

CHAPTER THREE

Reflections on Art and Genocide

[Rebecca Pristoop](#)

Why Art?

“Why art?” is the first question one must ask when curating an exhibition about sexual violence against women during genocide. There are numerous institutions, scholars, non-profit organizations, and international courts already studying genocide and reporting on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The news industry provides hourly updates, with images, about the current active states of genocide emergency around the world. (See the [Genocide Watch website](#) for a complete list.) So why do we need to bring art into the conversation?

Art exists as material and visual culture. To the viewer, it is a thing or image onto which a memory can be imbued and can therefore act as a symbol and reminder of a feeling, circumstance, or moment (Assmann, 2008). If the art itself seeks to convey something in particular—an event, trauma, or memory—recalling the artwork can trigger a recollection of its message and meaning. This ability to stimulate a specific memory, to leave a lasting impression of the violence perpetrated against women during genocide, is the objective of this exhibition. These lingering memories are meant to educate and advocate for the end of rape, forced marriage, sex slavery, and other acts of sexual violence. This exhibition aims to produce a collective memory, “stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds” (Sontag, 2003, p. 86).

Why Not Photographs?

Documentary photographs of war, both in print and on television, became overwhelmingly popularized in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the Vietnam War. War has been depicted for millennia within the history of Western art, and sexual violence against women is thoroughly embedded within that visual language. In the modern period alone we can reference more than a dozen paintings by well-known Western masters dating from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries that represent the rape of the Sabine women. The degree to which sensational photographs of war were presented in newspapers, magazines, and television during the Vietnam conflict, however, reached an unforeseen public accessibility (M. Berger, 1988; Arlen, 1982). These images were so pervasive that in a 1972 essay titled “Photographs of Agony,” art critic John Berger questioned their effectiveness for challenging the political establishments of war. In 2018, when journalistic photographs, videos, and

drone images of the Rohingya genocide instantly pop up in our digitized news feeds, only to be quickly swiped away and forgotten among the daily barrage of information, viewers are even more immune to readily available images of war and the effects they may have on creating change.

This is not to say that documentary and photojournalistic images lack power. On the contrary, they capture devastating and real moments of conflict, pain, and injustice. For this exhibition, however, we have chosen to leave photojournalism aside (while acknowledging its role as source material for some of the artworks presented) and ask viewers for their sustained attention as they notice the messages and meanings of individual artworks created over time. The slow intentional creation of these artworks, whether through brushstrokes, embroidery, crochet, time-based video, or other media, must be mirrored in the intentional mobilization to stop sexual violence.

Look, witness, feel. Move into the space of the gallery, or linger on each page of the catalog to consider both the experience of those affected by the violence and the channeling of those experiences through the hands, bodies, minds, and hearts of the artists who demand we notice. Let us embed the visual, material, and emotional tones of these artworks on the Holocaust and later genocides into our individual and collective memories.

Art of Later Genocides

Before looking at the artworks in this exhibition that convey the horror of sexual violence against women in genocides after the Holocaust, we must take a moment to recognize that the Western definition and expectation of art, especially contemporary art, does not translate for all cultural sensibilities. An absence of illustrative imagery in artworks made in countries that have experienced genocide does not mean the country, its people, and its artists are not reflecting upon and producing creative visual materials to embed the terrors of genocide into their collective memory. (See, e.g., Thompson, 2013, pp. 82–109.) The works in this exhibition do fall into the Western expectation for illustrative reflection and in this context are in the category of visual and material culture labeled art. While the selection of artworks in this exhibition does not account for all post-Holocaust genocides, the works presented are intended to bring greater attention to the atrocities discussed and stand as a signpost for all instances of sexual violence being perpetrated today.

Isolation and Restricted Movement

Separate the men from the women, the children from their mothers, the young from the old: isolation is repeatedly used to enable the systematic implementation of sexual violence as a weapon of genocide. Lining up according to gender was often the first thing a prisoner did upon arriving at a Nazi concentration camp. The same tactic was used in Srebrenica in

1995, and it is being used by the Myanmar Army in its genocide of the Rohingya Muslim minority. Men and boys are separated and killed in front of their wives, mothers, and sisters; surviving females are isolated in huts and forcefully raped (Kristof, December 15, 2017).

[Regina José Galindo](#) emphasizes the use of isolation, as well as the emotional trauma it carries, to portray the massacre of indigenous people during Guatemala's Civil War (1960–1996). In *Tierra*, 2013, the artist stands naked on a lawn of green grass, her diminutive size emphasized in comparison to a Hitachi excavator, her sole companion throughout the 33-minute, 25-second video (Figure 40, p. 91). The massive machinery, with its grumbling motor and mechanical staccato, represents the violence perpetrated against the more than 200,000 people killed during the Civil War. Galindo's defenseless body is vulnerable to the machine's slow assault of the land around her—it extends its arm, plants the claws of its bucket, and methodically tosses undesired earth aside. If the viewer joins the artist in her endurance, reaching beyond the video's 15-minute mark, s/he will notice the increasing tension between Galindo's unmoving body and the precarious positioning of the machine. Depending on the camera angle, her body is varyingly in danger of being shoveled with the dirt, pushed into the growing trench, or simply disappearing because of the position of the excavator. At the end of *Tierra*, a giant trench surrounds Galindo, referencing a mass grave and reminiscent of the killing fields in the East during the Holocaust. The excavator is shut down and she remains alone, further isolated on her tiny mound of land.

This feeling of isolation can also be perceived in [Rostam Aghala's](#) painting, *Daesh Molested the Girls (Yezidi Girls)*, 2015 (Figure 39, p. 89). It portrays the story of three raped Yezidi girls who escaped enslavement and ISIS's robust sex slave industry. The girls are shown sitting, standing, and leaning in various poses of protection and vulnerability. Although the painting tells the story of three individual girls, the artist has painted two of the girls in multiples. The central figure, wearing a yellow shirt and with arms crossed in front of her chest, is cloaked in a skirt bearing four faces. Is it her face we see, shown in various stages of emotional reflection, or do these visages represent the thousands of other Yezidi girls still held captive? To the right of the central figure, two renderings of a girl dressed in black appear seated against a wall. One of the girls shields her mouth as she gazes at the viewer, perhaps in a pose of shock or self-preservation. The other sits sideways with legs fully exposed, bent, and slightly separated, perhaps indicative of forced rape and violence.

A third figure in a red headscarf is the only girl to appear once in the painting. A bird is perched upon each of her shoulders. The bird on her left shoulder is described in black lines over subdued colors that form the structure of a building in the background. The bird on her right shoulder, however, is painted in rich colors with yellow breast, red body, a three-pronged fanning tail of pink, yellow, and orange, and an uplifted beak. This brightly colored bird may refer to the Peacock Angel, the most important Yezidi deity. Yezidi prophecy maintains that

the Peacock Angel will come to earth during a time of intense conflict and distress, either in the form of a peacock or a rainbow. Aghala's painting may identify the genocide as this moment. With a palette of brilliant rainbow colors, in opposition to the black and white flag of ISIS and the desert landscapes and camouflage uniforms often seen in photographs documenting the war, Aghala's painting stands in defiance against ISIS and celebrates the women that got away.

[Mary Mihelic's](#) *The Running Girls* series, 2014, also features females that got away. Begun in response to Boko Haram's kidnapping of more than 276 girls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2014, the series will comprise more than fifty works on paper—one for each girl who escaped. The twenty-seventh work in the series takes form as a trilogy, related to the Christian Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), to oppose Boko Haram's attack on Christianity and Western education. The three works, *Dumb Luck*, *Bad Luck*, and *Good Luck*, (Figures 42–44, p. 95) each portray the same figure caught mid-stride as she runs from her captors. Images, words, and textures are layered in, on, and around her, visually mirroring the danger she faces on all sides. Women are not only being attacked by Boko Haram, with an estimated two thousand sold into sex slavery as of October 2017, but they are also being raped by Nigerian security forces in displaced persons camps. Nigeria's former President Goodluck Jonathan failed in his commitment to free the abducted girls and end sexual violence in the camps. The titles for this trilogy play with his name to highlight this failure.

Sexual violence controls women's bodies through physical invasion and often by restricting movement. The body at the site of attack is also the body that enables some women to get away. Mihelic's work empowers this resilient body. But what can women do when the only way to survive is to place their bodies in a dangerous space? [Mitch Lewis](#) explores this problem in his [sculptural relief](#), *The Wood Gatherers*, 2010 (Figure 41, p. 93).

Disembodied faces with eyes gazing distantly or averted to the ground hover above the floor. Along with the bundles of sticks balanced on their heads and affixed to the wall behind them, they carry a resigned stoicism. These faces of hand-worked clay reference mud brick structures, ostensibly safe spaces that the women of Darfur in western North Sudan call home. Since 2003, however, the Janjaweed militia, funded by the North Sudanese government, has made home unsafe. With 2.5 million non-Arab ethnic minorities pushed into displaced persons camps, resources such as water, firewood, and straw are only available beyond the boundaries of the camps. To gather these resources, women risk being raped and attacked by the Janjaweed men who wait for them outside the camps: stay home and risk death from starvation and dehydration, leave home to gather wood and face the possibility of attacks and slow death from the effects of trauma and HIV infection. The women Lewis portrays reveal this dilemma: their closed mouths and upright postures

knowingly brace for what lies ahead. Lewis's sculpture, created eight years ago, continues to read accurately today.

The Agony of Survival

The genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina (April 1992–December 1995) and the genocide in Rwanda (April–June 1994) took place during the same general period, but 5,500 miles apart. Thousands of women and girls were raped or sexually violated in Bosnia and Rwanda. In both cases, rape was a weapon of war and ethnic cleansing. The oppressors in both genocides implemented gang rape, sexual slavery, and rape with objects. For those who survived, living through the violence and bearing witness to the death of others carries its own agony.

The emotional effects of living with this despair are visible in [Safet Zec's *Cry from Tears Cycle*](#), 2003 (Figure 47, p. 101), and [Manasse Shingiro's *Immortal*](#), 2015 (Figure 45, p. 97). Zec fled Bosnia in 1992 but lost his brother and brother-in-law; Shingiro remained in Rwanda until 2010 and lost his father, friends, and many other family members. The similarities in how they chose to portray female survivors is striking.

Both artists relay the pain of survival by focusing on the face and hands of the female survivors they depict. A tempera and collage composition, *Cry* portrays a woman's head thrown back in torment, eyes squeezed shut, hands clasped. Thin lines of paint define creases of anguish on her forehead and cheeks. This is the face of one of the Mothers of Srebrenica, a survivor of the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia. Zec looked to photographs published in newspapers to inform the features and grief in her face. These images are collaged into the final artwork. The monumental scale of the survivor's face, along with the contrasting lights and darks that Zec uses to define the wear of suffering, viscerally translates the devastating experience of genocide to the viewer.

Shingiro also uses contrasts in lights and darks to describe the lingering pain of survival, though his work is on a much smaller scale. *Immortal*, a pastel and ink pen on paper drawing, enunciates the rhythmic articulation of worry lines in his subject's forehead, nose, and hands. While Zec's survivor internally wrestles with her sorrow by keeping her eyes shut, Shingiro's reveals a disbelief and terror through the specks of bright white highlighting her open eyes. Her open hands cover her mouth, offering a small piece of protection from the horror she has experienced.

Survivors of sexual violence live with enduring physical harm and carry the psychological trauma of their violation. In addition, they experience continuous suffering and humiliation through the stigmatization not just of themselves, but their families. Seventy-percent of women raped during the genocide in Rwanda have the HIV virus, and likely contracted it from the battalions of AIDS-infected rapists that the government released from hospitals

specifically to inflict slow agonizing death (Landesman, 2002). That Zec and Shingiro, both male survivors, chose to portray female survivors of their respective genocides speaks to the effect that sexual violence against women has on the emotional and psychological health of a community at large.

Healing through Art

Israeli artist [Gil Yefman](#) uses the craft of crochet to work through and reflect upon personal and collective trauma. In collaboration with four women from the [Kuchinate Collective](#), a workshop for African refugee women living in Tel Aviv, Israel, he created the installation, *Body of Work*, 2017 (Figure 46, p. 99). Kuchinate means crochet in Tigrinya, a language spoken in Eritrea, a country many of the women in the collective fled. Armed with crochet hook and yarn, Yefman, Achberet Abraha, Selemawit Hagos, Dolshi Kidane, and Zerifea Wolde looped, hooked, and pulled fibers to each build a basket that literally and figuratively stores the women's traumas. The baskets range in size from waist height to almost six feet tall and include abstract and figurative elements.

A subdued palette of earth tones dominates the five baskets. One exception is a yellow dress delineating the figure of a young girl. The girl, with smiling red lips and red bows in her hair, reaches two-thirds the height of her basket and appears on a solid brown background. Her size, and the joy and brightness in her visage, offer a distinct contrast to the woman appearing on an accompanying basket. That woman, rendered in cream, takes up the entire height of her basket. She also stands out from a solid brown background but appears like a statue or monument, despite the red lips and bow she shares with her youthful counterpart. Alternating stripes of brown, tan, and cream are used to create the body-sized height of a third basket, while a fourth basket extends only to waist height and juxtaposes white text on an army green background. A geometric red heart sits below the white text. The imagery in these baskets, both figurative and abstract, contrasts survivors' memories from their home countries and perilous journeys with the complexities of navigating new lives in Israel.

Yefman's basket, while related in pattern and palette, stands apart from the other four. Among the tallest in the installation and with a handle at its rim, Yefman's serves as a witness to the other vessels. Large crocheted eyes look out from stripes of brown, cream, and tan, referring to the multiple testimonies that create the larger narrative of sexual violence. For Yefman, the collection of baskets with individual stories—recordings of each woman's journey to Israel can be heard emanating from inside each basket—tell a narrative that is greater than the sum of its parts. In community, survivors are able to share their pain and heal through the creative act of crocheting. Within the Kuchinate Collective, this creating also provides a sustainable livelihood that the women can use to support themselves and

others. Like the handle at the top of Yefman's basket, the Kuchinate community provides a tool to carry the weight of their experiences.

Creating art about genocide, while sometimes hard to view, is an important and even remedial practice for artists. The experiences of those affected by sexual violence during genocide and the channeling of those experiences through the artists that portray them demand that society reflect upon these tragedies, question their occurrence, and act to stop them. Let us embed these artworks into our individual and collective memories.

VIOLATION DURING LATER GENOCIDES

Artist Statements and Images

Rostam Aghala

(b. 1969)

The Yezidis (or Yazidis) are a Kurdish speaking people who live principally in northern Iraq. In 2014, ISIS, also known as Daesh and ISIL, attacked and conquered large parts of the area, and the Yezidis took refuge on Mount Sinjar. Those who couldn't flee were rounded up and many of the men were massacred or thrown into pits or died of dehydration, injuries, or exhaustion on the mountain. Many of the Yezidi women and girls were kidnapped, enslaved, and transported to ISIS prisons to be raped, beaten, sold, or locked away. I visited some of these girls who had run away, and my artwork is a story of three raped Yezidi girls who escaped.

When an artist lives surrounded by war and violence, he must use art to showcase resistance and present the social situations and the struggle. Art and culture are always destroyed in war, and art must create a new aggressive culture and a new civilization. Through my art, I stand bravely against violence and war, not caring about what might happen to me because of what I create. Art is a powerful and effective weapon, during and after wars.

Governments cannot create artists or inventors, but they can kill them. Similarly, a democratic country cannot create an artist, but it can create an environment for him or her. Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, his protest in 1937 against the Nazi bombing of the town during the Spanish Civil War, is one of the most important anti-war paintings. I stood up against Saddam Hussein's regime with my art in 1988, I have fought violent Islamic ideologies, and I have fought ISIS by painting ideas and beauty.



FIGURE 39. Rostam Aghala, *Daesh Molested the Girls (Yezidi Girls)*, 2015. Oil on canvas, 67 × 78,5 in (170 × 200 cm). Collection of the artist, Iraq, and Phantastische Bibliothek, Wetzlar, Germany.

Regina José Galindo

(b. 1974)

For 36 years, between 1960 and 1996, Guatemala experienced one of the bloodiest civil wars in history, with a genocide that left more than 200,000 dead. The origins of the war lay in a dispute over land rights between Guatemala's ruling military oligarchy (affiliated with Western corporate interests) and the country's rural mainly indigenous population. The army, which was fighting the insurgency, described the indigenous people as internal enemies. Claiming they sympathized with the guerrillas, the military persecuted and murdered them. With the intention of taking their land (under the indulgent eye of the country's oligarchy) and using the justification that the indigenous people were enemies of the fatherland, the State practiced a scorched earth policy. This was a common practice, characteristic of Guatemala's armed conflict. Troops of soldiers would arrive in indigenous communities and destroy anything that the people might need to survive, such as food, clothing, harvests, houses, and animals. They burned, raped, tortured, and killed. Bodies were buried in mass graves that today are part of extensive evidence that confirms the facts. *Tierra* alludes simultaneously to the massacre and interment of the victims and to the territorial dispute in the name of which they were murdered.

The following testimony, during the genocide trial of General Efraín Ríos Montt and Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez in Guatemala City, 2013, inspired me to create *Tierra*. The witness describes how the army dug pits prior to killing people and dumping the bodies:

The army officers had been drinking in a bar called The Three Little Monkeys. In the wee hours, when they were all quite drunk, they decided to go and celebrate by killing people. ...First they ordered García, who was operating the bulldozer, to dig a trench. Then the trucks loaded with people parked opposite El Pino and one by one the people were taken out. They did not shoot them. Usually they were stabbed with bayonets. They tore their chests with the bayonets and then they carried them to the grave. When the grave was full the bulldozer covered the bodies with earth.



FIGURE 40. Regina José Galindo, *Tierra*, 2013. Video. Collection of the artist, Guatemala.

Mitch Lewis

(b. 1938)

Art has always been a compelling vehicle for creating public awareness of social issues, and advocating for change. When I first became aware of the genocide in Darfur, which was inflicting unspeakable brutality on innocent women and children, the plight of these ill-fated people became the driver that dictated my artistic direction. The post-Holocaust outcry of “never again” to me included not only the Jewish people, but all of humanity. But once again, in my lifetime I was witnessing genocide. I expressed my personal outrage using my most effective form of communication, my sculpture. I created an exhibition entitled “Towards Greater Awareness about the Genocide in Darfur.” The exhibit transports the viewer into the grim reality of life in Sudan. *The Wood Gatherers* is one of the sculptures taken from that exhibition. The piece depicts women who must leave the relative safety of their village to gather firewood. These women, while providing for their families, put themselves at risk of rape, kidnapping, or death.

I believe that genocide affects us all. By the passive observation of the mass murder of men, women, and children, we all become accomplices. I see my role as raising awareness and initiating a dialogue with the viewer about the physical and psychological scars left on humankind by a culture of violence and brutality. I hope my work also gives young artists an understanding of the enormous power of art and the potential for them to become a voice for human rights.



FIGURE 41. Mitch Lewis, *The Wood Gatherers*, 2010. Clay and other material, various dimensions. Collection of the artist, USA.

Mary Mihelic

The *Running Girls* artworks are inspired by the courage of the schoolgirls who ran for their lives and escaped from the Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria, who attacked their school and kidnapped their classmates. On April 14, 2014, more than fifty schoolgirls made that split-second decision to run for it. The series, therefore, will comprise over fifty artworks of girls running. Thirty-eight are completed.

The term Boko Haram translated means “Western education is a sin,” and the group believes that women should not be educated. Instead, women should be used as cooks or sex slaves. The art reflects on war under the guise of religion, religious freedom, education for women, and global feminism.

Reports vary on the actual number of girls who got away; originally the number reported was 53 and then it changed to 57. As a result, the series title “53 Running Girls” differs from the actual number of artworks being made. This is symbolic of the chaos surrounding the kidnappings. The number of Chibok schoolgirls who were kidnapped is just as confusing. Most reports say 276, but it is believed that the number is higher. Some parents did not report their daughters missing due to the associated stigma. For that reason, the exact number of artworks being created is still undetermined.

When the series began over three years ago, James Foley hadn't been beheaded, the Boko Haram wasn't allied with ISIS, Charlie Hebdo was still alive, and hundreds of thousands of people weren't running from war and migrating to Europe. National Public Radio reported in 2015 that the Boko Haram killed more people than ISIS (6,644), making it the deadliest terrorist organization in the world. The *Running Girls* series has been featured in media in the United States, United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria.

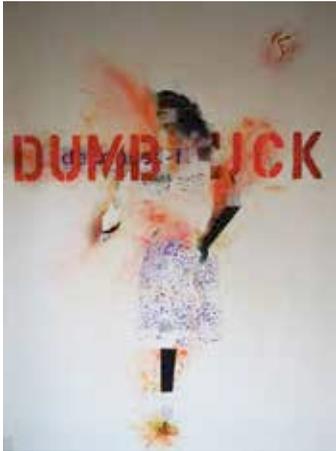


FIGURE 42. Mary Mihelic, *Dumbluck*, from *The Running Girls* series, 2014. Mixed media on paper, 64 × 48 in (162.5 × 122 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.



FIGURE 43. Mary Mihelic, *Badluck*, from *The Running Girls* series, 2014. Mixed media on paper, 64 × 48 in (162.5 × 122 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.



FIGURE 44. Mary Mihelic, *Goodluck*, from *The Running Girls* series, 2014. Mixed media on paper, 64 × 48 in (162.5 × 122 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.

Manasse Shingiro

(b. 1984)

My roots go back to Kigali, Rwanda, where I was born and raised, surrounded by the hills, valleys, mountains, and gigantic lakes that dominate the geography near the equator. I lost many of my friends, my father, and other family members during the 1994 Tutsi genocide.

Throughout this experience and despite these tragic events, I never lost my sense of creativity, and I chose to turn these thoughts of loss into triumph through my art. Thus, I chose to use the title *Immortal* for the face and hands of a terrified female victim. I began drawing at a young age and am a self-taught artist. My art is not confined to one subject area, and I continue to challenge myself by varying my projects and media.

My favorite media are pastel and graphite. I seek to emphasize rhythms, lines, realism, and colors, in order to express a connection to my background and identity. I hope as an artist to connect with the viewer in a way that words cannot. I moved to Portland, Maine, with a sense of adventure, creativity, and, as always, with a sense of humor.



FIGURE 45. Manasse Shingiro, *Immortal*, 2015. Pastel and ink pen on Canson paper, 24 × 18 in (61 × 46 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.

Gil Yefman and the Women of the Kuchinate Collective

Israeli artist Gil Yefman collaborated with four African refugee women in the Kuchinate Collective in Tel Aviv, instructing them to crochet an installation of five oversized baskets, one of which is his own creation. (See more about Gil Yefman's needlework in his statement for his *Sex Slave*, p. 80.) The other four baskets were crocheted by Achberet Abraha, Selemawit Hagos, and Dolshi Kidane, all from Eritrea, and Zerifea Wolde from Ethiopia. The women figuratively wove the horrendous details of their struggle to reach Israel into their work, and their stories can be heard emanating from the baskets.

Kuchinate is a collective of African refugee women living in Tel Aviv. It was founded in 2011 by clinical psychologist Dr. Diddy Mymin Kahn, who researched the repercussions of rape and sexual abuse on Eritrean asylum seekers. She was joined by Aziza Kidane, an Eritrean nun and trained nurse who had worked against human trafficking. The refugee women of the Kuchinate Collective crochet beautifully crafted baskets, rugs, and bean bags, teach crocheting, and provide traditional meals and coffee rituals in their studio. The socio-psychological benefit of this project gives the women the opportunity to earn a living and escape their harsh reality by employing craft techniques rooted in their African culture. Each woman is fairly compensated for her work and given access to social services. Since its inception, the collective has changed the lives of dozens of women. Most of them are mothers, and many are survivors of rape and other atrocities in Sinai—all relying on the collective as their sole source of income.

Body of Work was commissioned by Remember the Women Institute for this exhibition, and the project was coordinated by Gil Yefman and the Kuchinate Collective.

—*The Exhibition Team*



FIGURE 46. Gil Yefman and the Kuchinate women, *Body of Work*, 2017. Crocheted objects from yarn, various dimensions. Collection of the artist and the Kuchinate Collective, Israel. Photos by Rona Yefman.

Safet Zec

(b. 1943)

This work took its cue from a photograph that documented the horror of what happened in Srebrenica in 1995, showing one of the mothers who is overwhelmed by her pain and sorrow. The expression of despair on the face of the woman in *Cry* is intensified by the wringing of her hands.

Like much of my other work, the *Tears Cycle* weaves the story of the tragedy of Srebrenica. As Enzo Bianchi wrote of my work:

The experience of the scythe of death on his own skin, in some ways, has won over Zec's life: war, loss, abandonment, exile...a deep inner silence has fallen over all this. Safet Zec is a man of very few words. He knows a different language: that of transforming wounds into a forest of signs. Wounds that become painting, which does not mean to hurt the eye of observers but wants to help us find, in ourselves, the same silence that generated these canvases; a silence that brought them to light after having settled itself in the soul (Bianchi, 2017, p. 46).

During the genocidal action in Srebrenica, the men and boys were murdered. Many of the women and girls, however, were subjected to rape. Again, in the words of Bianchi: "What enables Zec to bring back these silent wounds? Reality; sometimes more brutal than any imagination. A reality that happens through communication, and flattens any story in a perpetual flow where everything loses consistency" (Bianchi, p. 46).



FIGURE 47. Safet Zec, *Cry* from *Tears Cycle*, 2003. Tempera and collage on paper, 87 × 63 in (220 × 160 cm). Collection of the artist, Italy.

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About Remember the Women Institute

Dr. Rochelle G. Saidel, exhibition coordinator and catalog co-editor, is the founder and executive director of Remember the Women Institute. She is the author, editor, or co-editor of seven books on various aspects of the Holocaust, including *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* and *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp*. She has curated museum exhibitions on Holocaust history and art, including *Women of Ravensbrück*, *Portraits of Courage*, *Art by Julia Terwilliger*. She has written and published articles, organized sessions and presented papers at conferences, consulted for films, and lectured internationally on the Holocaust for more than forty years.

Dr. Batya Brutin, exhibition curator and catalog co-editor, is an art historian focused on research of visual art dealing with the Holocaust and the artistic responses afterward in Israel and internationally. She has curated several other exhibitions on art and the Holocaust. She is also a researcher of Holocaust monuments in Israel and throughout the world. Dr. Brutin has published and edited books, academic essays, and educational materials on these subjects. The head of the Holocaust Teaching Program at Beit Berl College in Israel, she is a founder of the Israeli *Women and the Holocaust* series of international conferences and a member of the Advisory Board of Remember the Women Institute.

Rebecca Pristoop, a curator, art historian, and performance artist, has contributed to and curated exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, The Jewish Museum, The Tang Teaching Museum, Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs, The Jewish Theological Seminary, York College, CUNY, and elsewhere. She ran the art and food salon flatbreadaffair, where she curated site-specific installations, dinners, and panels. As Director of Programs for Art Connects New York, she organizes exhibitions of contemporary art to enhance the missions of social service agencies.

The Remember the Women Institute, founded in 1997 and based in New York City, conducts and encourages research and cultural activities that contribute to including women in history. Special emphasis is on women in the context of the Holocaust and its aftermath, including sexual violence. Through research and related activities, the stories of women—from the point of view of women—are made available to be integrated into history and collective memory. The work of the Institute has influenced academic research and publications, as well as popular culture, by encouraging the inclusion of all of humanity in

historical and commemorative representations. The projects of the Institute include carrying out research on women and the Holocaust, publishing and co-publishing books, creating exhibits, organizing panels at conferences, and cooperating with individuals and other organizations to create programs, films, and exhibitions. The Institute is a 501(c)(3) organization registered as a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York.

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