Palm Beach Daily News

LIFESTYLE

Artist Barry Salzman's tranquil landscapes invite reflection on genocides preceding them

Jan Sjostrom Special to the Palm Beach Daily News

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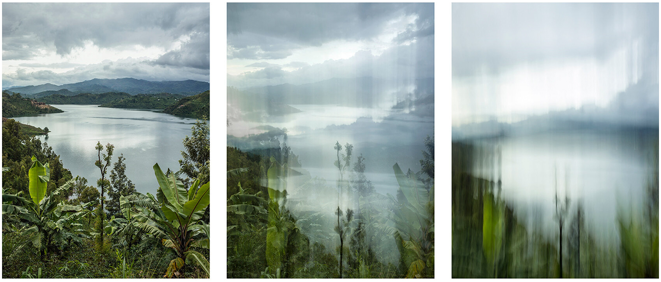
A Past Revealed and Concealed, Vyshnivka, Ukraine portrays one of the sites where some of the first mass victims of the Holocaust were executed during World War II. Photo by Barry Salzman. Executed in 2015

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

Poppies float in golden light in a double view of a meadow stretching to distant mountains. A tranquil lake rimmed by tropical vegetation and hills blurs into a mere whiff of a landscape over the course of three images.

At first glance the photographs in "Barry Salzman – How We See the World" seem like a celebration of nature. But the exhibition, which opens Feb. 24 at Holden Luntz Gallery, is more than that. The show, the artist's first in the United States, features 18 images of sites where genocides occurred during the 20th century.

The serene lakeshore was one of the places in Rwanda where in 1994 approximately 1 million people, mostly Tutsis, were slaughtered by Hutu neighbors and soldiers in just 100 days.



The triptych A Ravaged Land Healing, I-III, Karongi, Rwanda is an example of how Barry Salzman uses photography to represent the veils people use to shield themselves from the brutal reality of genocide. Photo by Barry Salzman. Executed in 2018

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

The field of poppies was photographed near Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where as many as 8,000 Muslim men and boys were executed by Bosnian Serb forces during a ruthless ethnic cleansing campaign in 1995.

Sites in Namibia, Poland and Ukraine also are displayed in the show.

Salzman's abstract landscapes are a seductive invitation to viewers to ponder why humanity continues to commit genocide. The question has dominated his work for the past 10 years.

Despite the many genocides that have stained the 20th century "there is no history of any Western government interceding in time to stop a genocide," he said.

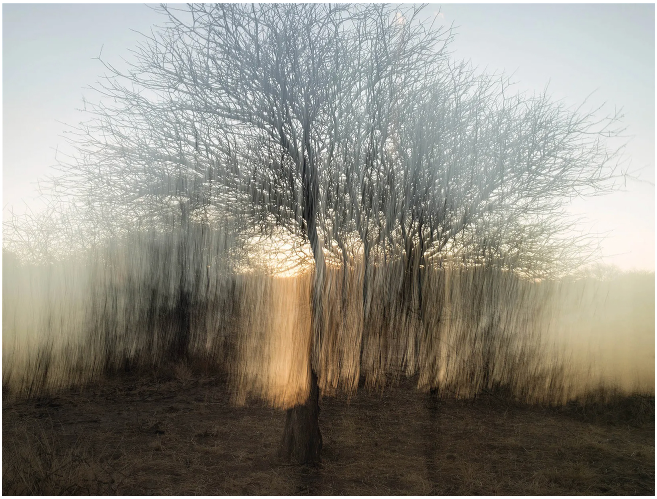
Salzman, who was born in Zimbabwe and educated in South Africa, grew up in a family scarred by the Holocaust. He became a professional photographer after a career in business. Now 61, he divides his time between New York City and Cape Town.

Portrait of Barry Salzman Barry Salzman's exhibition will be on view Feb. 24-March 23 at Holden Luntz Gallery.

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

A 2013 project inspired by his maternal heritage determined the course of his career. In 1944, the Nazis shipped 1,673 Sephardic Jews from Rhodes, an island in the Aegean Sea where their families had lived for generations, to Auschwitz. Fewer than 10% survived until the camp was liberated six months later.

"I realized in the deep, personal conversations I had with the survivors and their families that we will never understand what a victim of genocide endures, but I decided to spend the rest of my life trying," he said.



"In the Eye of the Beholder," (2020) taken in Ongandjera, Namibia, by Barry Salzman.

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

Factual accounts and documentary photography aren't enough to move people with no personal connection to genocides to act to stop them, he argues.

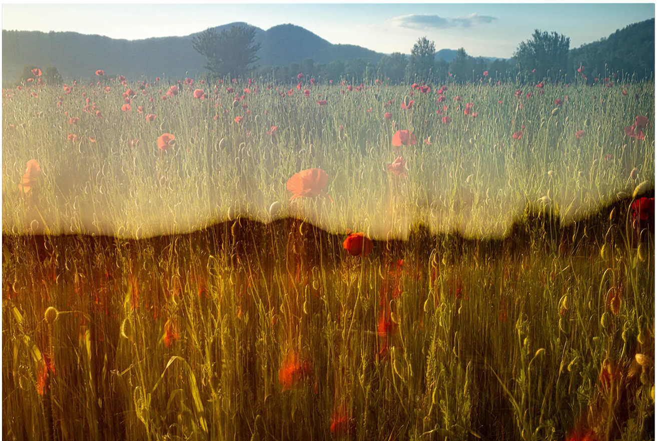
"I think there are a lot of veils through which we view uncomfortable history," he said.

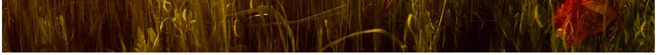
He represents these veils in his photographs by moving the camera during a single long exposure, which leaves some parts of the image sharp and drags other details, such as highlights from the sky, over the rest of the picture.

Instead of focusing on brutal facts, Salzman creates aesthetic images that appeal to viewers and leave room for interpretation and personal associations.

"If I can do a good job of getting these pictures into people's homes, it opens up a conversation," the artist said. "That's the way we address the problem, by having direct, open conversations."

As gallery owner Holden Luntz said "photographs are only memorable if you can establish a connection with them."





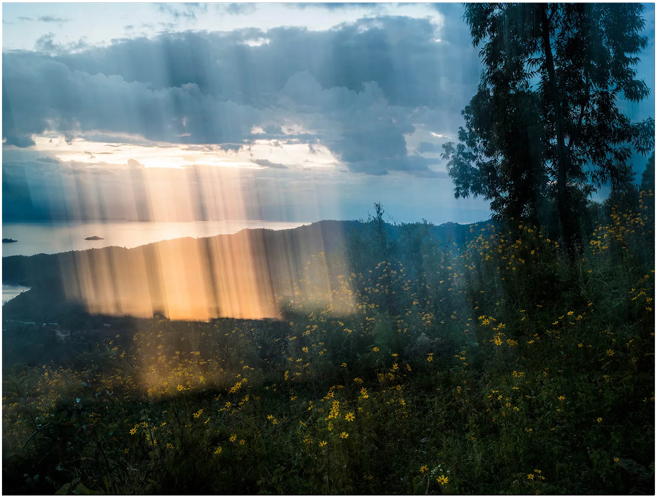
The image That Evening The Sun Set In The West, Bratunac (Near Srebrenica), Bosnia and Herzegovina will be exhibited in his show Barry Salzman: How We See the World at Holden Luntz Gallery. Photo by Barry Salzman. Executed in 2018

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

In the exhibition the landscape is a metaphor for humanity's relationship to genocide. It witnesses but does not act. In time, it rebounds and obscures all traces of the atrocities.

But the land's rebirth also holds out hope that humanity might conquer the dark impulse that goads one group of people to expunge another.

There's a reason why the scenes in Salzman's photographs aren't readily identifiable as specific locations. He wants to underscore a sobering possibility: This place could be any place, even the place you call home.



What Was and Will Be, Rutsiro District, Rwanda offers a symbolic ray of hope that humanity can transcend its history of genocides.Photo by Barry Salzman. Executed in 2018

Photo by Barry Salzman, Photo by Barry Salzman

If You Go

What: 'Barry Salzman – How We See the World'

When: Feb. 24-March 23

Where: Holden Luntz Gallery, 332 Worth Ave.

For information: Call 561-805-9550 or visit www.holdenluntz.com

PHOTOS: Barry Salzman exhibition at Holden Luntz Gallery in Palm Beach

Barry Salzman's exhibition will be on view February 24-March 23 at Holden Luntz Gallery