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Media Contact: Robin Cavanaugh / 713-851-4478 / [rcavanaugh@hmh.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@hmh.org)

## ***Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theater?* opens at Holocaust Museum Houston August 19, 2022**

*--An extraordinary story in artwork combining creative force with personal narrative--*

**Link to Charlotte Salomon photos:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/h6a054f580o8szeopon7b/h?dl=0&rlkey=7y28mubw3phuezyvtmrvgl7gy>

**HOUSTON (July 28, 2022)** – Discover one of the most important and powerful achievements of the 20th century – the singular and complex artwork *Life? Or Theater?* by German-Jewish artist, Charlotte Salomon – which through imagery and text tell the slightly fictionalized and theatrically imagined story of Salomon’s family. *Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theater?* is on view August 19 through December 4, 2022, in Holocaust Museum Houston’s (HMH) Edith and Josef Minberg Gallery.

This major exhibition features over 200 small gouaches on paper which Salomon created as part of a larger body of work in the early 1940s when in hiding from Nazi oppressors. These remarkable gouaches unveil a vivid self-portrait spanning across all facets of Salomon’s existence: from a complicated family life, growing up in Berlin, the rise of the Nazis, to her exile to France.

In 1940 Salomon and her grandfather were interned by the French authorities in the Pyrenees; the same year her grandfather revealed an extensive family history of severe mental illness that included suicides by her aunt, mother and grandmother. In the chaotic conditions after the German invasion of France, they were released from the internment camp. While in hiding between late 1940 and early 1942, in a burst of creativity culminating in approximately 1300 pieces, Salomon painted a life marked both by personal tragedy and external political events, combining images, texts and musical references, and pioneering a practice of honest and artistic self-expression.

*Life? Or Theater?* stops here where it begins. Acquaintances reported that Salomon was so possessed during its creation that she only rarely stopped to eat, drink, and sleep. When she was finished, she handed all the pages to a friend, saying, “Take good care of it. It is my life.”

Salomon survived for one year beyond the completion of *Life? Or Theater?*, a year that became increasingly dangerous after the Italians occupied Southern France and began to deport Jews to camps in Germany. Her grandfather passed away and Salomon, sheltering in a villa owned by an American woman, married the villa’s sole remaining resident, an Austrian refugee named

Alexander Nagler. The marriage doomed the couple as it was Nagler's attempt to get a marriage license at the local police station that gave them away as Jews. Salomon was 26 and five months pregnant when both she and her husband were picked up by the Gestapo in 1943. Salomon was killed immediately on arrival at Auschwitz; Nagler was murdered a few months later.

The exhibition *Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theater?* has been organized in cooperation with the Amsterdam Jewish Museum. Owner of the image copyrights is the Charlotte Salomon Foundation, Amsterdam.

Holocaust Museum Houston graciously thanks Forvis, Anchor Sponsor of the exhibition *Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theater?* and Lead Sponsors The Lewis and Joan Lowenstein Foundation, Ronald Grabois Family Fund and Jerry Rochman.

For tickets and more information, please visit [hmh.org](http://hmh.org).

Holocaust Museum Houston, Lester and Sue Smith Campus, is fully bilingual in English and Spanish. Located at 5401 Caroline Street, HMH is closed Mondays except Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day and Labor Day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. The Museum's Legacy Café is open during Museum hours. Admission is \$22 for adults; \$16 for seniors (ages 65+) and AARP members; free through Labor Day for active-duty military and their families; always free for children and students through age 18; and free to all visitors Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Parking is available at the Museum's adjacent lot for \$8 for a four-hour period. Tickets are available exclusively online. For more information, visit [hmh.org/visit](http://hmh.org/visit).

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