

VIOLATED!

Women in Holocaust and Genocide

Rochelle G. Saidel and Batya Brutin

EDITORS

Remember the Women Institute

This digital edition is the same as the printed catalog, with several changes. In the Acknowledgments and Introduction, we have added information that was not available at the time the printed catalog went to press. There were two additions to the exhibition, as well as other donors. The digital edition also contains numerous links throughout, so that readers can pursue further information.

We were obviously not able to include in the printed catalog references to the excellent press that the exhibition received, and we are adding them here. Please see:

- ["Groundbreaking exhibition depicts sexual violence against women in the Holocaust"](#) (*Times of Israel*/April 13, 2018)
- ["Can We Talk About Rape in the Holocaust Yet?"](#) (*Forward*/April 25, 2018)
- ["Art exhibit explores global violence against women during genocide"](#) (Women's Media Center/May 8, 2018)
- ["Healing through artwork: Crochet by African migrants and trauma victims on display in NYC exhibit"](#) (Religion News Service-RNS/May 2, 2018)
- ["The 54 Galleries to See Right Now in New York"](#) (*The New York Times*/April 26, 2018)
- ["10 Galleries to Visit Now Around SoHo and TriBeCa"](#) (*The New York Times*/April 26, 2018)
- ["The Art of Calling Attention to Genocide"](#) (*New York Jewish Week*/April 25, 2018)
- ["Trailblazing Exhibition to Open at SoHo Art Gallery"](#) (*The Jewish Voice*/March 28, 2018)
- ["#MeToo and the Holocaust,"](#) by Rochelle G. Saidel (*Hadassah* magazine/March 2018)
- ["My People Were Refugees, Too"](#) (*Times of Israel*/February 21, 2018)
- ["Violated! Women in Holocaust and Genocide"](#) (NY Blueprint, the Urban Jewish Event Guide)

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VIOLATED!

Women in Holocaust and Genocide

A GROUP ART EXHIBITION

Ronald Feldman Gallery

SoHo

New York City

April 12–May 12, 2018

Exhibition Catalog Editors

Rochelle G. Saidel and Batya Brutin

Remember the Women Institute

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Acknowledgments

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The 47 artworks in the exhibition were borrowed from the collections of some of the 30 artists or their families, as well as galleries, museums, and other institutions. We appreciate the generosity of Gertrude Stein and the [Boris Lurie Art Foundation](#) for loaning us two of Lurie's works; the [Butler Institute of American Art](#) for Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman's work; [Florida Holocaust Museum](#) for Judith Weinshall Liberman's work; [Galerie Lelong & Co.](#) for one of [Nancy Spero's](#) works; [The Ghetto Fighters' House](#) for the drawings of Holocaust survivors [Ella Liebermann-Shiber](#), [Halina Olomucki](#), and [Zeev Porath](#) (Wilhelm Ochs); the [Kuchinate Collective](#) for the project with [Gil Yefman](#); [Phantastische Bibliothek](#) for Rostam Aghala's work; [Printworks Gallery](#) for another of Spero's lithographs; and [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#) for Gil Yefman's installation.

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[Elizabeth Schwartz](#) contacted us to generously allow us to use the soundtrack of the song she wrote and sings, “Lager: A Lament,” to enhance the exhibition. Part of her “Plum Tree Songs” project that takes traditional instrumental Jewish melodies and updates them with English lyrics reflecting women’s perspectives, the moving song tells of a young girl in forced prostitution in a Nazi concentration camp. This music played continuously at the entrance to the gallery, and the lyrics were on the wall. We also included a short video of Holocaust survivor Manya Weizberg Horowitz, which was recorded for the USC Shoah Foundation and created for a [symposium](#) that Remember the Women Institute organized with them in 2012. We were grateful for these two important late additions to the exhibit, which are not part of the printed catalog.

We were pleased that the following organizations joined us as our Institutional Partners and supported this exhibition in a variety of ways: [Cardozo Law Institute in Holocaust and Human Rights](#); [Consulate General of Israel, New York](#); [Free Yezidi Foundation](#); [Genocide Survivors Foundation](#); [Ghetto Fighters’ House](#) (Beit Lohamei Haghetatot); [Kuchinate African Refugee Women’s Collective](#); [Kupferberg Holocaust Center at Queensborough Community College, CUNY](#); [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#); and [Yahad-In Unum](#). We thank the people through whom we worked in these partnerships: Patrice Bensimon, Hon. Mordehai Amihai Bivas, Anat Bratman-Elhalel, Father Patrick Desbois, Ronald Feldman, Vic Giasov, Pari Ibrahim, Dr. Diddy Mymin Kahn, Jocelyn Getgen Kestenbaum, Dr. Dan Leshem, Jacqueline Murekatete, and Catherine Van Kampen.

One partner, the [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#), needs to be singled out as enabling this exhibition to become a reality. In addition to generously giving us a home for the exhibition, Ron Feldman believed in us and unstintingly shared his wisdom, encouragement, ideas, kindness, and expertise. We offer Ron our deep gratitude and also thank his wonderful staff, which includes: Elaine Angelopoulos, Thad Cary, Lynn Cassaniti, Eric Ayotte, Peggy Kaplan, Marco Nocella, Burcu Oz, Megan Paetzhold, Vince Ruvolo, and Monica Terrero.

The design for the print and digital catalogs was created by Bonnie Greenfield, and her outstanding talent has been behind Remember the Women Institute’s [website](#), on-line publications, and mass communications for years. Our striking exhibition logo was designed by Orni Drori. Mindy Mangot and Prof. Guilherme Ary Plonski provided proofreading skills that included sound advice. Gloria Steinem helped us assemble our Honorary Committee. As members of the Honorary Committee, Patti Askwith Kenner was our gracious hostess, and she, Joan Dean, and Dr. Eva Fogelman helped with fundraising. Our partners for the Institute’s project on women, theater, and the Holocaust,

Dr. Meghan Brodie and Cynthia L. Cooper, facilitated an afternoon of dramatic readings at the gallery to complement the exhibition. Prof. Ziva Amishai-Maisels and Ahuva Passow Whitman made helpful suggestions along the way. We thank all of them for their contributions to the exhibition and catalog.

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With gratitude,

Dr. Batya Brutin, *Exhibition Curator*

Dr. Rochelle G. Saidel, *Exhibition Coordinator*

Remember the Women Institute

Introduction

Rochelle G. Saidel and Batya Brutin

The artworks in this [*VIOLATED! Women in Holocaust and Genocide*](#) exhibition commemorate and reflect upon a heinous component of genocides that has been repressed throughout history. The creative expression of the artists, who include victims, their close relatives, witnesses, and concerned others, sheds light on what happened to a great many women during the Holocaust and later genocides, encouraging empathy.

Although unintentional, this exhibition is related to the allegations of powerful men's sexual abuse of women that began making daily headlines in the fall of 2017. The exhibit was planned and well underway before these headlines broke. Moreover, these works of art express a much greater ratio of power to powerlessness. At a time when women have been coming forth about varying degrees of sexual abuse in peacetime—from Hollywood to Washington, from the university to the Olympics, from the board room to the news room—this exhibition reveals acts of sexual violation against women in much more vulnerable circumstances: during the Holocaust and later genocides.

The media have been full of stories since fall 2017 about sexual humiliation and violation, with women speaking out and naming the alleged aggressors. During the Holocaust, the victims could not speak out, and they were often murdered after they were raped. In most cases, their tormentors' names were unknown to them. Afterward the surviving victims were frequently silenced by their own unwarranted sense of shame. The relatively few courageous women who spoke about being sexually abused were sometimes discouraged rather than encouraged. There were no conditions for a #MeToo movement for Holocaust survivors, and despite advances in technology and feminist ideology, this situation has not changed significantly for the victims of sexual abuse during later genocides.

The earliest Holocaust memoirs in the 1940s mentioned sexual violence, but afterward the subject almost disappeared. The emphasis was on the murder of six million Jews and not on the suffering of individual women. The first book about the subject, [*Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*](#) (Hedgepeth and Saidel, eds.) appeared only in 2010. As proven by that book, research, documentary films, interviews, more recent books, and archived testimonies, we know that various kinds of sexual violence were prevalent during the Holocaust. In later genocides, some of which continue until today, victims of sexual violence still suffer from both the trauma and the stigma of what happened to them. Sometimes these survivors of rape are shunned rather than comforted.

The international group of 30 artists in this exhibition, from Israel, the United States, and other countries, includes Holocaust survivors, their second and third generation descendants, and others who portray sexual violation during the Holocaust, as well as artists (some of whom are survivors) who address later genocides and ethnic cleansings in Bosnia, Darfur, Eritrea, Guatemala, Iraq, Nigeria, and Rwanda. The artworks highlight the sexual humiliation, sexualized violence, sexual slavery, and rape that women have suffered during the Holocaust and later genocides. The artists' representations cry out on behalf of the victims who were silenced or chose to be silent, and viewers are encouraged to use their own voices to let the messages of these artworks reverberate.

This catalog consists of three contextual chapters: Chapter One provides background about sexual violence during the Holocaust and later genocides; Chapter Two discusses the exhibition artwork about sexual violence during the Holocaust; and Chapter Three addresses the exhibition artwork about later genocides. Images of all the art in the exhibition are included, along with artist statements about why they chose to portray this difficult subject. The statements were written by the artists or taken from material that they provided. In the cases of deceased artists, statements were written by the exhibition team, family members, or lending institutions. All of these statements reflect the thoughts of the artists, rather than those of the exhibition team. The artworks and accompanying statements are organized alphabetically, with figure numbers, in two sections: "Violation during the Holocaust" and "Violation during Later Genocides."

Two items, a song and a video testimony, were added to the exhibition too late to be part of the printed catalog. [Elizabeth Schwartz's](#) "Lager: A Lament," which she wrote and sang to tell the story of a teen-aged forced prostitute, set the tone for the exhibition as people entered the gallery, with the lyrics on the wall. We also included a short video of Holocaust survivor [Manya Weizberg Horowitz](#), which was recorded for the [USC Shoah Foundation](#) and created for a [symposium](#) that Remember the Women Institute organized with them in 2012. Manya Horowitz describes her experience as a personal sex slave in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A bibliography is included at the end of the catalog, with complete citations for the sources listed in the text. The exhibition [*VIOLATED! Women in Holocaust and Genocide*](#) and this accompanying catalog are projects of [Remember the Women Institute](#).

CHAPTER ONE

Sexual Violence during the Holocaust and Later Genocides: A Personal Contemplation

[Rochelle G. Saidel](#)

Documentation and Artistic Representation

I consider the exhibition [VIOLATED! Women in Holocaust and Genocide](#) the culmination of my work so far on the subject. These artworks are in a way an echo of the words I have written and spoken for decades. When I began doing research about [Ravensbrück](#) women's concentration camp in the 1980s, I thought that sexual violence during the Holocaust was a rare occurrence that affected only a small number of female victims. Any information I gleaned from the many interviews I did with Jewish survivors into the 1990s was minimal, almost by accident. In those days, interviewers seldom pressed the question, and such information was rarely offered.

By now I have changed my mind completely. After years researching and writing about this specific aspect of Holocaust history, as well as learning from victims, witnesses, documents, and other scholars, I no longer think that sexual violation was isolated or unusual. Instead, I am confident that in one form or another, to one degree or another, most women must have suffered from some form of sexual abuse during the Holocaust—from humiliation to outright rape. While I am not an expert about the more recent genocides, I know that this situation continues.

Although there are broader definitions, this exhibition considers the Holocaust as Hitler's systematic state-sponsored genocidal campaign that resulted in the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. The Jews were deemed undesirable *Untermenschen* (subhumans) who did not have the right to live.

Within this general Jewish population destined for extermination, women and men had different experiences. Among these differences, women suffered from sexual violation particularly designated for women. (And some men, too, were targets of sexual violence.) I admit there is little possibility of scientific documentation or a statistical study of sexual violence during the Holocaust. The Nazis were meticulous record keepers, but there was no such thing as a rape certificate. And murdering a rape victim was all too easy. However, the available testimonies by victims and witnesses, a better understanding of sexual violence and victims' reluctance to speak, new research, and experience “reading between the lines” of the unspoken are enough to convince me.

Rather than documenting the fact of sexual violence with statistics, the exhibition *VIOLATED! Women in Holocaust and Genocide* does so with artistic representations. These artworks are the result of the artists' deep convictions that such atrocities occurred, both during the Holocaust and later genocides. This is demonstrated not only by their artwork, but also by their accompanying statements in this catalog. Sometimes the victim or the presumed victim was an artist's family member. The fact that it has taken 73 years from the end of the Holocaust to create this exhibition reflects the reluctance of scholars, artists, Holocaust institutions, and the victims themselves to address the issue. Perhaps the exposure in the media about the rape and sexual violation that has been integral to later genocides helped to open up the discussion about the Holocaust.

No Art in First Book about Sexual Violence during the Holocaust

In 2006 at an international conference for educators at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, Dr. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and I organized through Remember the Women Institute a workshop entitled "[Beyond Anne Frank: Teaching about Women and the Holocaust.](#)" During my presentation about Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, a prominent Holocaust scholar rudely interrupted me to challenge my statement that some Jewish women had been raped there. He insisted, even at that late date, that Jewish women were not ever raped during the Holocaust. This encounter became a call to action for Dr. Hedgepeth and me, and the result was the book we edited, [Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust](#) (2010). It took until 65 years after the Holocaust ended for the first book on the subject to appear, and eight more years for the first exhibition.

Our 2010 anthology included chapters on literature and film, but none on visual art. In a way, this exhibition helps to correct that omission, which was not our choice. As part of our research, in 2008 Dr. Hedgepeth and I went to Belen, New Mexico, to talk with feminist artist Judy Chicago. She had incorporated the theme of sexual violence into [Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light](#), created with her photographer husband Donald Woodman. Between 1985 and 1987 they had immersed themselves in information about the Holocaust, including visits to concentration camps and killing sites, museums, and archives. They encountered survivors personally and via videotapes, and met with Holocaust scholars. Chicago even created a "round robin" letter with seven experts to discuss her ideas and receive advice. Coming to the subject with background in women's studies that included her groundbreaking [Dinner Party](#), she knew that women's experiences in general were usually left out of history, and she noticed that Holocaust history was no different. Her awareness about sexual violence also led her to question the absence of this specific women's experience in the Holocaust narrative. The entire monumental work was first exhibited in the [Spertus Museum](#) in Chicago in 1993. (See Chicago and Woodman, 1993.)

Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman had generously allowed Dr. Hedgepeth and me to use some of their images from *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light* to enhance the message in our 2010 book. However, for a reason that was never revealed, the publisher at the last moment vetoed our use of the images and text about Chicago's work. Her artwork and our discussion about her early portrayal of sexual violence in the Holocaust narrative never made it into print. This exhibition includes Chicago and Woodman's Half-Scale Study for *Double Jeopardy* from *Holocaust Project—Studies/Ancillaries*, 1990 (Figure 3, p. 41). *Double Jeopardy* is the most relevant to the exhibition's theme, although images of sexual violence appear in some other components of *Holocaust Project*. Because of size limitations, we were fortunate to borrow a half-scale study from the [Butler Institute of American Art](#), Youngstown, Ohio, still more than twelve feet long.

Putting Women's Experiences in the Picture

There were many milestones that led from my 1980 first visit to [Ravensbrück women's concentration camp](#) to our 2018 exhibition. Holocaust studies and Women's Studies were finally coming together in the 1980s. Only then did some feminist scholars begin to focus on women's experiences during the Holocaust, using the lens of gender to reveal what victims had endured as women. The first public event that addressed women, gender, and the Holocaust took place in March 1983, when Dr. Esther Katz and Dr. Joan Ringelheim organized the groundbreaking *Conference on Women Surviving the Holocaust* at Stern College in New York, NY. Sexual violence was not on the agenda, and I observed how some Holocaust survivors who were present became enraged when an audience member asked about sexual experiences in concentration camps.

In the 1990s a core of books was published about women's experiences during the Holocaust, but sexual violence was absent or not emphasized. (See Bibliography, p. 104.) In 1997 I founded the [Remember the Women Institute](#), in order to further research, publishing, and cultural activities that contribute to including women in history, especially Holocaust history. For the first time in its then 29 years of conferences, in 1999 the [Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches](#) presented a plenary session on women and the Holocaust. As co-chairs of this plenary, Dr. Myrna Goldenberg and I decided to feature recent scholarly books on the subject and to entitle the session "Women's Holocaust History: Books in Print." The occasion was remarkable not only because the subject was deemed important enough for a plenary, but because by early 1999, a core of "books in print" had made possible a session with such a title.

My own book, [The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp](#), was published in 2004. Even though these books and most of the work on women's experiences had only passing or no references to sexual abuse, they did move the discussion forward. With these

sources as a beginning, and after more years of research and publications, it is now possible to create this [*VIOLATED! Women in Holocaust and Genocide*](#) exhibition.

By the turn of the twenty-first century it was clear—almost too late—that the question of sexual violence needed to be more thoroughly investigated as part of women's experiences during the Holocaust. *Women and the Holocaust*, a series of international conferences, began in Israel in 2002, a collaboration among [Beit Berl Academic College](#), [The Ghetto Fighters' House](#) (Beit Lohamei Haghetat), and [Beit Terezin Museum](#), often with the cooperation of [Remember the Women Institute](#). The conference series was founded by Prof. Esther Hertzog and Dr. Batya Brutin, curator of this exhibition.

Despite the occurrences that had been reported in early books and a small number of testimonies, the instances of sexual violation and humiliation still seemed minimal. Nevertheless, some scholars began working to broaden and deepen the comprehension of Jewish women's experiences of rape and other forms of sexual violence as part of the understanding of the Holocaust. Some of these scholars were invited to write chapters for our 2010 anthology on sexual violence. In 2013 the Israeli *Women and the Holocaust* conference topic was [*Her Story: Transference Methods of Women's Biographies and Autobiographies from the Holocaust*](#). Remember the Women Institute coordinated the session entitled "Sexual Violence against Women during the Holocaust: Ways to Consolidate and to Reveal the Personal Narrative." The session was chaired by Dr. Hedgepeth, and I presented a paper about making sexual violence part of Holocaust history.

Two Moving Experiences

I have organized panels, attended international conferences, planned events, created exhibitions, and presented lectures as part of my work through [Remember the Women Institute](#). Among these activities, by now countless, two instances stand out as moving in both senses of the word: they moved me emotionally and moved the topic of sexual violence forward intellectually. The first event was a March 20, 2011, [*Panel and Speakout on Sexual Violence during the Holocaust and Other Genocides*](#), held at [The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art](#) at the Brooklyn Museum. A discussion about whether the new understanding of sexual violence during the Holocaust could decrease or prevent it during other genocides took place among [Equality Now](#) founder Jessica Neuwirth, [Shalupe Foundation](#) founder Maman Jeanne Kasongo L. Ngondo, Israeli novelist [Nava Semel](#), feminist activist [Gloria Steinem](#), Dr. Sonja Hedgepeth, and me.

Although all of us had something relevant and important to say, for me the highlight of the afternoon came during the subsequent audience participation. A long line formed on both sides of the big auditorium, with people asking questions and making comments. At the end of one of the lines stood [Consolee Nishimwe](#), a survivor of the [Rwanda genocide](#)

whom we had originally asked to join our panel. She had refused after much deliberation, saying she just couldn't do it. And then suddenly there she was, announcing publicly for the first time that she had been raped at the age of fourteen. She was crying, we were crying, and I think most of the audience had tears in their eyes. Since that day our courageous friend Consolee has become an accomplished speaker, published author, and activist, telling her story to keep the memory of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide alive as a deterrent for the future.

The second event, which could be described as historic, was a [symposium on sexual violence during the Holocaust](#), held in Los Angeles in November 2012, co-sponsored by Remember the Women Institute and the [USC Shoah Foundation](#). The meeting of some twenty invited academics and activists who had worked on this issue was held at [University of Southern California](#). Participants spent two days reflecting on the types of evidence that point to sexual violence, the place of sexual violence within genocidal processes, and the ways in which genocide is shaped by gender. For example, workshops and presentations discussed the role of testimony in understanding sexual violence in the Holocaust, the credibility of testimony as a primary historical source, how the Holocaust and other genocidal experiences are gendered, how understanding the role of sexual violence informs Holocaust historiography, and how shame has played a role in survivors' willingness to share their stories.

The participants drafted a group statement of purpose for going forward, which said: "Evidence, information, and scholarship are emerging that sexual violence, long largely ignored, was an integral part of the Holocaust in many forms. Absence of acknowledgment of this reality has not only harmed survivors but also the understanding of and efforts to prevent genocide, and efforts to stop sexual violence in genocide, war, and every day. We hope that increasing awareness of this subject, obscured by shame and denial, will bring recognition to the victims, many of whom did not survive, rectify this omission from history, and support the work of those who oppose these atrocities." This exhibition reinforces those hopes.

A highlight of the seminar was a public evening, also co-sponsored by [Equality Now](#). Oscar-winning actress [Jane Fonda](#) read excerpts from [And the Rat Laughed](#), a novel by [Nava Semel](#), herself a child of Holocaust survivors. The novel, published in English in 2008, tells the story of a five-year-old Jewish girl, sexually abused by the son of Polish farmers who were hiding her during the Holocaust. Fonda read with a handkerchief in hand, and had difficulty getting through the reading. Nava Semel worked with us on women and the Holocaust, gender and genocide from the beginning. She died too young in December 2017, and her work, creativity, energy, and friendship are missed as we go forward with our efforts to put sexual violence more firmly into the Holocaust narrative.

Sexual Violence during the Holocaust

This exhibition is one important way of moving forward, using artistic expression to reveal some of the objective facts that we have become aware of over the decades. By now I would like to hope there is no dispute that sexual violence was prevalent during the Holocaust. Nevertheless, to reinforce the reality, I will review here some of the various forms. Perhaps most blatant and obvious was the system of official brothels that the Nazis established, “staffed” by women prisoners who were forced to be sex slaves in order to survive. There was forced prostitution in many concentration and work camps, with the Nazi brothel in Block 24 in [Auschwitz](#) the most well-known and documented. If one is aware, it is hard to miss it, directly to your left after you enter the gate that says *Arbeit Macht Frei* (work sets you free). If one is unaware, the memorial's official guide may not point it out. There have been claims by the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) that some 500 official brothels existed for Nazi officers, German soldiers, and certain privileged prisoners (Lichtblau, 2013). I requested but never received a complete list of these brothels.

In addition to official brothels, according to eyewitness accounts, Nazis and their collaborators sometimes kept personal sex slaves, especially in the East. For example, in the town of Busk, Ukraine, around thirty Jewish women were kept as “sex objects” in the Gestapo offices, where they also had to cook and clean. Some of the women became pregnant, and the Nazis and their collaborators murdered them before moving on (Desbois, 2008, pp. 167–168). There are also eyewitness accounts that Nazi collaborators in the East sometimes raped women who were about to be murdered in killing fields (Desbois, p. 85). One survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Manya Weizberg Horowitz, told her [USC Shoah Foundation](#) interviewer (file number 7301) in 1995 how she had been forced to be a personal sex slave while in the camp. She ends her testimony by telling viewers how important it is for survivors to speak about what happened. Karen Shulman isolated this section of testimony for [Remember the Women Institute](#), and the USC Shoah Foundation produced a short video clip. We showed it at our 2012 joint public evening with [Jane Fonda](#), and I have used it for presentations since then. This video clip is also part of the *VIOLATED!* art exhibition.

The camp induction procedure itself was sexually violating. The entry process into camps was punctuated by sexual abuses such as forced disrobing in front of strangers and male Nazi guards, the shaving of women's heads, probing examinations of body cavities, and standing naked for *Appell* (roll call). Religious women recalled in interviews that seeing their mothers naked for the first time was a shock they never forgot. Sometimes women in concentration camps were forced by male prisoners, *Kapos*, or guards to provide sexual favors in exchange for bread or some other necessity for survival. This was tantamount to rape, because the sex was hardly consensual. “Medical” experiments related to fertility and pregnancy were another form of sexual violation that some women suffered in Auschwitz-Birkenau and other camps.

Even some Jewish ghetto leaders were complicit in sexual violence, sometimes forced to give the Nazis young women for their pleasure in order to try to stave off a general deportation. There are various accounts that this happened, including in *yizkor* (memorial) books of individual shtetls and accounts of ghettos. Survivor [Lucille Eichengreen](#) even accused Mordecai Chaim Rumkowski, head of the *Judenrat* of the Lodz ghetto, of trying to sexually abuse her, among others (Eichengreen, 1994, pp. 83–84; Eichengreen with Fromer, 2000, pp. 58, 103).

Like the Jewish leadership of the communities under Nazi control, people who undertook to hide Jews should have tried their best to protect them. However, there are accounts of so-called righteous gentiles who hid a Jewish girl or young woman but required sex as payment. This, too, was a form of rape. There are known cases in which adolescent girls in hiding complied with the demand for sex so they could shield their younger sisters. Rape, forced prostitution, sexual humiliation including public nakedness, sex for survival, and other forms of sexual violence took place during the Holocaust, and this exhibition gives these forms of sexual violence greater recognition.

Dr. Hedgepeth and I ended the introduction to our [2010 book](#), “With humility and compassion, we present this book as a challenge to claims that Jewish women were not raped or sexually violated during the Holocaust.” I believe that in 2018 we no longer need to challenge these claims, and the fact of sexual violation is by now generally, if at times reluctantly, accepted. I further believe that this acceptance came partially because of the revelations of sexual abuse during later genocides. Because sexually abused women are among the victims in headlines about these later genocides, one can see the link to what happened to women during the Holocaust. There are, of course, differences. Rape and sexual violence were not part of the Nazis’ weapons of war as they have been in later genocides. However, during the Holocaust and later, such violence has been part of some women’s experiences, with the same result of violated, shamed, and often dead women. This exhibition is intended to make that connection clear.

Sexual Violence during Later Genocides

I have been immersed in studying various aspects of the Holocaust for more than forty years, and my knowledge about the details of these later genocides is not as comprehensive. However, after meeting some of the survivors and activists who are working to make these horrors known, I am convinced that the women’s suffering has parallels. The 1948 United Nations [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), drafted in the aftermath of the Holocaust, defines genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. The later genocides or ethnic cleansings that our team studied in preparation for this

exhibition took place in Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Darfur, Eritrea, Guatemala, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Rwanda. We were not successful in finding art about all of these atrocities. Appropriate art from Cambodia was not located, despite several leads. The excellent sculpture that we found in Congo was ultimately ruled out because of logistics. We very much wanted to find art representative of the Rohingya ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, but perhaps it was too early to expect reactions by artists.

The art in the exhibition that represents the situation in Eritrea is unique in that it was created by refugee women living in Tel Aviv, Israel, and working in the [Kuchinate Collective](#) under the guidance of Israeli artist [Gil Yefman](#). The Kuchinate Collective was founded in 2011 by clinical psychologist Dr. Diddy Mymin Kahn, who works with Aziza Kidane, an Eritrean nun. Exhibition curator Dr. Brutin and I visited the workshop several times, and we saw how the women could socialize, eat meals together, and crochet baskets that earn them a small income.

A United Nations June 2016 [inquiry](#) declared that the Eritrean government had committed crimes against humanity in a widespread and systematic manner, and called for a hearing in the [International Criminal Court](#). The report included rape in the charges. In addition, there have been accusations of genocide against the Afar people in Eritrea. Some women who fled the dire conditions in Eritrea for Israel, including some in the collective, had to endure sexual violence on the way. On their horrendous trip toward freedom, many women were held captive by Bedouin traffickers and raped in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

The Bosnian and Rwandan genocides are perhaps better known, and the artists in our exhibition are male survivors who are familiar with the suffering of the women. I had the opportunity to learn details about both of these atrocities when, along with Dr. Hedgepeth, I was invited to represent Remember the Women Institute and participate in the [Salzburg Global Seminar](#) entitled "The Global Prevention of Genocide: Learning from the Holocaust" in Salzburg, Austria in 2010. The Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi by the Hutu majority government included rape as a weapon of war, sometimes by neighbors. Estimates of the number of Rwandans murdered are up to one million, during the 100-day period from April 7 to mid-July 1994.

The Bosnian genocide was committed by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica and Zepa in 1995, with a wider ethnic cleansing campaign between 1992–1995 in areas controlled by the Army of Republika Srpska. The events in Srebrenica included massive rape and sexual assault of the women, as well as the killing of more than 8,000 Muslim Bosniak men and boys and mass expulsion of another 25,000–30,000 Bosniak civilians.

In Guatemala, the government used its army and its counter-insurgency force for a systematic campaign against the Mayan indigenous people, whom they claimed were working toward a communist coup. There were various stages of this attempted genocide,

beginning in 1960 and ending with a United Nations-brokered peace accord in 1996. Women were routinely raped while being tortured, and pregnant women had their uteruses cut open. Those women who somehow managed to survive, like other victims of sexual violence during genocides, suffered not only from trauma but also from unwarranted shame.

The Darfur Genocide refers to the mass slaughter and rape of Darfuri men, women, and children in western Sudan that began in 2003. This genocide has been carried out by a group of government-armed and funded militias known as the Janjaweed. They have systematically destroyed Darfurians with methods that include rape, murder, displacement, and torture. With rape being used as a weapon of war, women have been especially vulnerable. The situation of unrest continues with activists calling for the world to realize that the crisis has not been resolved.

Boko Haram (literally translated as “Western education is a sin”) in Nigeria is considered “a genocidal criminal movement” by [Genocide Watch](#). This militant group has vowed to destroy every Christian school in Nigeria, and to carry out terrorist attacks on Nigerian government police and government officials. The movement kidnapped more than 276 girls from a Christian school in April 2014. Some were raped, sexually abused, and forced into marriages with their captors. Boko Haram has declared an Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria, murdering civilians in its effort to expand its territory and instill Islamic fundamentalism.

As for the [Yezidi](#) (or Yazidi) genocide, on August 3, 2014, the Islamic State (ISIS) attacked the region around Mount Sinjar in northwestern Iraq, near the country’s border with Syria. The area was home to some 400,000 Yezidi members of an ancient and often-persecuted religious minority. ISIS seized Sinjar City and the surrounding villages in a few hours, kidnapping and killing the Yezidi who could not flee. Some managed to escape to Mount Sinjar, where they were besieged by ISIS while enduring blistering heat and no access to food, water, or medical care. Between August 9 and August 13, 2014, Kurdish forces opened a safe corridor, allowing most of the surviving Yezidi to flee through Syria into the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Yezidi individuals have been persecuted, attacked, killed, raped, humiliated, displaced, and tortured by ISIS perpetrators. The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry determined this a genocide. Yezidi women were taken as sex slaves, bartered and sold in markets to the highest bidder. In addition to being raped, all their other human rights were taken away.

There are clear differences between the Holocaust and these later genocides, as well as differences among the later genocides. However, as this exhibition illustrates, perhaps more than words can say, there is a connection that is formed by the sexual violence that women suffered. By giving voices and faces to these women, the exhibition provides viewers with a better understanding of what happened, as well as impetus to act to prevent any repetition.

CHAPTER TWO

Art and Violation during the Holocaust: A Gendered Perspective

[Batya Brutin](#)

Art as Spiritual Resistance

Research on women in the Holocaust over the past three decades has gained increasing recognition among some academics and the public in general. Like this exhibition, a number of studies emphasize the uniqueness of the humiliating experiences that female victims of the Nazi regime suffered as women. Holocaust survivor and highly praised novelist [Aharon Appelfeld](#) explained the importance of artistic expression: “After the death of the last witnesses, the remembrance of the Holocaust must not be entrusted to the historians alone,” he wrote. “Now comes the hour of artistic creation” (Appelfeld, 2005).

This exhibition presents works of art dealing with women’s experiences of humiliation, abuse, and sexual violence during the Holocaust. The artists are Holocaust survivors, artists born during the Holocaust years outside of Europe, second and third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, and others.

Works of art created during and right after the Holocaust by victims are an authentic documentary expression of the events of that era. They portray various kinds of sexual violence first hand. Artistic work during the Holocaust, which could have been punishable by death, is one of the significant expressions of spiritual resistance against the Nazis’ intentions to suppress the human spirit. Other artworks by non-survivor artists commemorate and reflect upon this violence and serve to inform viewers about a relatively unfamiliar part of history.

When we speak of visual arts created during the Holocaust, it is initially unclear how art can be connected with violence. It seems that the horrors, cruelty, and suffering during the Holocaust are more than art can deal with. In fact, the artists’ creative impulses overcame all physical, mental, and aesthetic obstacles. These impulses could not be suppressed. Artistic activity in such difficult times is a unique phenomenon, because it took place under harsh conditions of isolation and oppression of body and mind. Under those circumstances, most artists worked in hiding while endangering their lives. Their creative urge was even stronger than their fear of death (Amishai-Maisels, 1993; Blatter and Milton, 1981; Costanza, 1982).

Many of the artists indicated their desire to document the events and sights they experienced, as evidenced by painter [Esther Lurie](#) (1913–1998):

Everything that was happening around us was so strange, so different from any concept and practice in our lives so far. I had the desire to draw from this new reality, to deliver things as I saw them. It was only during days of relative quiet that I could think of painting. After a while, I began to see this work as a duty (Lurie, 1958, p. 7).

Other artists indicate that in addition to the desire to document, the very act of artistic creation was their struggle against the process of dehumanization. Through artistic creation, they maintained sanity, self-identity, and a reason to live. As the painter [Halina Olomucki](#) (1919–2007) testified:

My urge to observe was stronger than my body. It was a need, a motivating need. It was the most important thing for me. I never rationally thought that I was going to die, yet I had this need to paint and record what was happening. I was in the same situation as all the people around me; I saw they were close to death; but I never thought of myself that way. I was up in the air. I was outside actual experience. My role was to draw, to record what was happening; my job was to observe (Rosenberg, 2002, p. 104).

Holocaust survivor [Zeev Porath](#) (a.k.a. Wilhelm Ochs) (1909–1991) was in the Janowska concentration camp between 1942–1943, where the Nazis assigned him work as a draftsman. During his tasks as a slave laborer, he could see what was happening from the window. In his drawing [Tortures](#), circa 1942–1943 (Figure 23, p. 67), he described how the Nazis undressed, tortured, and killed the Jewish women. Porath depicted the camp square where the naked Jewish women were gathered in groups, with an armed Nazi guarding them. In front of these women, a group of murdered naked women is lying on the ground. In the foreground on the right, the artist described a scene of torture. A naked woman is tied to a stake and a Nazi guard is kicking her and torturing her with his whip. This is an authentic and rare description of the abuse and murder of Jewish women.

When Holocaust survivor Halina Olomucki was a prisoner in the [Birkenau](#) camp, she succeeded in getting somewhat better food for survival, thanks to her artistic talent. She painted for the Germans on the camp's staff, while continuing to make her clandestine artworks. She drew [Women in Birkenau](#) (Figure 22, p. 65) in 1945, while still in the camp. The drawing depicts women prisoners in striped uniforms, humiliated and oppressed. They look emaciated, dressed in worn-out prison garments and full of despair. Olomucki drew on torn transparent paper with a soft pencil that she had stolen.

Immediately after liberation, some survivor artists described their experiences during the Holocaust. These artists either wanted to document the events or to create as part of a therapeutic process. Holocaust survivor [Ella Liebermann-Shiber](#) (1927–1998), for example, started to depict scenes from her camp experiences right away. Her husband later encouraged her to work, because he thought that artistic expression would help her free herself from the traumas she had faced. She then did the series *On the Edge of the Abyss* (*Chayyim al Kav ha-Ketz* in Hebrew).

Liebermann-Shiber's [Roll Call](#) (Figure 13, p. 53), drawn a month after her liberation, describes in detail the horrors of this camp experience. This was one of the most significant recurrences in the camps, when prisoners were forced to withstand harsh weather conditions for hours, sometimes collapsing and then shot to death. She depicted the women prisoners in front of the camp barracks. On the left side, the prisoners are wearing striped uniforms and head covers, while on the right side, they are wearing plain camp uniforms and their heads are shaved. The feeling conveyed is that the women had lost their personal and female identity. Although the central description is of the roll call, there are additional depictions of beatings, torture, humiliation, and sexual abuse in the foreground.

Holocaust survivor [Boris Lurie](#) (1924–2008) took a different and unique artistic approach. He was never afraid to portray sexual violence and humiliation as components of the Holocaust. His *Untitled (Deliberate Pinup)*, circa 1975 (Figure 14, p. 55) and *Untitled (Corset with Stars of David)*, 1982 (Figure 15, p. 55) both reflect this aspect of his art. The fact that the Nazis murdered his mother, sister, grandmother, and high school girlfriend—the important female figures in his life—deeply affected his artistic expression.

Lurie was fascinated by pornographic photographs, which he collected, hung on his studio walls, and used in his art. Citing John Wronoski, Sorin Heller explained “the use of pornographic photographs of women [as] dual conception of female nude as both an object of desire and as a memory of his exterminated family, an ‘echo’ of the female bodies in the concentration camps” (Heller, 2016, p. 82). According to Tal Sterngast, in a film interview taken in 2007 in his New York studio, Lurie pointed at a black-and-white photograph taken in Libau (Liepāja) outside Riga by a Latvian officer during the mass murder of Latvian Jews in 1941. In the photograph, there are four naked women about to be shot, surrounded by a circle of armed soldiers. Their arms are folded to cover their exposed bodies. Lurie said, “It’s an expression of society. The way the strong ones suppress the weak and the torturer gets a certain pleasure from it, a sexual pleasure” (Sterngast, 2016, p. 127).

The central figure in *Untitled (Deliberate Pinup)* is an almost naked woman lying in both a sexual and vulnerable position. The woman conveys a strong feeling of sexual violence. The figure is almost covered with paint. The strong red color on the bottom can be interpreted as

blood and the yellow stains might refer to the yellow badge Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust. Heller suggested: “This use of color may be interpreted not only as enacting a dialogue between photography and painting, but also as an act of injury that alludes to the spilling of blood, to an impending act of violence that is about to take place again...the canvas is the territory upon which the process of art-making constructs historical memory” (Heller, p. 81).

In *Untitled (Corset with Stars of David)* Lurie refers directly to both the female victim and his own Jewish identity by adding the yellow Jewish badge on the large corset colored in red and yellow. The colors convey the same meaning as in *Untitled (Deliberate Pinup)*, with the strong red color referring to blood as a result of violence and death, and the yellow color, to the yellow badge. The cement Star of David hanging from the corset with chains, reminiscent of prisoners’ chains, emphasizes the imprisonment of the Jews in ghettos and camps during the Holocaust.

Holocaust Photographs as Testimony and Memory in the Form of Art

Immediately after the Holocaust, many photographs were published in newspapers, magazines, and even in film journals. The impact of these Holocaust photographs was intense and some artists responded to them, copying them or adapting them and integrating them into their iconography and personal style. Thus, reactions and interpretations of the Holocaust were created that were different from those created by the survivor witnesses.

These well-known Holocaust photographs were produced by Nazis, Jews, bystanders, and Allied photographers. The spectator’s attitude and emotions are influenced if photographs depict vulnerable and helpless women. When the photograph’s status changes from an archival item to a memorial agent in public space in the form of art, additional meanings can be added to it.

Among the many Holocaust photographs are those that show the humiliation, cruelty, and sexual violence against women. Non-survivor artists born outside of Europe during the time that Hitler was rising to and in power—[Judith Weinshall Liberman](#), Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman, [Judy Chicago](#) and [Donald Woodman](#)—were inspired by photographs of atrocities against women during the Holocaust. Before starting to use Holocaust photographs, Weinshall Liberman stated:

I had seen many photographs from the Holocaust over the years, but now I decided to take a fresh look. I spent many hours at the Hebrew College Library in Brookline, Massachusetts, poring over books about the Holocaust, mostly books that contained photographs, and checked out books that I felt I wanted to study further. As I looked through Holocaust photographs, I felt so

moved by what I saw that I had a hard time deciding which of many horrific scenes depicted in these photographs I should try to deal with first (Weinshall Liberman, 2007, p. 234).

For her *Women in the Holocaust*, 1996 (Figure 12, p. 51) Weinshall Liberman was inspired by photographs of women forced to walk naked to a place of execution, before being shot by the *Einsatzgruppen* (Nazi mobile killing squads) in Eastern Poland in 1941–1942. The composition is designed to convey the victims' feelings of entrapment and terror, and the black-and-white tonality represents the struggle between life and death (Weinshall Liberman, 2017).

Helfman, also known as Nezhnie, relied on photographs taken by a Russian soldier who liberated Auschwitz for her *Daughters of Auschwitz*, 1979 (Figure 7, p. 47). She depicted five female Auschwitz inmates, gathered close to each other, wearing striped uniforms, some of them barefoot. The backdrop for the women is the famous Auschwitz gate with the German declaration *Arbeit Macht Frei* (work sets you free). On the surface below, the artist added the passage from the *Shacharit* (morning) prayer for weekdays from the Hebrew prayer book, “And now we were made a few from many” (Reese, 2004, pp. 117–118). By adding the Auschwitz gate sign Helfman referred to the perpetrators, who humiliated, imprisoned, tortured, and oppressed these women. Moreover, by adding the Hebrew passage she emphasized the victims' Jewish identity.

Chicago and Woodman also relied on photographs from the Holocaust, as Chicago wrote: “Donald and I have selected a number of ‘familiar’ photos from the Holocaust that could form the background for the painted tableaux” (Chicago, 1993, p. 127). *Double Jeopardy*, 1990 (Figure 3, p. 41) is composed of six panels separated by fabric strips on which the combined Stars of David and female symbols are embroidered. Each panel consists of an original photograph from the Holocaust, in which men are present at the center of the events, reflecting what was generally accepted as the Jewish universal experience during the Holocaust. The second part of each panel is a painting by the artist presenting women's harsh experience of humiliation, cruelty, savagery, and sexual violence. The artwork's title, *Double Jeopardy*, refers to the twofold vulnerability of the Jewish women, both because of their so-called race (Jewish) and their gender (Chicago, 1993, pp. 18–19).

Second-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, [Ofri Akavia](#), Hana Shir, [Haim Maor](#), and [Dvora \(Veg\) Zelichov](#) were also inspired by photographs from the Holocaust. Akavia was deeply affected by photographs of emaciated and agonized women. In *Without Words*, 1990 (Figure 2, p. 39), she depicted herself as a ghost-like figure screaming with hollow eyes. She felt empathy and deep feelings toward women imprisoned in concentration camps, women who experienced horrors, humiliation, and sexual violence (Brutin, interview, summer 1998).

The influence of Holocaust-era documentary photographs depicting the Jewish victims stripped, sexually humiliated, hiding their nakedness before being executed, is evident in Maor's *Female Nude with My Mother's Face*, 1986–1987 (Figure 16, p. 57). By depicting the naked figure of his Holocaust survivor mother as a young girl, as she was during the Holocaust, Maor makes the description personal. In addition, the three portraits of his mother on the top of the cross, frontally, sideways, and in profile, are copied from the way camp inmates were photographed (Brutin, interview, winter 1998).

Although influenced by Holocaust-era documentary photographs, Zelichov, like Maor, describes her mother's story in a personal manner, while also referring to the many other women who experienced humiliation, abuse, and cruelty. In *Two Sisters*, 1999 (Figure 36, p. 85), she emphasizes the emaciated figures who lost their femininity as they appeared in many photographs released by the camp liberators. Despite their condition, the two women kept the strong physical and emotional bond between them. The facial expression of large open terrified eyes in *Engraved in Blood*, 2000 (Figure 37, p. 85) is reminiscent of the many photographs of haunted, terrorized, and violated women taken by the Nazis. The artist emphasizes that her mother did not lose her resilience, despite the terror of Auschwitz and the number tattooed on her arm there.

The figures in *Wallowing in your Blood*, 2010 (Figure 38, p. 85) are reminiscent of the photographs of naked Jewish women before their death. Through this depiction, Zelichov wants to emphasize her mother's experience and that of many other women who were cruelly beaten until they bled from their female organs (Brutin, interview, January 16 and 28, 2002).

When Hana Shir visited the Auschwitz concentration camp memorial, she was moved by the photographs of women prisoners hanging in the corridors of the Polish pavilion. In her embroideries, the female faces around the two women's naked torsos in *Needle in the Eye*, 2006–2007 (Figure 25, p. 71) and the agonized faces in *Pink Ladies*, 2014 (Figure 26, p. 71) are inspired by the facial expressions of fear, seriousness, vulnerability, and astonishment in these photographs. The two women's naked torsos refer to the sexual violence women faced in the camps.

[Shosh Kormosh](#) and [Anat Masad](#), second generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, referred to the liberators' photographs of piles of hair that remained at the extermination camp sites. In her two works *Untitled (Braids)* and *Untitled (Combs)* from the series *Order and Cleanliness: A-*, 1994–1995 (Figures 10, 11, p. 49), Kormosh used the images of hair and combs to describe a female presence that was humiliated and destroyed by the Holocaust. Many survivors of the Holocaust testify that the shaving of their hair in the camps was not only humiliating to them as human beings, but also an unbearable theft of their femininity. Holocaust survivor [Batsheva Dagan](#) (b.1925) describes her experience when she arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau in part of her 2001 poem *The Sentence*:

*Getting a number
instead of a name
that was a source
of deep painful shame.
But what was harder
still to bear
was when they shaved off
all my hair.
My head was covered
in stubbly thorn,
I was almost bald
completely shorn.
My hair, my crown,
my femininity,
my hair, my own
that belonged to me.*

Masad, like Kormosh, reacted to the photographs of piles of hair left in the extermination camps as relics of the Holocaust. In her three-part *Robbed Women*, 1996 (Figures 18, 19, 20, p. 61), she used real hair as evidence of rejection, humiliation, and sexual violation. The hair also represents destruction and the memory of a violent act of annihilation (Brutin, interview, January 1, 2001). Although both artists used the image of human hair, the effects are different. Kormosh photographed the hair and thus created a sense of commemoration and memory of the past, while Masad used real hair that conveys a sense of existence that disappeared.

The influence of photographs of female and male camp prisoners wearing striped uniforms is visible in the artwork of second generation descendants of Holocaust survivors Akavia, [Ayana Friedman](#), Nechama Golan, and [Naomi Markel](#). In *Through the Stripes*, 1990 (Figure 1, p. 39) Akavia portrayed herself wearing a striped T-shirt. Stripes have always held meaning for her and they are connected to the Holocaust because human beings, especially women, experienced loss of identity when wearing the striped camp uniform. In this manner, Akavia conveys a strong feeling of identification with women camp prisoners, her mother among them (Brutin, interview, summer 1998).

Friedman also portrayed herself wearing a striped garment in *Chic Paris*, 2004 (Figure 4, p. 43). She is more direct, using cutout photographs of life-size prisoner clothes—a coat, pants, shirts and a dress—some of them ragged and some torn, with a white cloth in the background. Friedman placed a large figure of herself wrapped in striped fabric to identify with the female camp prisoners. Her image appears on both sides

of the quilt. This two-piece installation invites the viewer to pass between the two parts as in a narrow corridor, thus becoming one of the “prisoners” (Brutin, interview, February 18, 2004).

Relying on photographs of women prisoners’ striped uniforms, Golan refers to the symbolic meaning of the imprisonment in the camp from a direct feminine point of view in her Installation *Striped Garment*, 1995–1996 (Figure 6, p. 45). “I am particularly interested in women’s fate during the Holocaust,” she stated. By presenting an empty striped garment, she dealt with the imprisonment, degradation, and negation of womanhood that women experienced during the Holocaust. The footprint on the board below belongs to the artist, expressing her identification with the female victims (Brutin, interview, winter 1999).

Photographs of the camp prisoners in stripes are the central element in Markel’s *Target Body*, 1995 (Figure 17, p. 59). The artist clearly relates the triptych to the Holocaust by combining three elements: schematic figures for target practice in striped garments (to emphasize the loss of personal identity); a railroad image to hint at the trains that brought the Jews to the camps; and a furnace reminiscent of crematoria in extermination camps. The figure’s hairstyle emphasizes that she is a woman. By numbering each panel of the triptych, Markel seeks to present the stages that go from losing human dignity and identity to annihilation (Brutin, interview, summer 1999).

In contrast to the use of general photographs from the Holocaust, [Nancy Spero](#), [Helfman](#), [Rachel Roggel](#), and [Li Shir](#) used a photograph of a specific event. Spero used a photograph found in a magazine, which she used for several of her artworks. For *Ballade von der “Judenhure” Marie Sanders (The Ballad of Marie Sanders, The Jew’s Whore)*, 1991 (Figure 28, p. 75) and *Document Trouvé*, 1999 (Figure 29, p. 75) she created lithographs. The same figure is in both works, bound, a rope around her neck, with one breast forced up. She is naked apart from half stockings and shoes. For the first artwork, Spero put together the woman’s image from a Nazi photograph and the text of a [Bertolt Brecht](#) poem. The female image appears twice: on the left it is vague and in the background of the text; on the right, it is clear and powerful, serving as an exclamation mark for the text. For the second lithograph, the woman’s figure is multiplied four times, almost merging with the black, blue, purple, and orange background. In this way, the message conveyed is that she represents many other women who were humiliated, tortured, violated, and murdered (Bird, Isaak, and Lotringer, eds., 2011, p. 34).

In *Daughters of the Earth*, 1981 (Figure 8, p. 47) Helfman was impressed by the famous photograph from the [Liepaja, Latvia massacres](#) in 1941. She copied from it the figures of the five exposed women stripped of their clothing, wearing only underwear. Two are wearing socks and three are barefoot. The women are grouped and have their arms linked. Above their heads the artist wrote “Lijepaja (Liepaja) Latvia 1941,” and on the lower section she added the inscriptions, “Earth hide not my blood,” and “Let there be no resting

place for my cry,” both from *Job* 16:18. The women’s facial expressions, along with the inscriptions, create a powerful message (Reese, 2004, pp.118–119).

Helfman and Roggel referred to the famous photograph from the [Lviv \(then Lwów\) pogroms](#), the consecutive massacres of Jews living there, perpetrated June 30–July 2 and July 25–29, 1941, by the Ukrainian mob and encouraged by the German occupation forces. In *Pogrom*, 1989 (Figure 9, p. 47) Helfman copied from the photograph the running frightened, helpless, and screaming Jewish woman, wearing only a slip and pursued by two young boys in uniform. The boy on the right is holding a club in his hand, and they are trying to catch the woman under the “blessing” of a swastika. The artist added a Hebrew quotation above the scene from *Lamentations* 3:52: “They hunted me like a bird; they are my enemies without cause.” The inscription under the scene says “Lwów Poland June 1941” (Reese, 2004, pp.125–126).

Although Roggel relied on the same photograph as Helfman, her artistic approach in *The Scream—Lvov 1941*, 2008 (Figure 24, p. 69) is symbolic rather than descriptive. She portrayed a white slip reminiscent of what the woman in the photograph was wearing. Screaming skulls are scattered on the scarlet red background. A closer look reveals small hands tugging at the slip as if they are about to attack it (Brutin, interview, spring 2009).

Li Shir, a third-generation descendant of Holocaust survivors, used a photograph of an unknown woman prisoner in *The Woman Who Looks a Little Like Granny*, 2004 (Figure 27, p. 73). She found the photo in her grandfather’s commemorative *Shoah* album, alongside those of his murdered family. The unknown woman is wearing a worn-out and torn upper part of a prisoner’s striped uniform, revealing her lower body, her arm, and one of her breasts. The artist combined this multiplied photograph with her grandmother’s photograph, making a connection between them as a tribute to the endurance and heroism of all women survivors (Brutin, interview, summer 2017).

Verbal and Written Testimonies

Friedman and [Linda Stein](#) were influenced by oral testimonies they heard or read. Friedman named her two-piece installation (discussed above) *Chic Paris* (Figure 4, p. 43), based on a story she had been told as a child: After distributing prison garments to the women prisoners, the concentration camp guards made fun of how ridiculous they looked, with clothes either too big or small. The *Kapo* said “chic Paris” mockingly, and one of the prisoners understood it as *Schicken nach Paris*, thinking they were being sent to Paris.

Stein was moved by two stories told by Holocaust survivors, one female and the other male, which inspired her to create *Spoon to Shell*, 2015–2017, (Figure 30, p. 77). She used spoons based on the story of Leah, a Jewish inmate in [Birkenau](#) camp. Leah resisted the temptation of accepting a life-saving spoon from a Polish prisoner, a maintenance man

in Camp C, who wanted sex in return for the gift (Dror and Linn, 2010). Along with the spoon, Stein used the shell as a metaphor for protection, based on [Elie Wiesel's](#) *Night* (1960). Wiesel wrote that he stood still with a shell of a face next to his father, who was being brutally beaten. The meaning of these two stories, along with the images of the spoon and shell, inspired Stein to create this series of box sculptures in the context of women in the Holocaust. They convey a message of loss and victimization, together with hope and protection (Brutin, interview, March 2017).

Ghostly Empty Garments

Golan, [Dvora Morag](#), and Friedman described an empty garment with the volume of an absent body, reminiscent of the ghost of a figure that existed in the past and remained only as a tangible remnant. We saw in Golan's *Striped Garment* (Figure 6, p. 45), discussed above, the empty striped garment representative of female victims of the Holocaust who were humiliated, tortured, sexually violated, and murdered.

Friedman's *Tears of Dust*, 2016 (Figure 5, p. 43) was inspired by a story by Elsa Pollak, an Auschwitz survivor and family friend. Pollak told Friedman, then age twelve, that a Nazi concentration camp physician had injected her womb with tuberculosis germs to test whether she would later be able to conceive. This story had a strong impact on the artist when she designed the artwork. In this installation, Friedman pays respect to all the women who suffered when Nazi physicians used their bodies for so-called medical experiments. The artist hung a black fabric dress, empty of human presence, down to the floor. It represents the Jewish women prisoners in the camp who went through those horrific experiments. Light blue pillows containing the image of an embryo are attached to the dress with light blue ribbons hanging down. The unborn embryos represent the birth potential lost because of the medical experiments.

Morag, a second-generation descendant of Holocaust survivors, took a different approach in *Écorchement-Flaying*, 2009–2010 (Figure 21, p. 63). She described large-scale empty white fabric figures in three different positions of agony, harmed and suffering, to describe women's fate during the Holocaust. She stated, "These characters have become ghosts of my childhood. I am interested in the way the past intervenes with the present as a second-hand memory." For her the act of flaying represents the body as a wound (Brutin, interview, September 2016).

Depicting Sexual Violence

The definition of sexual violence during the Holocaust is broad. It includes a continuum of sexual abuses such as physical-sexual humiliation, sexual slavery, sex as a means of survival, and rape. It is one form of terror and violence against Jewish women on their way to the final solution.

In the last panel of *Double Jeopardy* (Figure 3, p. 41), Chicago placed a photograph of exhausted camp inmates, and above it is a scene of soldiers raping women prisoners. Almost at the same time, [Yocheved Weinfeld](#), a second-generation descendant of Holocaust survivors, dealt with imagery associated with the atrocities of the Holocaust. In *It's Just a Fairy Tale*, 1988 (Figure 31, p. 79), Weinfeld portrays the threats from which mothers needed to protect their innocent children.

On the right panel, there is a photograph of the artist in a rape scene, a reminder of the Nazis' rapes. In the next panel to the left, she depicted a wolf representing the Nazis: he exposes his teeth to prey on his victims and gazes toward the photograph of the rape scene. The choice of the wolf to describe the Nazis is not coincidental or naive, since the wolf is a predatory animal, portrayed in fairy tales in Western culture as sly and cruel. Moreover, for many decades the wolf symbolized the consolidation of the German nation in German culture.

In *Razor*, from the series *History, it seems for the initiated consists of just a few words*, 1989–1990 (Figure 32, p. 79), Weinfeld returned to describing herself as a Holocaust victim, using other images that are an inseparable part of her inner reservoir. The razor is connected to the word SKULL in the shaving of the camp prisoners' heads, expressed in a photograph of Weinfeld as a camp prisoner. This is a central motif in her imagery, through which she identifies with women Holocaust victims who have suffered agony, abuse, and sexual violence (Brutin, interview, September 19, 1997).

[Racheli Yosef](#), a second-generation descendant of Holocaust survivors, also refers to the suffering and humiliation of the women victims through her mother's private situation. In a series of works, she copes with fragments of information about sexual abuse that her mother experienced during the Holocaust. A year after her mother died, she created the series of prints *Homage to Mother*, 1995.

In the first work (Figure 34, p. 83), a naked woman is seen lying on the floor, her legs apart and a large bloodstain spreading around her, her hands on her side. The abdominal area is featured to hint at the potential consequences of the recent rape. On the top left is a roaring male wolf, with an erect penis—a description that transmits power, control, and aggression. Here, too, as in Weinfeld's art, the choice of the wolf to describe the Nazis is based on the image of the wolf in German culture.

The second work (Figure 35, p. 83) repeats almost the same description. However, this time the stain of blood has increased, spread, and violently covers most of the artwork. On the left side are two wolves, one under the other, with the lower wolf standing between the legs of the naked woman on the floor. On the upper right are the words, "The German shouted at her to climb high on the table and she, so it seemed to her, heard softness in his voice." Adding the two wolves increases the sense of violence and humiliation and suggests

gang rape. The inscription echoes a scene engraved in the memory of the artist since childhood. This work emphasizes the polarity between the female victim, a helpless Jewish woman, and the powerful male Nazi aggressor. In this series of her works, Yosef copes with her mother's past from the point of view of an adult woman and a mother. By "reconstructing" the act that her mother went through, she tries to understand and atone for her inconsiderate behavior as a child. However, one cannot ignore the fact that this difficult description is general. The artist chose it because the exposure of the personal story was very difficult for her, and she wanted to present a personal description in a comprehensive context (Brutin, interview, May 25, 2000).

[Gil Yefman](#), an Israeli artist who has no close family ties to the Holocaust, takes a direct approach in presenting the Third Reich's attitude toward gender and sexual violence. In *Sex Slave*, 2008 (Figure 33, p. 81), he refers to Nazi brothels, in which female concentration camp prisoners were forced to service Nazi officers and privileged male prisoners. He created a life-size crocheted doll to represent a woman who has clearly been violated. He uses this installation as performance art, personally participating in the scene and asking viewers to do likewise (Brutin, interview, November 16, 2017).

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 THE HOLOCAUST

Artist Statements and Images

Ofri Akavia

(b. 1959)

Without Words lay hidden in the bottom of a portfolio in a basement storage area for about 25 years. I painted this image of myself while looking in the mirror. The young woman (me) slowly transformed into a ghost-like figure with hollow eyes. Not a man. Not a woman. Ageless, with no identity. I wanted to make a sound but was unable to. Only the formation of the open mouth. I painted what I saw. And for one moment, I merged with the painted image. I thought I felt like the women imprisoned in concentration camps, women who experienced horrors, humiliation, and sexual violence.

I used oil pastels, which are simple and modest. The colors are muted, neutral, and lifeless. The background is busy, but ultimately conveys an empty hole or abyss. It has taken me 25 years to accept and embrace this part of myself.

With regard to *Through the Stripes*, stripes have always held meaning for me. I am attracted to their beauty, their repetition, and rhythm. On the other hand, stripes can obviously take me, as the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, to some dark places of loss of identity as a human being and a woman. The stripe motif is a common theme in many of my paintings.

When I painted this picture as a young woman, for the first time in my life I had a very short haircut. I rejected any coquettish elements. I recall that on the day I produced this work I was wearing a youthful, almost innocent black and white striped tee-shirt. When I looked at the mirror, I saw the haircut and the stripes, reminiscent of women prisoners during the Holocaust. For the painting, I intentionally chose dissonant colors—so dissonant to me that they were painful.

After completing the portrait, I felt as though I was engulfed by the stripes. I made scratches on the image. Then I cut paper stripes, covered them with black oil paint, and pressed them against the painting. When the stripes were peeled off, they left a print-like graphic. Finally, I embedded some of these print-like stripes directly into the painted figure. The stripes cover one eye that refuses to look. The other eye is permanently observing and refuses to close.



FIGURE 1. Ofri Akavia, *Through the Stripes*, 1990. Pastel and oil paint on paper, 19.5 × 21 in (50 × 53 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 2. Ofri Akavia, *Without Words*, 1990. Pastel on paper, 20.5 × 28 in (52 × 71 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Judy Chicago

(b. 1939)

Donald Woodman

(b. 1942)

More than thirty years ago, Donald Woodman and I embarked on a journey that would culminate in the major traveling exhibition, *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light*. In my extensive research for the project at that time, I was slowly making connections between different victim experiences and developing the concept of the Holocaust as a prism through which to view them. To put it a different way, I began to perceive that the unique Jewish experience of the Holocaust could be a window into an aspect of the unarticulated but universal human experience of victimization. The problem was how to express that while honoring the particularity of the Holocaust as a historical event.

Surprisingly, as I studied the subject of the Holocaust in the 1980s, I found that there was actually a considerable amount of source information about sexual abuse. It was amazing that so little attention had been paid to it by historians; and the questions asked of survivors in the oral history projects had scarcely mentioned it.

In the panels of *Double Jeopardy*, I chose to transmit the story of the Holocaust as it's generally told, using standard photographs to illustrate the "orthodox" themes: Humiliation, Ghettoization, Concentration Camps, Mass Killings, Resistance, Liberation. Then I painted in the untold story of women's experiences of those same events. The image of *Double Jeopardy* refers to the intersection of antisemitism and sexism that defined many women's experiences.

—Judy Chicago



FIGURE 3. Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman, Half-Scale Study for *Double Jeopardy* from *Holocaust Project—Studies/Ancillaries*, 1990. Sprayed acrylic, oil, and photography on photo linen fabric, 24 × 145.5 × .75 in (61 × 370 × 8 cm). ©Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman. Collection of Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.



DETAIL: RIGHT HAND PANEL

Ayana Friedman

(b. 1950)

The installation piece *Chic Paris* addresses family Holocaust stories of torture, and specifically the humiliation of women. Here, I am sitting on a swing that is a symbol of childhood. While the cut of my garment is fashionable, it is also shocking because its black and white stripes evoke the clothes worn by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps.

The scene recalls a story I was told when I was a child. After distributing prison garments to the women prisoners, the concentration camp guards made fun of them, because their clothes were ill fitting. When a female *Kapo* said “chic Paris” jeeringly, one of the women prisoners optimistically thought that she meant that they would be sent to Paris, as *shik* means “send” in German.

This two-piece installation invites the viewer to pass behind the printed comforter, as in a narrow corridor. While doing so, s/he looks at the back of the artist, as though passing behind a screen. The life-size impact of the images makes one think of the human beings who wore those striped garments, who now confront us as living evidence of the horror.

The *Tears of Dust* installation was created as a token of love and respect for all of the women who endured horrible pain and permanent bodily harm when they were used as experimental human guinea pigs by Nazi physicians.

In addition, a story that a family friend told me caused me to react by portraying a woman’s loss of her ability to give birth. Elsa Pollak, an Auschwitz survivor whom I met when I was twelve, told me that a Nazi concentration camp physician injected her womb with tuberculosis germs so he could check if she would be able to conceive afterward.

The black fabric dress, empty of human presence, hangs with its volume on the wall and rolls down to the floor. There are tiny light blue pillows attached to the dress with light blue ribbons and sliding toward the floor. Each pillow has the image of an embryo, in various positions. It is clear that the embryos are attached to a baby pillow, but they are unborn, and will remain as such.



FIGURE 4. Ayana Friedman, *Chic Paris*, 2004. Installation, photograph on fabric, approximately 91 x 94.5 in (230 x 240 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 5. Ayana Friedman, *Tears of Dust*, 2016. Mixed media Installation, 86.5 x 59 x 31.5 in (220 x 150 x 80 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Nechama Golan

(b. 1947)

My father was a Holocaust survivor who lost almost his entire family. The Holocaust was vaguely present at home during my childhood since it was an unspoken subject. I started consciously referring to the Holocaust in the 1980s when I became aware of my father's life story. I felt great empathy toward Holocaust victims' suffering and the atrocities they experienced. At the same time, I was deeply affected by the injustice of the perpetrators' cruel behavior against the Jews.

I am particularly interested in women's fate during the Holocaust, and *Striped Garment* belongs to a body of works dealing with this topic. By presenting an empty striped garment, I deal with the imprisonment, degradation, and negation of their womanhood that women experienced during the Holocaust.

The iron hook, which serves as a hanger for the garment, represents the evil and cruelty of the perpetrators. The barcode, which is an integral part of numbered consumer goods in the affluent societies of our time, stands for control and order, as well as tattooing numbers on human arms in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The footprints on the board below are my own, expressing my identification with the victims of the Holocaust.



FIGURE 6. Nechama Golan, *Striped Garment*, 1995–1996. Installation, mixed media. 60 × 31.5 in (150 × 80 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman

(1934–2002)

Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman is best known for her series of tapestries, *Images of the Holocaust*, based on photographs of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, many of them women. Her idea for these tapestries occurred during her 1973 trip to Europe with her husband. The concept for the series took many years to evolve. It started in 1979, with serious and comprehensive research in the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, as well as the YIVO Institute in New York and the Holocaust Museum and Learning Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Nezhnie collected a large variety of graphic photographic images for her project.

Nezhnie was very conscious of maintaining the accuracy of details during the design stage. She aspired to achieve a balance between revealing the hurtful descriptions and an esthetic view, attracting the viewer's attention and conveying the dignity of the individual. To emphasize the Jewishness of the characters, in most cases the artist added Hebrew passages from Jewish holy books.

In the three artworks presented in this exhibition, the artist describes scenes depicting the fate of women during the Holocaust. The two tapestries *Daughters of Auschwitz*, and *Daughters of the Earth* complement each other. In both, she shows a group of five women. In *Daughters of Auschwitz*, the women are grouped close together, while in *Daughters of the Earth* the women have their arms linked to emphasize the value of support. There is, however, a major distinction between the two representations. The women in *Daughters of Auschwitz* were photographed at their liberation, while the women in *Daughters of the Earth* were documented just before their imminent death.

In *Pogrom*, the artist highlights the fear and helplessness of a Jewish woman pursued by two young boys wearing uniforms. They are trying to catch her under the “blessing” of the Swastika above (see Reese, 2004).

—*The Exhibition Team*



FIGURE 7. Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman, *Daughters of Auschwitz*, 1979. Tapestry, 60 × 54 in (152.5 × 137 cm). Collection of the artist's estate, USA.



FIGURE 8. Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman, *Daughters of the Earth*, 1981. Tapestry, 81 × 53 in (205.5 × 134.5 cm). Collection of the artist's estate, USA.



FIGURE 9. Muriel (Nezhnie) Helfman, *Pogrom*, 1989. Tapestry, 64 × 48 in (162.5 × 122 cm). Collection of the artist's estate, USA.

Shosh Kormosh

(1948–2001)

Shosh Kormosh was born in Europe in 1948 to Polish Holocaust survivors. When she was only one year old, she immigrated to Israel with her family, and they soon settled in the Bitzaron neighborhood in Tel Aviv. The unique furniture and high-quality artifacts they carried with them from Germany, as well as the elegant clothes they meticulously wore, stood out in the drabness of their surroundings at that time. Kormosh's mother rigorously dressed her daughters in clean and neatly pressed clothes, and she braided their hair with white ribbons. The uneasiness between the "good order" that prevailed in the house and the concealed memory of the horror her mother experienced resonates in Kormosh's works.

The two works presented in the exhibition are taken from the series *Order and Cleanliness: A-*. This series, the third of four series of photographs made by Kormosh, is based on bodily images that are without a body: fabric, aprons, shirts, hair, and feathers. The unique work process and technique that Kormosh developed over her years as a photographer and an artist are prominent here. She would single out and collect photographed objects, most of which she shot and printed herself, then cut them out of their frame, rearrange them, and paste. She would then use a paintbrush to color the background with shades of black and white. Finally, she would take photographs of the small collage she created, using an enlarger to print the finished work.

The severing of hair and replication of image evoke the sense of catastrophe: the connotation of the Holocaust is evident. Braided plaits and loose hairs hover and cover the surface in a suffocating density. A silent clamor of suppressed trauma erupts from the artwork. In the piece with the combs, a hank of hair is laid in a balanced horizontal and unsettling manner. No comb could fix a bald head.

—Shaul Franco Kormosh, the artist's son



FIGURE 10. Shosh Kormosh, *Untitled (Braids)*, from the series *Order and Cleanliness: A-*, 1994–1995. Photography, silver print, 33 × 46 in (81.5 × 117 cm). Collection of the artist's estate, Israel.

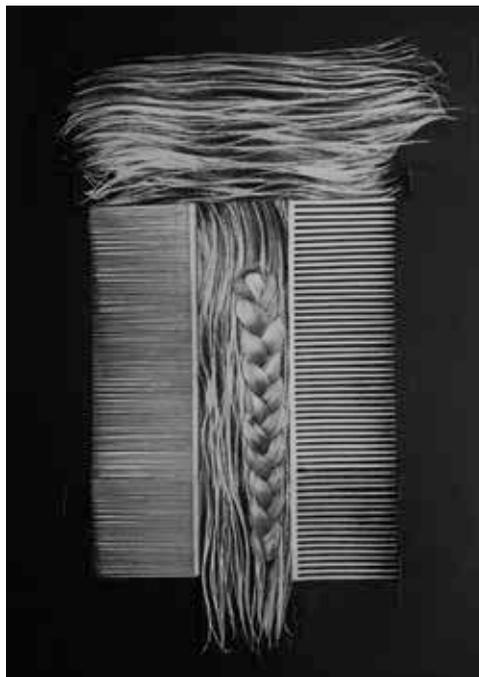


FIGURE 11. Shosh Kormosh, *Untitled (Combs)*, from the series *Order and Cleanliness: A-*, 1994–1995. Photography, silver print, 46 × 33 in (117 × 81.5 cm). Collection of the artist's estate, Israel.

Judith Weinshall Liberman

(b. 1929)

Women in the Holocaust was inspired by photographs of women forced to walk naked to a place of execution, before being shot by the *Einsatzgruppen* (Nazi mobile killing squads) in Eastern Poland in 1941–1942. The composition is designed to convey the victims' feeling of entrapment and terror, and the black-and-white tonality represents the struggle between life and death.

This painting is part of the *Holocaust Paintings*, which I created in 1987–2000. The series consists of more than three dozen acrylic paintings on stretched canvas, combining brush painting with block printing and stenciling. The artworks are based on historically accurate data. The chief impact of these artworks is achieved through their composition, including their color expression.

My interest in the subject of the Holocaust dates back to my childhood. Although I was not physically in the Holocaust, I have always felt a personal connection to this period of history. This is not only because I was born in Israel (then called Palestine) and grew up there during the Holocaust, but also because of my beloved nanny, Batya. She had immigrated to Israel from Poland shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and her parents, who had remained in Poland, were murdered by the Nazis.



FIGURE 12. Judith Weinsall Liberman, *Women in the Holocaust*, 1996. Acrylic on canvas. 40 × 30 in (101.6 × 76.2 cm). Permanent collection of Florida Holocaust Museum, St. Petersburg, FL., courtesy of Judith Weinsall Liberman.

Ella Liebermann-Shiber

(1927–1998)

Holocaust survivor Ella Liebermann-Shiber was born in Berlin. Her family relocated to Bedzin, Poland in 1938, and was later interned in the ghetto there. In August 1943, Bedzin was declared *Judenrein* (free of Jews), and her family was sent on a transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her father and brother were sent to their deaths in the gas chamber, but because of Ella's artistic talent, she and her mother were spared. She was put to work by the Nazis as a portrait artist. As Soviet forces approached the Auschwitz camp in January 1945, Ella and her mother were sent on a death march to Germany, where they were interned in Neustadt-Glewe, a subcamp of Ravensbrück women's concentration camp. They were liberated from there in May 1945.

Ella Liebermann went to Bydgoszcz, Poland, after liberation and made this drawing one month later. She married Emanuel Shiber in Poland in 1946, and the couple moved westward assisted by *Habricha*, which aided Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe to Mandatory Palestine. They sailed on the illegal immigration ship *Ben Hecht*, which the British sent from the shores of Palestine to Cyprus in March 1947. In a detention camp there, Ella was among the many artists taking part in the art courses organized by Naftali Bezem of Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy. The participants published an album, *In the Cyprus Exile* (*Be-Gerush Kafrisin* in Hebrew), with 26 linocut prints depicting daily life in the camp. After thirteen months of internment, the Shibers were released, arriving in Haifa in April 1948.

Soon after her liberation from the camps in Poland and Germany, Ella depicted in her drawings scenes from her camp experience, including *Roll Call*. Several years later she began making sketches about life and death in the camps, which became a series of 93 artworks titled *On the Edge of the Abyss* (*Chayyim al Kav ha-Ketz* in Hebrew), exhibited in the Ghetto Fighters' House museum and donated to its art collection. During 1979–1983, she studied art at the University of Haifa. Ella regarded her artistic recollections not only as documentation but also as the beginning of a rehabilitative process.

—*The Exhibition Team*



FIGURE 13. Ella Liebermann-Shiber, *Roll Call*, 1945, done one month after liberation. Colored pencils on paper, 15 × 25 in (38 × 64 cm). Collection of The Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

Boris Lurie

(1924–2008)

Holocaust survivor Boris Lurie was born in Latvia and was only sixteen when he and his family were rounded up in Riga by the Nazis and their collaborators. While he and his father survived dehumanization and near death in several concentration camps, his mother, sister, and grandmother were all murdered. This deeply affected his artistic expression. He immigrated to New York City in 1946, into a society where most Holocaust survivors suffered in silence. He began creating artworks that he considered private, and we can see in some of his early works that he is mourning his mother, sister, and grandmother. This theme continued throughout his life, while a painting of a single woman probably depicts his murdered high school girlfriend.

Lurie was never afraid to portray sexual violence and humiliation as components of the Holocaust. His *Untitled (Deliberate Pinup)* and *Untitled (Corset with Stars of David)* both reflect this aspect of his art. Lurie exhibited extensively throughout the 1950s, and in 1959, he, along with Sam Goodman and Stanley Fisher, took over leadership of the March Gallery. There they created the seminal *Vulgar, Involvement, and Doom* shows, and started a movement that would later be called NO!art. With the principle aim of bringing back into art the subjects of real life, the movement stood in opposition to the two most popular movements of the era, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. For the most part, critics and curators of the day rejected Lurie and NO!art, but he continued to produce his highly charged political and social imagery. In 1963, his now famous *Railroad Collage*, which superimposed a pinup girl in front of victims of a concentration camp, caused a major furor. His works are today shown in major galleries and museums around the world, with recent shows in Cuba, Germany, Israel, and the United States.

—*The Exhibition Team*



FIGURE 14. Boris Lurie, *Untitled (Deliberate Pinup)*, circa 1975. Collage with oil paint and paper on cardboard, 32 × 17 in (81 × 43 cm). Collection of the Boris Lurie Art Foundation, New York, NY.



FIGURE 15. Boris Lurie, *Untitled (Corset with Stars of David)*, 1982. Oil paint on corset with chains and cement, 27.5 × 15 in (70 × 38 cm). Collection of the Boris Lurie Art Foundation, New York, NY.

Haim Maor

(b. 1951)

During the years 1986–1988, I created the installation *The Face of Race and Memory*, which was exhibited in 1988 in four large gallery halls at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The triptych *Female Nude with My Mother's Face* was one of the paintings exhibited at the beginning of the first part of the installation, which was called *Prologue*. *Prologue* was the figurative development and expansion of visual images from the 1970s.

In the center of this triptych, a young nude woman can be seen with an expression of fear across her face, as she covers her private parts in shame. She represents the young image of my mother, a Holocaust survivor. The two portraits on the sides of the figure are also of my mother's face, and the three portraits together resemble the mug shots of convicts photographed by the police, as well as the way in which prisoners in Auschwitz-Birkenau were photographed.

The painting's format and the choice of old pine wood boards suggest the image of the cross, on which the ultimate (Jewish) sacrifice was crucified—Jesus. The wooden boards are also similar to burial coffins found in the ancient city of Faiyum, Egypt, dating back to the Roman Empire, which have painted portraits of the dead on their coffin covers. I used light, hinted brush strokes for aquarelle-like painted female images who seem to appear from within the wood, like ghosts from the past. They move and wander without rest, terrified by the Nazi violence wrought upon them.



FIGURE 16. Haim Maor, *Female Nude with My Mother's Face*, 1986–1987. Triptych, high-gloss paint and lacquer on wood, 79 × 59 in (200 × 150 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Naomi Markel

(b. 1955)

I am a child of Holocaust survivors. My mother experienced the horrors as a young girl in Transnistria. As a young man, my father was a prisoner in Bergen-Belsen until his liberation in 1945.

In my childhood home, there were hardly any conversations about the Holocaust, and the information I know about what my parents went through is fragmented. Dead relatives were anonymous, dead figures, ghosts. I did not know them and they are distant in time, but they are a part of me.

In the 1990s, I painted the figures of the dead as disrupted, emaciated shadows coming out of the darkness. The figures are reminiscent of *Muselmänner* (a slang term used among concentration camp inmates for those who were near death from illness or starvation). The background is hazy, with the posts and fences as indications of imprisonment in camps.

In the triptych *Target Body*, I depicted a schematic figure of a woman, referring directly to the fate of Jewish women in the camps. The numbering that appears on the prisoner figure in the three parts presents in stages the process that the female prisoners experienced. The process went from their initial loss of human dignity and private identity when they arrived at the camp to their ultimate annihilation. I emphasized three experiences: faceless figures refer to the loss of their personal identity; wearing striped uniforms signifies being stripped of female identity; and, finally I describe their horrific death in the crematorium.

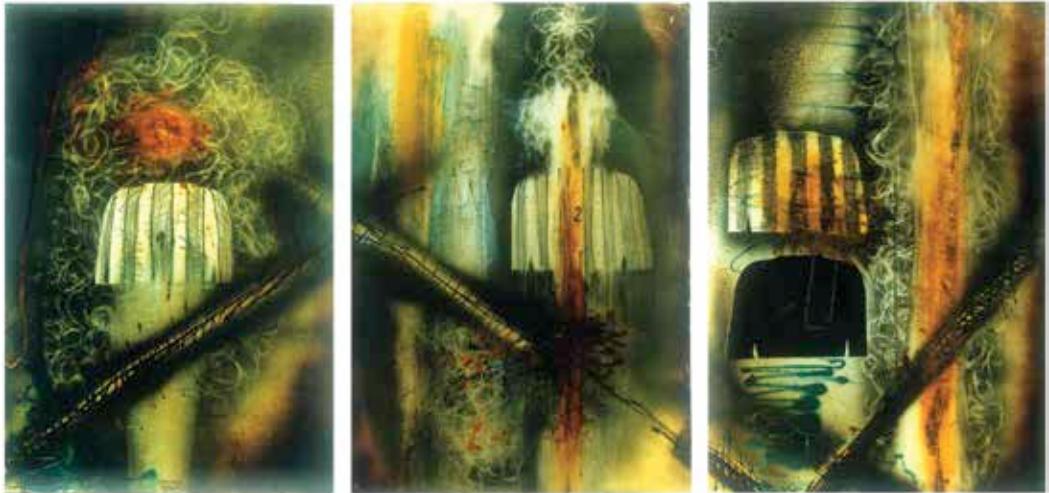


FIGURE 17. Naomi Markel, *Target Body*, 1995. Tar, glass, paint, and rubber on canvas, 39 × 27.5 in (100 × 70 cm) each part, three parts. Collection of the artist, Israel.

Anat Masad

(b. 1951)

The three parts of *Robbed Women* are about hair: a feminine symbol, an organic element with the memory of a soft touch, an image loaded with connotations of romance and desire, and at the same time, of seduction, concealment, and sin. The task of sorting, cutting, and carefully arranging it relates to the ritual act, but above all, there is an attempt to break accepted moral values. Putting elements that society represses into a sacred framework sharpens the conflict between hiding and exposing female hair, and turns weakness into power.

The hair. Historical cultural memory also turns out to be oppressive, with a heavy sense of Holocaust and death. Rough sawdust on the floor of a barbershop, picked up by a broom with no sentiment, again and again. Chopped with disdain, a waste no one wants, emptied of its initial meanings. Evidence of rejection, a sign of destruction, a memory of a violent act of annihilation. A death ceremony.

Fixed in iconic frames, the hair forces on the spectator a dark sanctity and orders a hushed silence, reminiscent of documentation and memorial rooms in death camps and Holocaust museums. However, in the center of the hairy icon, silence slowly becomes a speech that breaks every sense of solemn seriousness: "I shaved my hair from my tongue," says one. "Satisfaction you need," commands a second. "Where is the cradle of your desire?" asks the third.

These are banal and vague sentences, and we do not know who is speaking or to whom. This distances the testimony of the hair from its historical spaces into a timeless aggregate of possible "high" and "low" relationships between men and women. However, the cropped hair that surrounds the sentences leads to known death for the icons.

Hair. Surrounded by gold, black, and gray. Iconic panels conceal desire and death, inviting a disturbing experience. They ask the observer to connect through the remnants of hair between the sacred tablets and the fragments of erotic texts, formulated in the language of passionate and violent poetry, bursting through the sealed protective glass. Trapped in memorial slabs, choked and restrained, the hair remains as fragments of the past, still awaiting collection and deciphering.



FIGURE 18. Anat Masad, *I shaved my hair from my tongue*, from the series *Robbed Women*, 1996. Mixed media on wood, 16.5 x 12 in (42 x 30 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 19. Anat Masad, *Satisfaction you need*, from the series *Robbed Women*, 1996. Mixed media on wood, 16.5 x 12 in (42 x 30 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 20. Anat Masad, *Where is the cradle of your desire?* from the series *Robbed Women*, 1996. Mixed media on wood, 16.5 x 12 in (42 x 30 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Dvora Morag

(b. 1949)

Écorchement—Flaying deals with the inability to represent pain. This series is composed of large-scale fabric figures made from only one white cotton sheet. Wrapping the fabric around the body, folding, stitching, and peeling result in an emptied suspended sloughing that hovers between sculpture and drawing. No doubt, stitching is my mother tongue.

My works reveal the textile qualities of tactility, flexibility, foldability, and fragility. “Textiles remember, in part, because they are hostage to their own fragility” (Hemmings, 2012, p. 57). These characters have become ghosts of my childhood. I am interested in the way the past intervenes with the present as a second-hand memory.

The act of flaying represents the body as a wound. “Something to do with human life and all its ambiguities and all its horrors and terrors and misery...” (Benthien, 2002). It raises the important question about the body’s surface—skin—as the place where identity is formed and assigned.

I find myself continuing to deal with the issue concerning the depth of the surface: here it is the unknown, the unspeakable, that creates the depth. Space and time are intertwined by the act of sewing. The stitches are scars, which time leaves upon matter as a memory, in order to trace the action that turns “here” into “signs.”



FIGURE 21. Dvora Morag, *Écorchement—Flaying*, 2009–2010. White cotton fabric and stitching, various dimensions. Collection of the artist, Israel.

Halina Olomucki

(1919–2007)

Holocaust survivor Halina Olszewski Olomucki was born in Warsaw to a secular Jewish family, showed artistic talent from an early age, and began painting during childhood. Her father died when she was very young, and she, her mother, and older brother were interned in the Warsaw ghetto from its inception. Even under its harsh conditions, she continued to paint, recording what she observed and experienced. She was sent to work outside the ghetto and managed to smuggle her artworks out to a Polish acquaintance.

Halina and her mother were deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Majdanek, where her mother was murdered. Halina managed to escape from a selection for the gas chamber and fled to a women's barrack. There she was asked by the Block Elder to letter slogans on the walls and decorate the barrack. She was given art supplies by the camp administration, with which she also made secret drawings and paintings of her barrack mates.

Olomucki was transferred to the Birkenau camp, where, thanks to her artistic talent, she succeeded in getting somewhat better food for survival. She painted for the Germans on the camp's staff, while continuing to make her clandestine artworks. She drew *Women in Birkenau* in 1945, while still in the camp, depicting women prisoners in striped uniforms, looking emaciated and full of despair. On January 18, 1945, she was among the inmates sent on a death march to Ravensbrück women's concentration camp in Germany, from which she was transferred to the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp.

The artist returned to Warsaw after the war and married Boleslan Olomucki. She relocated to Lodz and studied in an art academy. After her liberation, during the years 1945–1947, Olomucki painted many works documenting her experiences during the Holocaust. She immigrated to Paris in 1947, and then to Israel in 1972. She donated many of her works made during the Holocaust and afterward to the art collection of the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel.

—*The Exhibition Team*



FIGURE 22. Halina Olomucki, *Women in Birkenau Camp*, drawn secretly while imprisoned, 1945. Soft pencil on transparent paper, 12.5 × 8.5 in (32 × 21.5 cm). Collection of The Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

Zeev Porath (Wilhelm Ochs)

(1909–1991)

Holocaust survivor Wilhelm “Willi” Ochs, later Zeev Porath, was born in Tarnopol, Ukraine, the son of Chaim Ochs and Bat-Zion Ochs. He studied architecture in Lvov, and under German occupation he was in the Lvov ghetto. Subsequently he was interned in the Janowska concentration camp, where the Nazis assigned him work as a draftsman. During his tasks, he could enter and exit the camp. He could also see what was happening from the window of the workshop where he worked as a slave laborer. From that window, he saw and managed to draw *Tortures*, in which he described how the Nazis undressed, tortured, and killed the Jewish women.

Porath escaped from the camp in July 1943 and fled to Romania. He met a man on the street there who sheltered him for several months. He emigrated to Mandate Palestine in the summer of 1944 via the [*Aliyah Bet*](#) clandestine immigration. His ship was apprehended by the British and he was incarcerated in the Atlit detention camp. He ultimately settled in Israel after the creation of the state, and later became the director of the Tel Aviv Municipality’s architecture department. He testified in Germany at trials of accused Nazi war criminals.

—*The Exhibition Team*

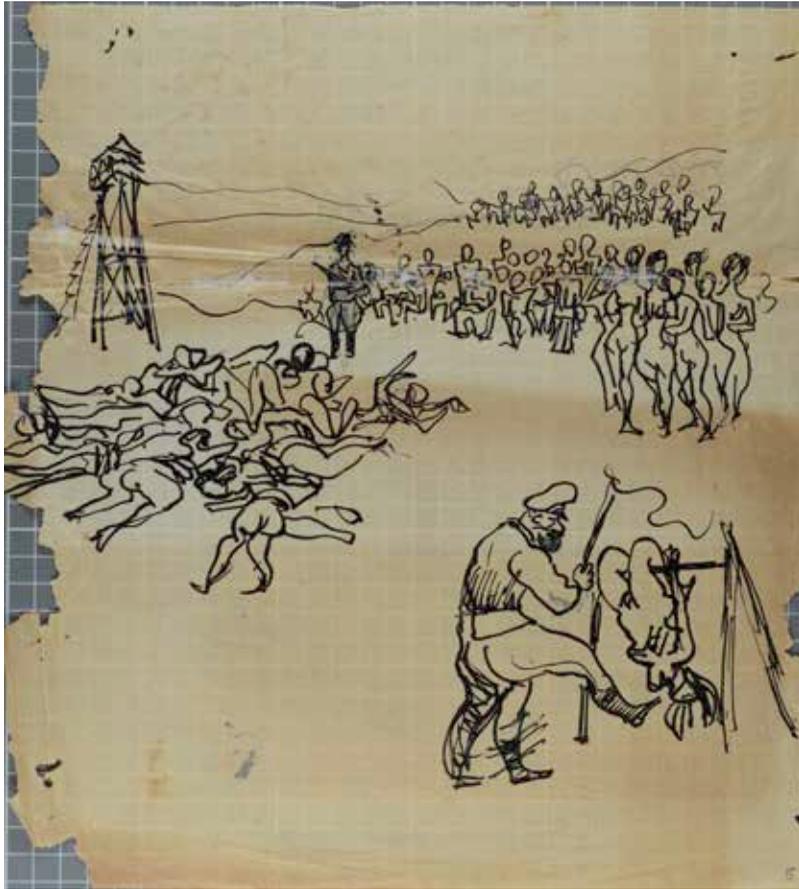


FIGURE 23. Zeev Porath (Wilhelm Ochs), *Tortures*, drawn secretly while imprisoned, circa 1942–1943. Drawing ink on paper, 15 × 13 in (33.8 × 30 cm). Collection of The Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

Rachel Roggel

(b. 1957)

At first glance, my works are decorative and inviting. But on closer examination, one discovers something like flashes of tragic memory of events that are unforgettably engraved in the collective memory of the Jewish people.

In this work, I use symbols and images to convey the feelings invoked by the photographs of women who were victims of public sexual abuse and humiliation during the pogroms in Lvov. They took place in the summer of 1941, perpetrated by the Ukrainian mob and actively encouraged by the German occupation forces.

The white feminine lingerie on the red satin surface gives the impression of a sexy adult scene on a stage. The black tulle alludes to a theater curtain and is suggestive of the crowd gathered around the women. They are watching the victims being humiliated and even deriving pleasure from the situation, as if the abuse is part of a theatrical show. A closer look reveals hands tugging at the slip.

The screaming skulls, a metaphor for the contorted faces of the women in the photographs, allude to Menashe Kadishman's installation in the Berlin Jewish Museum entitled *Fallen Leaves*. As the spectator glances from the top downward, the stitches gradually fade away until they completely disappear. These fading screaming skulls are a symbol of the increasingly forgotten cries of the victims, whose voices I can still hear.



FIGURE 24. Rachel Roggel, *The Scream—Lvov 1941*, 2008. Mixed media with lingerie, tulle, satin, buttons, and glass beads, 49 × 30 in (124 × 77 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Hana Shir

(b. 1947)

The way *Needle in the Eye* is composed recalls an altar image. The altar is comprised of two central female figures who are bare-chested, angular, and distorted. The central portraits are surrounded by smaller portraits of women created spontaneously on coarse cotton fabric. The small works are made without prior sketching, with the needle used as a pencil and the thread and line as the color. The female altar was inspired by my visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp memorial. In the Polish pavilion there are photographs of women in striped clothes. They look out at the camera so that their faces are visible to the viewer. Beneath each photograph is a caption: name, age, occupation, and number. The expressive face is terrified, severe, harsh, and serious. The eyes look forward in astonishment. They know this is a “marked” person’s photo. At an initiation ceremony in Auschwitz, adjacent to one another, hang photos: a teacher, a clerk, a housewife, a student, a pupil, and a peasant. Ages: 25,16,19,40. Names and numbers. What happened to these women looking at us from these photographs? What did they go through? What was burned in their bodies and souls? And what was engraved in the memory of those who had survived this hell?

The work *Needle in the Eye* deals with memory, in a futile attempt to understand what happened “there.” It deals with a female victim who is hurt and extinct, the female victim who reminds us with her gaze of her existence in the past and presence in the present.

The Pink Lady series of women’s portraits is embroidered on an old sheet that belonged to my mother, who experienced the inferno on her flesh. A sheet holds all the secrets of the body: the moments of love and the moments of sickness and tears. The sheet is soaked in body secretions and will end up as a shroud. The women in pink are women who hold the past but have also experienced the hand of life of the present.



FIGURE 25. Hana Shir, from the series *Needle in the Eye*, 2006–2007. Embroidery, two central pieces—27.5 × 19.5 in (70 × 50 cm) each, all the others 8 × 8 in (20 × 20 cm) each. Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 26. Hana Shir. *Pink Ladies*, from the series *Pink Lady* on her mother's old sheet, 2014. Embroidery, 27.5 × 19.5 in (70 × 50 cm) each piece. Collection of the artist, Israel.

Li Shir

(b. 1971)

The work reframes a black-and-white photo of my grandmother, Sarah Sheyer (née Josefa Bonk) at eighteen, within a repetitive woman prisoner's image I found in my grandfather's commemorative *Shoah* album, alongside photos of his murdered family. The picture of the young beauty at the center is a rare record of my granny-to-be in her previous life as Josefa, a Catholic from Łazy, Poland, before she married Grandfather Abraham and converted to Judaism. Josefa's photograph is framed by the copied images of the woman prisoner in grandpa's album. To my horror when I was an adolescent, this prisoner eerily resembled my grandmother.

For many years I believed that the prisoner was indeed my granny during her time in Nazi camps, or maybe later, in Siberia. To me, that prisoner was an image of Granny's silenced history, representing what she could hardly find the words to tell—how the Nazis shot her newlywed husband before her eyes, how she became pregnant while in a camp (raped by a guard?), and how they had taken her baby girl upon birth. That image has always filled me with horror, since I could not reconcile the sexually humiliated woman prisoner, photographed in torn striped uniform shamefully exposing her breasts and genitals, with the plump, lusciously-curved, gluttonous and giggly woman I admired and loved as Granny Sarah.

The multiple frames are intended to convey the paradox embodied by the figure of Josefa-Sarah: victim and survivor, Christian and Jew, figure of death and Great Mother. Josefa's centered smiling face is surrounded by an oval "shadow." The ghostly image of the woman prisoner, recopied by pencil onto parchment paper, creates the shape of a translucent cross around her; and these concentric layers are enclosed between two old wooden frames, echoing the Black Madonna of Częstochowa.

This iconic portrait highlights the shared fate of Josefa, Granny Sarah, and the unnamed woman who looks a little like her. It could be perceived as a trinity of womanhood, portraying different facets of women prisoners, and a tribute to the endurance and heroism of all women survivors.



FIGURE 27. Li Shir, *The Woman Who Looks a Little Like Granny*, 2004. Mixed media with pencil on parchment paper, glass, wooden frames, 19.5 × 15.5 in (50 × 40 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Nancy Spero

(1926– 2009)

The nude bound image of a woman in *Ballade von der Judenhure Marie Sanders* becomes a repeated image in *Document Trouvé*. Both works were inspired by *Ballade von der "Judenhure" Marie Sanders* (*Ballad of Marie Sanders, the Jew's Whore*), a poem written by Bertolt Brecht, circa 1935–1936. In the poem, which is inscribed by Spero as part of her *Ballade*, Marie, a non-Jew, is accused of violating the 1935 Nuremberg law, by which the Nazis forbid consensual sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews, or so-called Aryans. Part of the fourth stanza of the poem says (in German):

She was driven through the town
In her slip, round her neck a sign
Her hair all shaven
The street was yelling. She coldly stared.

Spero's husband, artist Leon Golub, had found a photograph in a magazine of a woman about to be hanged by the Nazis. The caption was "Document trouvé sur un membre de La Gestapo" (document found on a member of the Gestapo). Spero made the photograph into a printing plate and later said: "She is bound and gagged; a rope is around her neck and her whole body is bound very tightly and most brutally. One breast is forced up. She is naked apart from half stockings and shoes. Her head is bowed and averted, which means that probably the guy who took this photo watched this hanging. I had this image and I didn't know how to use it." When she later heard the Brecht poem on the radio, she put the two together (Bird, Isaak, and Lotringer, eds., 2011, p. 34).

Brecht describes Marie being sexually humiliated by her townspeople in Nazi Germany, and Spero's image adds the woman's public hanging to Brecht's words. Spero used this image and the entire poem for a wall installation of *Ballade* in an exhibition at The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, in 1993–1994, *From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists*. She used the same image for *Frieze II*, 1992, and *Masha Bruskina/Gestapo Victim*, 1994. One of the *Ballade* lithographs was exhibited at the Jewish Museum in March–August 2001 in *Voice, Image, Gestures, Selections from the Jewish Museum Collection*.

Spero said she completed a limited lithograph edition in 1991 at Solo Press based on the Brecht poem, combined with a photograph of a bound nude woman found on a Gestapo officer (Arkesteijn, ed., 2008, p. 118). One lithograph from that *Ballade* edition is part of this exhibition.

—The Exhibition Team

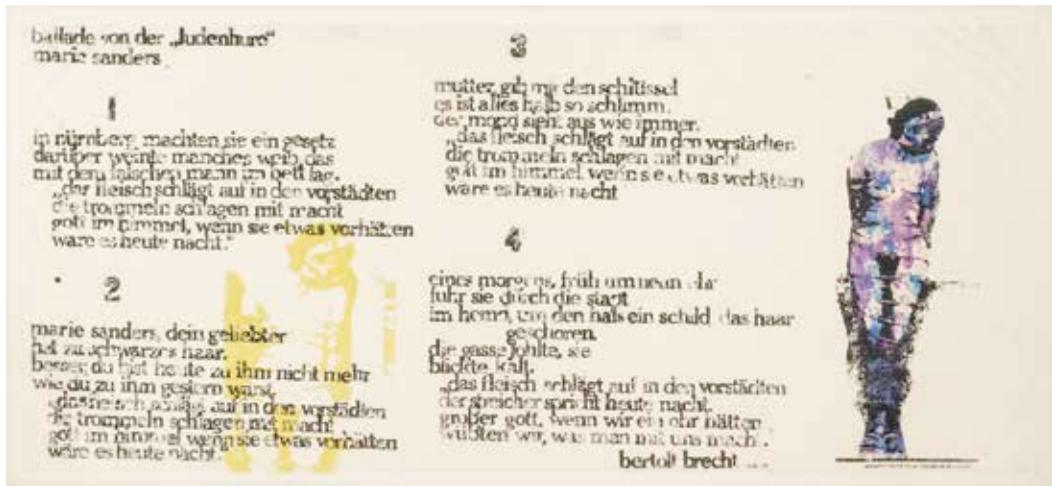


FIGURE 28. Nancy Spero, *Ballade von der „Judenhure“ Marie Sanders* (*The Ballad of Marie Sanders, The Jew's Whore*), 1991. Lithograph, 49/70, 24 × 48 in (61 × 122 cm). Art ©The Nancy Spero and Leon Golub Foundation for the Arts/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Collection of Printworks Gallery, Chicago, IL.



FIGURE 29. Nancy Spero, *Document Trouvé*, 1999. Hand printing on paper, 19.75 × 24.75 in (50 × 63 cm). Art ©The Nancy Spero and Leon Golub Foundation for the Arts/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Collection of Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, NY.

Linda Stein

(b. 1943)

The Spoon: “In Birkenau, Leah resisted the temptation of accepting a spoon from a Polish prisoner, a maintenance man in Camp C, when she understood that in return for the gift she would have to have sexual relations with him. She made this choice in spite of the fact that a spoon was literally a lifesaver in the camps. Without it, one had to drink soup from the same vessel as everyone else, risking exposure to contagious diseases such as tuberculosis.” Referring to sexual abuse, Leah said: “On that topic...I have zero knowledge. I know nothing.” But then she related the offer of a spoon in exchange for sex. When she refused and threw the spoon at the man, he simply offered it to another woman, who accepted (Dror and Linn, 2010, pp. 275–291).

I can't get Leah (and all the other Leahs) out of my head. What must it have been like to desperately want to survive with your self-respect intact? It is understandable that women like Leah did not want to revisit the shame, ostracism, rejection, and even worse, associated with sexual abuse. For me, the spoon has forever become a metaphor: a symbol of protection and nourishment, as well as an image that brings to mind the impossible choice that many women faced.

The Shell: Along with the spoon, I see the shell as another metaphor for protection: a hard protective outer covering, a mask or camouflage of true feelings.

[Elie Wiesel](#) (1928–2016) described in *Night* (Wiesel, 1960) a time in the concentration camp when he steeled himself to sit motionless, looking straight ahead with a shell of a face, while his father was being brutally beaten next to him. He knew that if he called attention to himself, he, too, would face torture or death. Mulling around these meanings and images brought forth by the spoon and shell in the context of women in the Holocaust, I found myself creating this series of box sculptures combining spoon and shell within an amalgam of mixed materials, words, and associations: memory, loss, and victimization, as well as hope, nurturance, and protection.



FIGURE 30. Linda Stein, *Spoon to Shell*, 2015–2017. Installation with mixed media, spoons, shells, fourteen boxes, 11 × 14 × 2 in each (27.94 × 35.56 × 5.08 cm), full installation 43 × 90 × 2 in (109.22 × 228.6 × 5.08 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.



DETAIL: TOP ROW, SECOND FROM RIGHT

Yocheved Weinfeld

(b. 1947)

In the 1970s I became interested in the ways images form in one's mind in early childhood, and how they change in memory and become associated with newer images as time passes. As a child of Holocaust survivors, some of my memory's earliest images sprang from the hints, whispers, and allusions surrounding me. Some were rudimentary, almost abstract, but others were representational, somewhat mythical and scary. I wanted to make these mental images perceivable, putting them together to give complex "invented" and "real" memories a concrete form.

It's Just a Fairy Tale is one of five works in a series created in 1988, which explores the futility of mothers' soothing clichés vis-à-vis their inability to protect their children. Each work centers around a copy of a different *Madonna and Child*, the iconic representation of motherhood in Western art. There are images of imagined threats on one hand and images of childish innocence on the other. This particular work references the threat associated with the atrocities of the Holocaust.

History, it seems for the initiated consists of just a few words: Razor is one of five works in a series created in 1990. Each work is based on a personal list of words taken from those used in conversations about historical events, and each list ends with the word "war." The images in the work *Razor* connect my actual early childhood memories with Holocaust images "invented" in my early childhood.



FIGURE 31. Yocheved Weinfeld, *It's Just a Fairy Tale*, 1988. Mixed media, 35 × 86.5 in (89 × 220 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.



FIGURE 32. Yocheved Weinfeld, *Razor*, from the series *History, it seems for the initiated consists of just a few words*, 1989–1990. Mixed media 38 × 46 in (96.5 × 117 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.

Gil Yefman

(b. 1979)

By deconstructing and transforming canonized familiar myths from varied beliefs and traditions, and by creating fantastic realms where characters with elusive gender, sexual, and political identities serve as alternative cultural heroes, I try to challenge and undermine the structured definitions and portrayals of the “other.” My purpose is to explore and cherish the intrinsic potential of the extraordinary. Through a manifold spectrum of practices and media, and with a prevalent predilection for the craftswomanship of knitting and crocheting, I indulge in the therapeutic virtues of these activities as means for dwelling on personal and collective traumas, as well as for reflecting upon recurrent obsessive patterns in humankind’s societies.

The act of knitting and crocheting resembles that of writing: long, rapid, carefully calculated, and monotonous movements, a collection of syllables that create a narrative, the object. The texts and contexts become textures that suggest an alternative examination, reflection, and interpretation, rather than dogmatic translations.

My *Sex Slave* reflects on the absurd world of Nazi brothels, in which female concentration camp prisoners were forced to service Nazi officers and privileged male prisoners. When I enter my sculpture for performance art, I personally participate in this reflection and also ask viewers to show their courage and do likewise.



FIGURE 33. Gil Yefman, *Sex Slave*, 2008. Installation, mixed media, crocheted yarn, mattress, bed frame, toilette mirror, chair, various dimensions. Collection of the artist, Israel, and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, NY.

Racheli Yosef

(b. 1953)

“There was a woman who had a private wolf of her own. Since she was ejected from the closed car, it deceived her and laughed to itself with a long, long wail. And she returned him a horrible terrible howl. I, her child, heard.”

My mother was beautiful, with blue eyes and a yellow braid down her back. A woman who was aware of her beauty, always carefully made up, dressed in European elegance, aware of the stares and silent. She did not speak, and I did not ask. I was afraid. I kept away from her as much as I could. After a lifetime of emotional numbness and repression, my mother passed away and her secrets disappeared with her. As she went, I felt emotions that I could not bear. With her death, the howls became paintings.

A male wolf, pregnant woman, and red color are three recurring images in my works. They seemed to be there before I started drawing. At that time, I experienced in a way I cannot explain that my silent mother implanted within me and unconsciously passed on to me these three ancient archetypes. In the process of creation, she spoke to me in primordial images based on memories she could not speak while she was alive. Dichotomous connections vary between images: destructive aggression versus protection and support; terrible abuse versus silent admiration; vitality, enthusiasm, and power as opposed to cruel control. Out of the conflicts, her voice was heard, and I began to feel Mother.



FIGURE 34. Racheli Yosef, *Homage to Mother (One)*, 1995. Print, 27.5 × 39 in (70 × 100 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

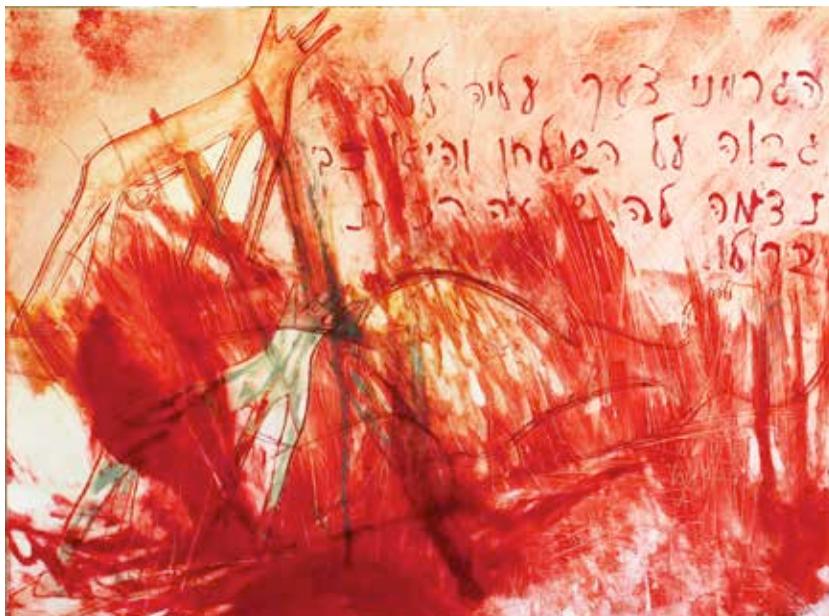


FIGURE 35. Racheli Yosef, *Homage to Mother (Two)*, 1995. Print, 27.5 × 39 in (70 × 100 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

Dvora (Veg) Zelichov

(b. 1953)

The subject matter in all three of these paintings is similar to many of my other works: the woman. The woman is my mother, Lena Greenfeld (b. 1924), robust yet fragile, a persistent survivor, aggressive yet gentle and motherly. The painting *Two Sisters* describes the strong physical and emotional bond between the two, and emphasizes the emaciated figures in warm monochromatic colors.

The painting *Engraved in Blood* focuses on two main motives in my paintings: One is my mother's resilience, which is described by a large and strong hand, despite the terror emanating from the open eye. The other is an emphasis on the Nazi concentration camp number tattooed on her arm—A-17583.

In the painting *Wallowing in Your Blood*, my mother, like many other women, was exposed to abuse and cruelty by men and women alike. The painting describes the woman wallowing in vaginal blood after a Nazi *Kapo* kicked my mother in the stomach. The figures in the painting symbolize physical suffering and mental anguish, with the bleeding woman in the center of the painting symbolizing femininity—bleeding from the womb.

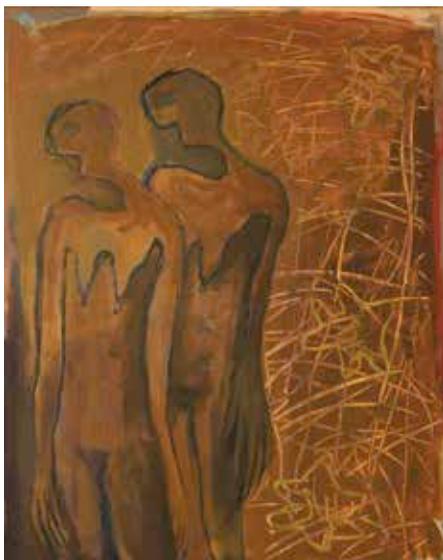


FIGURE 36. Dvora (Veg) Zelichov, *Two Sisters*, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 39.5 × 31.5 in (100 × 80 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.



FIGURE 37. Dvora (Veg) Zelichov, *Engraved in Blood*, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 27.5 × 39 in (70 × 100 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

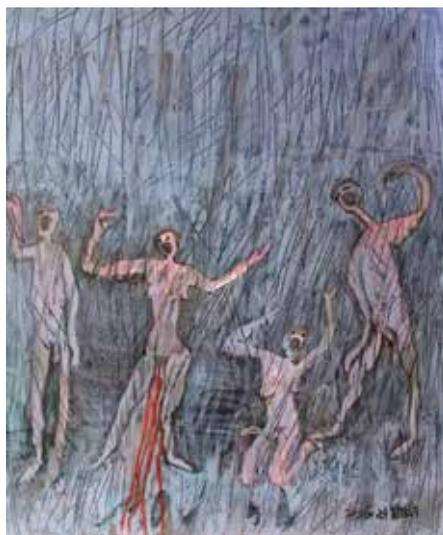


FIGURE 38. Dvora (Veg) Zelichov, *Wallowing in your Blood*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas, 23.5 × 19 in (60 × 50 cm). Collection of the artist, Israel.

From the Holocaust to Later Genocides

[Recognizing Sexual Violence as an International Crime](#)

1945–1946

After the Holocaust, the [Nuremberg trials](#) against Nazi war criminals did not prosecute sexual violence as a crime.

1948

The [UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), enacted in the aftermath of the Holocaust, did not explicitly include sexual violence among its definitions of genocidal crimes.

1992

The UN Security Council declared the “massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women” in Bosnia and Herzegovina an international crime that must be addressed.

1993

The [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#) (ICTY) was created by the UN Security Council, with rape included as a crime against humanity.

1994

The [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda](#) (ICTR) was created by the UN Security Council, with rape included as a crime against humanity.

1998

The ICTR found an accused person guilty of rape as a crime of genocide, deeming rape and sexual assault acts of genocide that were committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Tutsi ethnic group.

2001

The ICTY found an accused person guilty of rape as a crime of genocide and a crime against humanity, and also stated that sexual slavery, like slavery in general, is a crime against humanity.

2002

[The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#) included rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or “any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” as a crime against humanity.

2016

[The International Criminal Court](#) issued its first conviction for rape as a war crime, in the case against the former vice president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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.

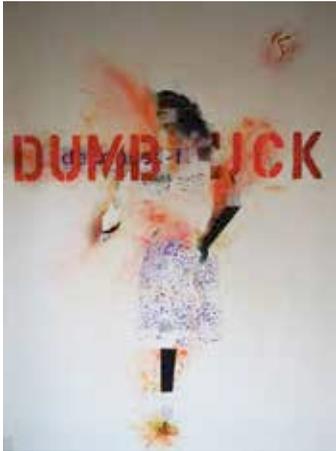


FIGURE 42. Mary Mihelic, *Dumbluck*, from *The Running Girls* series, 2014. Mixed media on paper, 64 × 48 in (162.5 × 122 cm). Collection of the artist, USA.



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.

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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