more show up  
I can’t fire ‘em fast enough  
If right now I fired every one I knew  
I’d have 6 million employees by Christmas  
Six million***

[2]

Then I asked her, "Why does Dan Bern single out the number six million?" When she told me what story in history was behind this figure, I felt ashamed that I was thirty-six years old and didn't know how many Jews were killed during The Holocaust. The recollection of this experience answered my third question. The six million Jews killed during The Holocaust define too much. With that, a work of art began moving from the back of my mind to the front.

If I could represent each person with "a something," what would that be? I thought for a moment and recalled the time I spent in Hull, Massachusetts visiting my Uncle Joe Hanson in 1997. He had been a reconnaissance photographer during World War II and was one of the soldiers who liberated Dachau concentration camp near Munich. It was an experience that he had never talked about, so I was hearing his account for the first time. He said that after the troops penetrated the gates, he frantically moved from building to building, taking pictures, and collecting documents. Then he showed me a palm-sized identification card for an Italian seamstress. He gently put it into my hand and I carefully examined it. It included her photo, personal information, and a single fingerprint. At that instant I got the answer I was looking for: I would represent the six million Jews killed during The Holocaust with six million fingerprints.

### **Original Project Description for Six Million**

**Six Million** amounts to 50,000 letter size pages containing 120 fingerprints made with my right index finger. Each 11" x 8.5" sheet features a cross-sectioned area printed with pigmented black UV resistant ink. Every grid is 8.75" x 7.5" and divided into 120 .875" x .625" sections. I make the fingerprints with archival Jet Black ink that is both waterproof and non-toxic. I use this same ink to brand each completed page with a date stamp (character height: .157") in the lower left and a number stamp (character height: .157") in the lower right. After each work session I scan my finger on a flatbed scanner and create a JPEG file. This documents any significant changes visible to the naked eye. I have a contact group named **Witnesses of the Six Million** in my Outlook Express Address Book to whom I send the updated sum of fingerprints at the end of the day. I attach the JPEG of my fingertip to these emails to humanize the experience of the numeric statistic. I also have a sign on my front door documenting the current sub-total of fingerprints that I update without fail. The pages will be stored in TrueCore™ Drop-Front Boxes during the course of production and while they are not on exhibit.

I made the decision to use my right index finger because I generally point with that finger. I single out things when I point at them and the main reason for doing this piece is to individualize six million different human beings. I have set up a 27-month production schedule because that's how long it took to build the first atomic bomb during World War II. Almost everyone at Los Alamos thought that defeating Hitler was the only good reason for working on the bomb project. On 30 April 1945, Hitler committed suicide, and eight days later Germany surrendered. Now that the bomb could not be used against the Nazis, doubts arose amid the scientists. Then, when the bomb was exploded over Japan without discussion or some peaceful demonstration of its power to the Japanese some of the scientists felt betrayed. I feel that by connecting the 27 months that it took to build the first atomic bomb with the 27 months that it will take to execute "Six Million," I am giving those scientists another chance to fight the Nazis. The only difference is that this time the scientists are going to win.

I had planned to begin **Six Million** during the month of October 2005. I got the quote for the cost to print the grids on 20 September 2005 and made the decision to postpone the project until I could finance a lot of 5,000. During this time, I completed the "volume projects" called **Fifty Eggs** and **Ninety Red Crosses** and started another one called **576**.

### **A Brief Description of 576:**

On Sunday, 9 October 2005 I was in the frame shop cutting 150 mats for the "volume projects" **Hundred Hearts (2005)** and **Fifty Eggs (2005)**. The only time I listen to music is while I'm framing. On this particular morning, I was directed to Jeff Buckley's CD **Grace**. I used the remote control to set the CD player on "repeat disc." Track eight is called **Corpus Christi Carol**. After several rotations, I said the following statement out loud: "This song is somehow connected to Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's 1954 security hearing." I immediately changed the setting to "repeat track 8" and listened to **Corpus Christi Carol** until I

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completed my mat cutting project. During each rotation, there was one verse toward the end of the song that I instinctually felt was the actual connection to Dr. Oppenheimer's security hearing. But I could not completely make out the words. As soon as I got home I did an Internet search, found the lyrics, and determined the verse in question.

*And on this bed there lyeth a knight  
His wound is bleeding day and night  
By his bedside kneeleth a maid  
And she weepeth both night and day*

I instantly saw the knight as a metaphor for Dr. Oppenheimer and the maid as a metaphor for the United States. Why? Because since 23 November 2003, I have believed that if Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's security clearance had not been taken away on 29 June 1954, and had he never died from throat cancer on 18 February 1967, he would have been the one person who could have helped control overarmament in the United States. **576** represents all of the things in history, science, and the field of color that I have linked together to share this belief with others. Each of the 576 11" x 8.5" paintings on 65 lb. acid-free cover paper features a 6.5" x 6.5" square with a series of .25" wide concentric bands centered within its boundaries. The disks measure up to 5.5" in diameter and the sum of the rings divides equally into the number 24. This configuration also provides a means to explore the 24 colors in Wilhelm Ostwald's color system as well as his principles of color organization and color harmony.

What is the significance of the numbers 576 and 24?

12 April 1954 through 5 May 1954→24 days
The block of time Dr. Oppenheimer endured his security hearing.
24 days x 24 hours = 576 hours

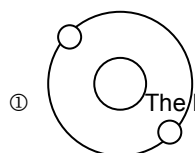
How does the design for **576** represent all of the things in history, science, and the field of color that I've linked together to share the belief I've stated in the preceding paragraph? **Table 1** through **Table 5-2** answers this question by dividing the meaning behind the design for **576** into five main categories and subdividing those categories where it is necessary.

**Table 1**

<b>The Halo</b>	
A halo is a ring of light that surrounds an object.	
In Eastern and Western churches, saints are depicted with a halo.	
<b>Why do I feel that the life of Dr. Oppenheimer resembles that of a saint?</b>	
I feel that his contributions as a teacher, physicist, national hero, and public servant are examples of how we should act.	His story has been recorded for the education of future generations.

**Table 2**

<b>The Bohr Model of the Atom</b>		
According to the simple Bohr model, the atom looks like a miniature solar system.		
<b>How does this simple model of the atom relate to a halo and Dr. Oppenheimer?</b>		
The nucleus surrounded by electrons in various orbits resembles a series of halos. <sup>1</sup>	As early as 1944, Bohr's concern about directing the power of nuclear energy led him to campaign for the control of nuclear weapons and world peace through the open sharing of knowledge among nations.	
	<b>These two written documents support Bohr's concept of an open world</b>	
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>"The Acheson-Lilienthal Report"<sup>2</sup> Dated 16 March 1946</td> <td>Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's lecture titled "The Open Mind" Dated 11 December 1948</td> </tr> </table>	"The Acheson-Lilienthal Report" <sup>2</sup> Dated 16 March 1946
"The Acheson-Lilienthal Report" <sup>2</sup> Dated 16 March 1946	Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's lecture titled "The Open Mind" Dated 11 December 1948	



① The basic structure of The Bohr Model of the Atom

② Prepared for The Secretary of State’s Committee on Atomic Energy by a Board of Consultants: Chester I. Barnard, Dr. J. R. Oppenheimer, Dr. Charles A. Thomas, Harry A. Winne, and David E. Lilienthal, Chairman

**Table 3**

**The Sun**

**What does the sun have to do with Dr. Oppenheimer, halos, or the Bohr Model of the Atom?**

During the Trinity test Dr. Oppenheimer spoke fragments from the Hindu epic, <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> that compare the “splendor of the Mighty One <sup>1</sup> ” to “the radiance of a thousand suns.”	The phenomenon referred to as a halo: the circular band of colored light around the sun that is caused by the refraction and reflection of light by hexagonal ice crystals suspended in the atmosphere.	Sometimes I use one of the designs <sup>2</sup> for <b>576</b> to paint a portrait of the sun. This visually connects the sun to the Bohr Model of the Atom.
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**Fusion and the Sun**

Fusion is the basic reaction that drives the Sun.

**Let’s compare fission with fusion**

<b>Nuclear Fission</b>	<b>Nuclear Fusion</b>
A heavy atom, such as uranium, can fall apart, that is, go through fission. When this happens, a little of the mass of the original atom is turned into energy.	It is also possible to turn mass into energy by taking less massive atoms, such as hydrogen, and squeezing them together to form another type of, and heavier, atom. This process is called nuclear fusion.

Scientists have been able to produce fusion reactions for about the last 60 years. In the beginning, there were small studies in which a few fusion reactions actually occurred. But, these first experiments later lead to the development of thermonuclear fusion weapons (hydrogen bombs).

**Edward Teller + Thermonuclear Bomb + Dr. Oppenheimer’s 1954 Security Hearing**

Teller’s interest in the hydrogen bomb dated to 1941. He was involved in making possible the first successful U.S. explosion of the device on 1 November 1952.	Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer had opposed the development of the bomb on technical and moral grounds.	During the 1954 security hearing, Teller called for Dr. Oppenheimer’s removal from positions involving national security, an act that alienated many within the scientific community.
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①In Hinduism, Indra (the Mighty One) is god of weather and war, and Lord of Heaven.

②This design has a 2” diameter circle in the middle and 7 bands. I purposefully choose it when I want to paint a sun. I color the central circle Yellow 2 and then count out like this: “Orange 5, Red 8, Purple 10, Ultramarine Blue 14, Turquoise Blue 17, Seagreen 20, and Leafgreen 23.”

**Table 4**

**The Rainbow**

A rainbow is actually round.

On the ground, the bottom part is hidden, but in the sky, it can be seen as a round shape.

The rainbow has been used as a symbol for peace and the environment in the past few decades.

In many cultures the rainbow stands as a symbol of people’s hope for a better world.

<b>In Christian Tradition:</b>	<b>Greek Mythology:</b>	<b>Ancient China:</b>	<b>The Incas of Central America:</b>	<b>Norse Mythology:</b>	<b>Johannes Itten:</b>	<b>In 576:</b>
It symbolized God’s forgiveness, as it was placed in the sky as the arch of peace after the Biblical flood—a symbol of the covenant between God and mankind.	Links it with Iris, the goddess who brought messages from the gods of Mount Olympus to the mortals below.	It was often drawn as a symbol of the sky dragon, connecting heaven and earth.	Associate it with their sun god.	It was a bridge built by the gods between earth and their home in Asgard.	<i>...the colors of the rainbow and the northern lights soothe and elevate the soul. The rainbow is accounted as a symbol of peace.</i>	It symbolizes Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer’s legacy of hope for peace and a freer world.

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I chose the colors of Wilhelm Ostwald's system to paint the 576 rainbows because it consists of 24 hues. They can all be formed by the 8 principal colors. Here is a chart that lists the colors of the visible spectrum (or what we also identify as the colors of the rainbow), Ostwald's 8 Principal colors, and the 8 colors available today that are consistent with Ostwald's system:

Table 5-1

The Basic Colors of the 576 Rainbows		
The Visible Region of the Electromagnetic Spectrum in Terms of Wavelength (ROYGBIV)	Ostwald's 8 Principal Colors Then and Now	
	Ostwald's 8 Principal Colors	8 Colors <sup>3</sup> Available Today That Are Consistent With Ostwald's System
Violet (380-420 nm)	Yellow 2	Primary Yellow or Hansa Yellow Opaque*
Indigo <sup>1</sup> (420-440 nm)	Orange 5	Vat Orange + Naphthol Red Light
Blue (420-490 nm)	Red 8	Primary Magenta*
Green (520-570 nm)	Purple <sup>2</sup> 10	Quinacridone Magenta
Yellow (565-590 nm)	Ultramarine Blue 14	Ultramarine Blue*
Orange (585-620 nm)	Turquoise Blue 17	Primary Cyan
Red (630-760nm)	Seagreen 20	Turquoise (Phthalo)*
	Leafgreen 23	Permanent Green Light

①Indigo is the color of light between blue and violet. The human eye is relatively insensitive to indigo's frequencies and often can not distinguish it from blue and violet.

②Technically, violet is a **spectral color**, while purple is an **extraspectral color**. There is no such thing as a "wavelength of purple light": it only exists as a combination of red and blue spectral lights. Purple is the only color on the color wheel that is an extraspectral color. Purple was not present on Newton's color wheel but is present on modern ones like Ostwald's.

③Sarah Sands, an artist who works in the Technical Support Department at Golden Artist Colors, Inc. in New Berlin, New York recommended the set of colors in the far-right column as being consistent with Ostwald's system (the 4 primary colors are designated with an asterisk).

Each of Ostwald's 8 principal colors are split into three equidistant steps. If I follow his model of the color circle and call them first, second, third yellow, first, second, third orange, etc., I can draw the following table:

Table 5-2

The 24 Hues That Complete Ostwald's Color Circle							
Hue Name	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Hue Name	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Yellow	1	2	3	Ultramarine Blue	13	14	15
Orange	4	5	6	Turquoise Blue	16	17	18
Red	7	8	9	Seagreen	19	20	21
Purple	10	11	12	Leafgreen	22	23	24

**How I discovered that Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer unites Six Million and 576:**

On 30 January 2006 I decided to begin **Six Million** on 18 February 2006, the 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dr. Oppenheimer's death. I had purchased the first 5,000 grids on 5 January 2006. On 9 February 2006, my family offered to pay for the necessary drop-front boxes and interleaving paper I needed for storage purposes. I found that **Six Million** and **576** were connected. Not only because I am working on them simultaneously, but because of the following two Oppenheimer quotes on page 114 in **American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer** (Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin):

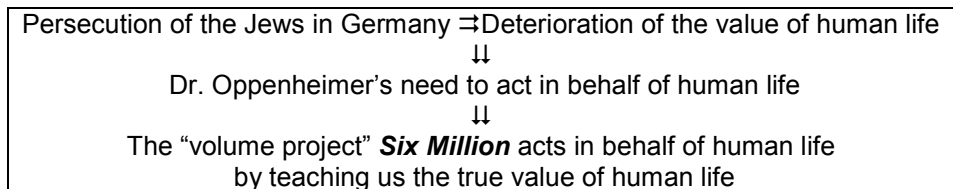
④"Beginning in late 1936," Oppenheimer would explain to his interrogators in 1954, "my interests began to change... I had had a continuing, smoldering fury about the treatment of Jews in Germany.

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I had relatives there [an aunt and several cousins], and was later to help in extricating them and bringing them to this country.”

② “I began to feel the need to participate more fully in the life of the community.”

This is the little “word picture” I drew in my head after I read these statements:



### I add **The Six Million Desk** to the project’s plan:

On 10 February 2006 I thought that it would be more efficient to set up a small desk in my workspace that I would exclusively use while filling the grids with my fingerprints. This way I could rotate between **Six Million** and **576** without having to break down one project and set up the other. I felt the ideal desk would be a fully adjustable lift lid school desk and began my search. I found a company in Geneva, Ohio called **Top Seat Supply, Ltd.** Their **Adjustable Leg Lift Lid Desk Model #774** had a 5” deep book box which would provide me plenty of room to store stamp pads, brayers, re-inkers, boxes of grids, and other supplies. They usually sell these desks in bulk. But after I explained why I needed only one, they made an exception to this rule and shipped the desk Federal Express so that I would have it before February 18.

### I Begin **Six Million**

I began **Six Million** on time but soon realized that I was going to have to make some adjustments to my original plans in order to complete the project.

**Adjustment #1:** The characters made by the date and number stamps were inconsistent and sloppy. Even with practice I could not get legible impressions with uniform opacity. I created a **Microsoft Word Document** that would date and number each grid in the correct locations at the bottom of the page.

**Adjustment #2:** I estimated the following fingerprint quota per work session in my original calculations for the production schedule:

**Table 6**

Number of Grids Per Work Session	Fingerprints Per Grid	Fingerprints Per Work Session
107	120	12,840

On 24 February 2006, after only 4 work sessions and 16,800 fingerprints, I noticed that my right forefinger was swollen. Two of the “**Witnesses of the Six Million**” had also noticed a disquieting change in its appearance while observing it on their computer monitors. Their remarks helped me to face the fact that my right forefinger could never build itself up to make 12,840 impressions with archival Jet Black ink in a work session. But, it could complete 3,600 impressions in a work session while maintaining “maximum fingertip health.” I revised my calculations and came up with the following production schedule per work session:

**Table 7**

Number of Grids Per Work Session	Fingerprints Per Grid	Fingerprints Per Work Session
30	120	3,600

I can execute 5 pages of grids in 25 minutes. This gave me the idea to spread out 6 stamping sessions during each work session, which runs an average of 12 hours in length.

The following production schedule provides me with plenty of time to rest and moisturize my fingertip between stamping sessions.

**[7]**  
**Table 8**

Number of Grids Per Stamping Session	Number of Stamping Sessions Per Work Session	Number of Fingerprints Per Grid	Fingerprints Per Work Session
5	6	120	3,600

Then I had to figure out the number of years it would take me to make 6,000,000 fingerprints. I began this process by figuring out the number of fingerprints I am able to make over a 1-year period.

**Table 9**

Number of Fingerprints Per Work Session	Estimated Number of Work Sessions Per Week	Number of Weeks Per Year	Number of Fingerprints Per Year
3,600	4	52	748,800

After I came up with that figure, I worked out the following two equations:

$$6,000,000 \text{ Total Fingerprints} \div 748,800 \text{ Fingerprints Per Year} = 8.012820512 \text{ Years}$$

$$748,800 \times 8.012820512 = 5,999,999.999$$

The "bottom line?"  
**Close enough.**

According to this amended production schedule, **Six Million** will be done over an 8-year period. At 4:15 a.m., 26 February 2006, I made the calculations illustrated below in my journal while painting **2006-29 (576-33)**.

$$\begin{aligned} \sqrt{3600} \div \sqrt{24} &= 150 \\ \sqrt{576} \div \sqrt{8} &= 72 \\ 24 \div 8 &= 3 \\ 24 \times \sqrt{3} &= 72 \\ 9 \times 8 &= 72 \\ 3 \times 3 \times 8 &= 72 \end{aligned}$$

I noticed that along with Dr. Oppenheimer, the numbers 3600, 24, 576, 8, and 3 connect **Six Million** and **576**. I made a table for each of these numbers and listed how they link the projects together.

**Table 10**

<b>3,600</b>
The number 24 divides evenly into the number 3,600.
I will need to execute 3,600 fingerprints per work session over an 8-year period to complete the "volume project" <b>Six Million</b> .

**Table 11**

<b>8</b>			
The number 8 divides evenly into the number 576.			
I will require 8 years to complete the "volume project" <b>Six Million</b> .			
<b>There are 8 principal colors in Wilhelm Ostwald's color circle:</b>			
Yellow 2	Orange 5	Red 8	Purple 11
Ultramarine Blue 14	Turquoise Blue 17	Seagreen 20	Leafgreen 23
Each painting in <b>576</b> features a 6.5" x 6.5" square with a series of .25" wide concentric bands centered within its boundaries. <b>576, Design #1</b> consists of 8 such bands.			
I have been arranging the paintings making up <b>576</b> in rows of 8.			
The <b>Corpus Christi Carol</b> is track number 8 on Jeff Buckley's CD <b>Grace</b> .			
In the dharmic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism), the <b>wheel of life</b> is a Mandala or symbolic representation of the continuous cycle of birth, life, and death. There are two basic forms of the <b>wheel of life</b> . The more elaborate form usually has 6 spokes (sometimes 5). The simpler form, mainly used in Buddhism, has 8 spokes.			

**What does this *wheel of life* have to do with *Six Million* and 576?**

<u>Connection #1:</u>	<u>Connection #2:</u>	<u>Connection #3:</u>
<p align="center"><b>Dr. Oppenheimer studied Sanskrit, an ancient language of India (the language of Hinduism)</b></p> <p>Dr. Oppenheimer studied Sanskrit with Professor Arthur W. Ryder (1877-1938). He called the sacred Hindu epic, <b><i>Bhagavad-Gita</i></b> (BAH-guh-vahd GEE-tuh) "the most beautiful philosophical song existing in any known tongue." The name means "the song of God." It contains a discussion between the divine being Krishna and the Indian hero Arjuna on human nature and human purpose.</p>	<p align="center"><b>The designs for 576</b></p> <p>The concentric bands in the designs for <b>576</b> can be interpreted as a continuous cycle of birth, life, and death.</p>	<p align="center"><b>What my right forefinger may come to symbolize to others</b></p> <p>On Saturday, 18 February 2006, my friend Edie Ellis looked at my ink-stained right forefinger and said, "...it is life."</p>

**Table 12**

<b>24</b>							
The number 24 divides evenly into the number 3,600.							
The number 8 divides evenly into the number 24.							
12 April 1954 through 5 May 1954							
Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer had to endure his 24-day security hearing.							
There are 24 hues that complete Wilhelm Ostwald's color circle.							
Hue Name	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Hue Name	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Yellow	1	2	3	Ultramarine Blue	13	14	15
Orange	4	5	6	Turquoise Blue	16	17	18
Red	7	8	9	Seagreen	19	20	21
Purple	10	11	12	Leafgreen	22	23	24

**Table 14**

<b>576</b>	
Once again, the number 8 divides evenly into the number 576.	
24 Days x 24 Hours = 576 Hours	

**Table 15**

<b>3</b>	
Each letter size sheet in <b><i>Six Million</i></b> features a grid divided into 10 rows of 12.	
12 ÷ 4 = 3	
<b>1 = Father, 2 = Son, 3 = Holy Spirit</b>	
I ink my finger, make 3 fingerprints, re-ink my finger, and continue this ritual until I fill all 120 sections of the grid. Before long, I was repeating the following formula: "One, two, three, re-ink."	
Sunday 19 February 2006 6:23 a.m. The numbers transformed themselves and the formula was elevated to this repetitive prayer: "Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Re-ink."	

## The blessing of *The Holy Finger*, 8 April 2006:

### What is a Blessing?

Blessing (Anglo-Saxon: *bloedsian*, redden with blood): From the custom of sprinkling the altar with blood in sacrifice, as used in the Scriptures, has several meanings: praise; expression of desire that good fortune go with a person or thing; dedication of a person or thing to a sacred purpose; and a gift. In a strictly liturgical sense a blessing is a rite of ceremonies and prayers by which an authorized minister sanctifies persons or things to Divine service or invokes Divine favor upon them. The prayer usually mentions the object of the blessing and is accompanied by the Sign of the Cross. In the Appendix of the ***Roman Ritual*** there are over 200 such blessings of everything imaginable: of the sick, fields, flocks, archives, libraries, food, cheese, beer, carriages, railroads, homes, airplanes, electrical machines, fire-engines, elevators, lifts, women pregnant and after delivery, organs, pilgrims, wells, schools, seismographs, horses, printing presses, vineyards, etc. In the Divine Office the blessing pronounced by the officiant upon the reader is known as the benediction. (from the ***New Catholic Dictionary*** online)

### How *Six Million* amended the ritual I perform before entering a church for mass:

I regularly attend the 7:30 p.m. mass at St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church in Buchanan, New York. After entering the vestibule, I stop at a wall-mounted vessel on the left side of the door that opens to the church. This vessel, called a **stoup** (stūp), contains holy water. In general, **holy water** is water that has been consecrated by a priest and is used for baptism and rites of blessing and purification. I will simply define **baptism** as a custom of cleansing by water. This rite calls upon the grace of God to renew a person, free them from sin, and make that person a part of the church. I tirelessly searched the Internet to find what I deemed to be a clear and simple definition of the **grace of God** (the underlined words are defined in simpler terms to ensure the clarity of this passage):

**In Christianity, divine grace refers to the sovereign favor of God for humankind, as manifest (demonstrated) in the blessings bestowed upon all irrespective of (regardless of) actions (“deeds”), earned worth, or proven goodness. More broadly, divine grace refers to God’s gifts to humankind, including life, creation, and salvation (deliverance from the power or penalty of sin). More narrowly but more commonly, grace describes the means by which humans are saved from original sin and granted salvation.** (From ***Wikipedia***, the free encyclopedia)

I dip the fingertips of my right hand into the holy water contained by the stoup and make the **Sign of the Cross**. To perform this ritual, my thumb, forefinger, and middle finger are brought together to form a pyramid shape. I place them on my forehead and then move them down to my breastbone. From this position, I move my hand to the left shoulder and then to the right shoulder. This is what I say out loud as I proceed through the Sign: at the forehead, “In the name of the Father”; at the breastbone, “and the Son”; and across the shoulders, “and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.” In making the Sign of the Cross I assert my belief in the union of three heavenly persons (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one God. I am also maintaining that I believe Jesus achieved forgiveness for our past sins, and protection from our everlasting punishment, by His death on the cross. By making the Sign of the Cross after wetting my fingers with holy water, I am blessing myself with holy water and renewing my **baptismal promises**.

**The Baptismal Promises are made on behalf of the child by the parents. When the child has grown to adulthood it can choose to renew these promises for itself. The parents promise four things:**

- to reject evil
- to believe in God the Son, Jesus
- to believe in God the Father
- to believe in God the Holy Spirit

(From ***A Thumbnail Guide to Christianity***, re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/gcsere/revision/romancath/rc1/3.html - 11k)

After I started ***Six Million***, I modified this ritual at the stoup by dipping only my right forefinger in the holy water a second time. I felt that this part of my being needed to be blessed more than once each week. Amy Cabot is one of the ***Witnesses of the Six Million***. She referred to my right forefinger as ***The***

**Holy Finger** in a reply she emailed after reviewing one of my fingerprint progress reports. Her nickname for my digit gave me an idea that would take this second blessing with the holy water a step further.

On 30 March 2006 I wrote a letter to Reverend Father Leonard J. DiNola. He is a priest at St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church. I asked him if he would bless my right forefinger before or after mass on a Saturday evening. On Saturday, 8 April 2006 I met my mother inside the church as usual. We have been sitting in the second row of pews (A **pew** [pyū] is one of the long backed benches arranged in rows for the seating of the people attending mass.) on the right side of the church for as long as I can remember. We were celebrating Palm Sunday. **Palm Sunday** is the Sunday before Easter, the sixth and last of Lent, and the beginning of Holy Week. (The week before Easter.) The day marks the spreading of palm branches in Christ's path as He entered Jerusalem prior to being crucified a few days later. Palms are blessed at the beginning of the service and distributed to the parishioners. Old palms are saved in many churches to be burned later as the source of ashes used in Ash Wednesday services. **Lent** is a season of fasting and penance observed by Christians during the forty weekdays from Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday. **Ash Wednesday** is the first day of Lent. On this day ashes are placed on the foreheads of the faithful to remind them of death, of the sorrow they should feel for their sins, and of the necessity of changing their lives. **Easter** marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his crucifixion. Reverend Father DiNola came out onto the altar before the mass and we made eye contact. He held up his right forefinger and I returned his gesture. Then he asked if my finger had been blessed yet (perhaps he thought I had also contacted Monsignor Donald Hendricks of the same parish). After I shook my head, he said he would get the holy water and meet me in the sacristy. (The **sacristy** is a room in the church, where vestments, church furnishings, sacred vessels, and other related belongings are kept. It is also where the clergy meet and dress for religious functions.)

I can't remember everything that he said. But I do remember that it was extemporaneous and heartfelt. Essentially he asked that I be given the strength, and my right forefinger the physical endurance, to complete **Six Million**. He also asked that this finger be protected from harm while it is performing its assigned task. I interpreted what he said like this: *He asked God to transform 'The Holy Finger' into a little superhero while it is fulfilling its mission. This way it won't get hurt while it is teaching us the value of human life while re-teaching us the value of the number one.*

#### **The significance of the palm on the floor in front of *The Six Million Desk*:**

In general, the palm is a symbol of victory and triumph. I believe that my right forefinger was blessed before the mass that celebrated Palm Sunday as a sign that I will successfully execute all six million fingerprints. It is customary for people to take the palms they receive during Palm Sunday mass and place them around religious pictures, statues or other objects. They remain there until the next Palm Sunday when newly blessed palms replace them. I positioned the palm I received after my right forefinger was blessed on the floor in front of ***The Six Million Desk***. It will remain there until I receive the newly blessed palm in 2007. This cycle will continue until the six millionth fingerprint is made. This ritual of placing a palm branch "in my path" symbolizes my faith in fulfilling my promise to six million human beings.

#### **Acknowledging *Fanny* on Easter Sunday, 16 April 2006:**

##### **Why did I initially choose to use a grid pattern in *Six Million*?**

I decided to use a grid pattern in ***Six Million*** because it provides the ideal format for a neat and orderly progression of individual fingerprints.

##### **How did the use of a grid pattern unexpectedly add two new elements to *Six Million*?**

As I moved farther along on the project I found that the cross-sectioned design resembles sheet music and the "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("work will set you free") gate at Dachau.

### What practice brings about the thoughts of sheet music while I'm making fingerprints?

The fingerprints are made in intervals of three. The density of the ink decreases with each impression. As a result, the pattern that forms on the page creates a rhythmic beat in my head as I'm working (refer to **Table 16**). This practice brings about the thoughts of sheet music while I'm making fingerprints.

**Table 16**

Fingerprint Triad	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Ink Density	Dark	Middle	Light
Beat Volume	Loud	Medium	Soft

### Why does the grid design remind me of the "Arbeit Macht Frei" Gate at Dachau?

I looked at **Philip Greenspun's** photographs of Dachau on the Internet when I first began working on **Six Million**. The "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("work will set you free") gate at the entrance of the camp caused me the most discomfort. I interpret the phrase as a false promise stating that those who worked to exhaustion would eventually be released. Shortly after I began **Six Million**, I noticed that **Mr. Greenspun's** pictures of the "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate frequently came to mind while I was filling the grids with fingerprints. This prompted me to conduct an experiment. I turned one of **Mr. Greenspun's** photographs of the gate 48° clockwise and found that it forms a pattern of regularly spaced horizontal and vertical lines forming squares. But what made me perform this action? Then I remembered that while I'm filling the pages with fingerprints, I turn the paper 48° *counter*-clockwise. This slight rotation transforms the vertically oriented rectangles of the grid into diamond shapes. The similarity between the diamonds on the paper and the diamonds on the "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate creates the presence of this gate in the project.

**Table 17**

Here are the two roles the grid has played in the two-dimensional and three-dimensional projects I've been producing since 1987:	
<b>Role #1:</b> It has been used in the "b through y" steps between the "a and z" steps of a piece.	<b>Role #2:</b> It has been a major detail in the "z" step of a piece.

### Why did **Six Million** call to mind the work of Chuck Close?

Comparisons of my work to Chuck Close's work have been made since 1987 because of how I have used the grid design in various pieces (**refer Table 17**) and the diligent systems of operation I develop to produce a piece.

I originally attributed my decision to represent the victims of The Holocaust with six million fingerprints to the impression on the Italian seamstress's ID. Then on Easter Sunday a discussion with my family about the work of Chuck Close brought to mind one of his paintings and changed this first theory. Most of us had seen his pieces as well as reviewed comprehensive books or documentaries about his life and his work. As the conversation developed each of us began to elaborate on these experiences. It did not take long for me to recall the finger painting he did in 1985 called **Fanny**. I actually relived the first time I stood in front of **Fanny** at the Pace Gallery in 1986. I always make an effort to practice propriety in my daily life, but I disrupted our orderly dialogue with the following statement: "The ID of the Italian seamstress is not the only reason why I decided to use a fingerprint to represent each member of the Jewish population killed during the Holocaust—**Fanny** also influenced this decision."

Three out of five dinner guests asked: "Who's Fanny?"

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“Fanny is Chuck Close’s grandmother-in-law. Chuck Close painted her portrait using his thumbprint. It’s a large-scale black and white oil painting. If I remember correctly, Fanny was the only person in her family to survive World War Two. As a matter of fact, I don’t think I have ever experienced a more loving painting to this day.”

### **What is the significance of the foot washing ritual I engage in while making fingerprints:**

I have been employed as a custom picture framer since 3 October 1988. In the beginning, I worked Monday through Friday, eight hours each day. Then I would work in the studio a minimum of three weekday evenings and all weekend. As I advanced my artistic career, I understood that I needed more time to develop art projects as well as fulfill the administrative responsibilities required to gain recognition for the work. How could I do this while maintaining the income required to cover my arts-related expenses and necessary living costs? My answer was derived from basic mathematics and principles of time efficiency. I would compress a standard full-time work schedule picture framing over a three-day period. This arrangement would provide me with a minimum of forty hours to focus on my art if I managed my time accordingly.

Here is a simple equation illustrating exactly what I mean:

$$4 \text{ work sessions} \times 10 \text{ hours} = 40 \text{ hours}$$

Over the last thirteen years I’ve honed in on my time management skills and gradually increased the number of hours that I dedicate to my artistic career.

Here is a simple equation illustrating my current average:

$$\text{work session 1} \rightarrow 13 \text{ hours} + \text{work session 2} \rightarrow 13 \text{ hours} + \text{work session 3} \rightarrow 10 + \text{work session 4} \rightarrow 10 = 46 \text{ hours}$$

This has been wonderful for the work. But thirteen years standing upright for intervals of up to fifteen hours has not been great for the bunions that have formed on both of my feet.

**A bunion is a sometimes painful structural deformity of the bones and the joint between the foot and big toe. Bunions develop via long-term irritation (inflammation) from arthritis, poorly fitting shoes, and heredity, any of which can cause this joint at the base of the big toe to thicken and enlarge. This causes the bones of the big toe to angle in toward the second toe, and leads to an often painful lump of bone which forms at the outside-edge base of the big toe. People with flat feet and laxity in their ligaments are prone to developing bunions, as well as those in professions which place excessive stress on the feet, such as ballet dancers. Bunions may be followed by painful calluses, resulting from a changed foot balance.** (From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia)

Whenever something comes along that has the potential to impede the development of my artistic career I make the effort to either avert or eliminate it. There have been times that this process has transformed a possible threat to the work into a part of the work. The therapy I now use to relieve the pain caused by my bunions is an ideal model for this course of action.

### **How my bunion remedy got incorporated into *Six Million*:**

In April 2006 the bunion on my right foot began to cause so much discomfort that I would need to periodically sit down to work while I was at the frame shop. I found this a nuisance due to the fact that my responsibilities are geared toward maintaining a steady output of finished work. I also perceived this as an impending obstacle to the work. If I can’t physically endure long work periods in the frame shop then I can’t maintain the number of hours I’ve managed to focalize into my artistic career.

I read about different home remedies used to lessen the irritation of bunions. A good hot soak in Epsom salts was the most popular. Some sources recommended that immersing your feet in hot water alone is enough to reduce inflammation and ease pain. The Lenten Season had just come to an end. The idea of washing my own feet in a bath of hot water made me think about the foot washing ritual that is practiced during mass on Holy Thursday.

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In the Christian calendar, Maundy Thursday (môn'dē), Holy Thursday, or Great Thursday is the feast or holy day which falls each year on the Thursday before Easter, and commemorates the day on which the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and the Apostles is said to have occurred.

Church services and masses held on this day typically include a reading from the gospel account of the Last Supper. In this context, the feast often highlights Christ's sharing of bread and wine with the Apostles, which take on new meaning as Christ's body and blood. Maundy or Holy Thursday also stresses the Washing of the Feet which also took place during the Last Supper, according to the Gospel of John, during which Christ washed the feet of the assembled Apostles. At services on this day, a minister, priest, or lay leader(s) may wash the feet of some members of the congregation to commemorate Christ's actions and command. (From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia)

I found the above passage to be a succinct source of facts regarding Holy Thursday. But it did not mention why Jesus Christ washed the feet of the Apostles. It took me approximately six hours spread out over three work sessions to find a brief explanation of foot washing that I could grasp (I underlined *humility*, *dusty roads*, and *servant* in the encyclopedia entry I cited for this document).

**Foot washing is a religious rite practiced by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week (preceding Easter) and by members of some other Christian denominations in their worship services.**

The early Christian church introduced the custom to imitate the humility and selfless love of Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper (John 13:1–15), the night before his Crucifixion. The practice was originally an act of hospitality in Palestinian homes performed for guests (who wore sandals and walked on dusty roads) by a servant or the wife of the host. St. Paul refers to the custom in 1 Timothy 5:10, and St. Augustine mentions it in one of his letters about AD 400. The Maundy Thursday ceremony observed in Rome by the pope and locally in parish churches, first appeared in the Spanish liturgy of the 7th century.

In several European countries the monarchs or members of the royal family washed the feet of poor people and gave them gifts on Maundy Thursday. The royal practice was continued for a time in England after the Reformation but ended in the Church of England in 1754. Foot washing is generally still practiced in some Episcopal churches. Some Lutherans and other Protestants also practice the washing of feet. ("feet, washing of." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopedia Britannica Premium Service. 23 June 2006)

The origins of foot washing as an act of hospitality encouraged my decision to ceremoniously wash my own feet during fingerprinting work sessions. Why? I see the dust on the roads as things I don't need. By washing this "dust" off my feet, I am ridding myself of the possessions, thoughts, and actions that could distract me from leading a purposeful life. The practice of washing my own feet also refers to the humble service of the foot washing religious rite and I perceive this practice as a metaphor for my vocation as a visual artist. What does the humble service of the foot washing religious rite have to do with my vocation as a visual artist? At the Last Supper Jesus Christ used foot washing as an example of the loving service that his followers must give to the community. I use works of art that foster the value of humanity, investigation, and openness to contribute to the community. I regard both the foot washing custom and the art making process as forms of service. In both instances here, they are used to teach something of great value to others. This commonality links the service of the foot washing religious rite to my vocation as a visual artist.

#### **Closing comment regarding my vocation:**

When I was "called" to be a visual artist I didn't pursue this occupation for reasons based on financial gain. I make every effort to achieve recognition for the work and earn income from the work; and I do so with zeal. But I do not redirect the true nature of the creative process to yield art that I know people will purchase or to please a prospect. I see the rewards for my vocation as a visual artist in more spiritual terms and will continue to fulfill my role in society with integrity and glee.

#### **How does Six Million benefit others?**

When I write a number greater than one down on a piece of paper I begin to lose sight of its true value. So many times I see a penny on the ground and I pass it by. Imagine if I had faithfully collected every penny I

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found since I was five years old? I wonder how many dollar bills they would be worth? After all, there *are* one hundred pennies in a single dollar bill. I can write, or say, that six million members of the Jewish population were exterminated during The Holocaust. But what does six million really look like when I divide it by the number one? The installation ***Six Million*** teaches us the true value of human life by re-teaching the true value of a number greater than one.

**How does 576 benefit others?**

I began studying Dr. Oppenheimer's life and life's work on Monday, 13 October 2003. I understood on Thursday, 16 October 2003 that he was more than ***The Father of the Atomic Bomb***. On the morning of Friday, 17 October 2003 I promised to educate as many people as possible about his contributions as a teacher, physicist, national hero, and public servant. **576** is a work of art that honors my declaration to Dr. Oppenheimer. Therefore it teaches us the value of maintaining our loyalty to others by following through on the commitments that we make to others.

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