

THE LANDSCAPE OF OUR MEMORY

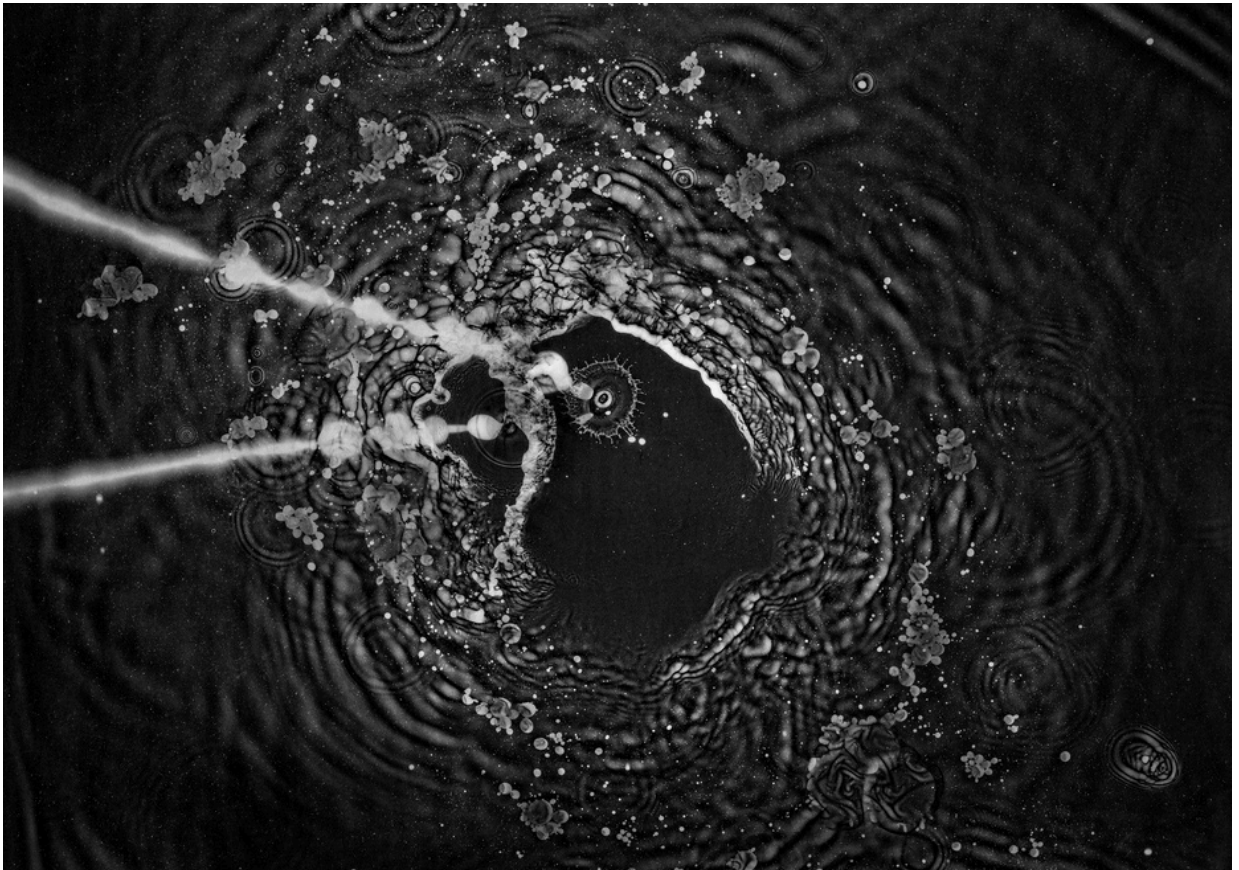
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY & RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



GABRIELA BULISOVA & MARK ISAAC

THE LANDSCAPE OF OUR MEMORY

GABRIELA BULISOVA & MARK ISAAC



CURATED BY RYANN CASEY & SYDNEY O. JENKINS
WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY DR. JACOB ARI LABENDZ
AND IRVIN O. MORENO-RODRIGUEZ

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY | SEPT 16 - DEC 04, 2026
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An Introduction

"... Cursed be the ground because of you; By toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life... until you return to the ground—for from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

– Genesis 3:17-19

"What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground! Therefore, you shall be more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. You shall become a ceaseless wanderer on earth."

– Genesis 4:10-12

The Landscape of our Memory questions the artificial separation of blood and soil. So too do the Edenic allegories, which open in divine harmony. We meet the earth as the material source of human life and the physical locus of its oblivion. The first humans—the parents of us all—achieve discernment, against their creator's will. Humanity thus learns to distinguish (and therefore must choose) between good and evil, and between the necessity of life and inevitability of death. No longer in balance with nature, much less each other, we sweat against the land, suffer for new life, and fear for our earthen bodies. Moral and existential distress leads Cain, the first human child, to murder his younger sibling. The latter's blood—his lifeforce, in biblical terms—calls to the heavens from the very earth into which it should have naturally returned. Human hands rent the vestiges of prelapsarian harmony, and so we carry the curse of alienation from the earth and each other.

One by one, the Nazis and their collaborators shot to death over two-million Jews and members of other targeted minorities, notably Roma, as they built an empire of blood and soil across Eastern Europe. They sought to resolve existential fear by rendering humanity into distinct races arranged along a hierarchy of moral worth. The intimacy of these murders scarred the earth, like the mass graves they left behind. Generations later, they reveal Cain's lasting mark upon us.

With *The Landscape of our Memory*, Gabriela Bulišová and Mark Isaac offer stunning glimpses of reharmonization. They help us sense the blood that still calls out from the killing fields of the Holocaust, flows through nearby rivers, and whistles among trees that witness but cannot see. Anthotype victim portraits, created with flora from sites of

mass murder, reterritorialize the dead and imbue earthen materials with lives cut short. Through the artists' edenic lens, genocide and ecocide appear almost indistinguishable. *The Landscape of our Memory* points to the fundamental wholeness of our world and humanity, at a moment of profound rupture—a reminder of the responsibility we collectively assumed when we endeavored, in our imperfection, to tell good from evil.

The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Ramapo College of New Jersey (CHGS) is committed to helping its students, patrons, and the public approach humanity's greatest horrors through the arts. As the preeminent Holocaust scholar and survivor Yehuda Bauer (1926-2024) indicated in *Rethinking the Holocaust*, a handful of academic disciplines cannot fully satisfy our need to understand and work through the Holocaust (along with other genocides and mass atrocities). We also depend, he explains, upon the vision of the artist, the wisdom of the philosopher, and the care of the therapist. It is an honor to have worked with so many talented organizations and individuals to bring this exhibit to life. On behalf of CHGS, I would like to thank Gabriela Bulířová and Mark Isaac for their kindness, generosity, and cooperation, not to mention their artistry. We are grateful to Sydney Jenkins, Robert Modafferi, and the Ramapo College Galleries. CHGS also owes special thanks to Irvin O. Moreno-Rodriguez and our colleagues at the Sara & Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center at Stockton University and the Stockton University Gallery.

Dr. Jacob Ari Labendz (he/him)

Director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Ramapo College of New Jersey

An Act of Defiance

There are places in our world where history does not rest quietly. The earth remembers. Beneath forest beds, meadows, underneath trees, and flowing rivers lie the unmarked graves or ashes of countless victims of Nazi persecution and their collaborators. For decades, these landscapes have carried the burden of holding within them remnants of names, dreams, and futures that were stolen and cut short.

There is a saying that we die twice: first when our physical bodies cease to exist, and again when our names are spoken for the last time. The tragedy of genocide is not only the destruction of life, but the attempt to erase the memory of the crime itself. Yet *The Landscape of our Memory* stands as an act of defiance against that forgetting. Through their extraordinary work, Bulišová and Isaac return us to these sacred landscapes and invite us to remember.

What the exhibit reveals is astonishing. The ground is no longer simply soil. It becomes an archive. The trees become witnesses. The leaves and the water become messengers, carrying fragments of memory from one generation to the next. In places where human beings sought only destruction, nature has continued its quiet work of renewal. Roots stretch into the same earth that received the dead. Branches reach toward the sky. Life persists. And yet this exhibition does not allow us the comfort of believing that nature has erased the crimes of the Holocaust. Rather, it asks us to see how memory and life coexist.

The landscape bears the wound, but it also bears witness to resilience. That, perhaps, is what makes this work so deeply moving. The artists have transformed sites of unspeakable loss into artwork of reflection and encounter. They remind us that remembrance is not a static act. It is alive. It breathes. It grows.

At the same time, this work challenges us to think about our relationship with the natural world. The artists remind us that the violence we inflict upon one another and the damage we inflict upon our planet often arise from the same failures of empathy, responsibility, and stewardship. In this way, *The Landscape of our Memory* opens a conversation not only about genocide and remembrance, but also about climate change, environmental responsibility, and the fragile interconnectedness of all life.

It is a profound privilege to welcome *The Landscape of our Memory* exhibit by Gabriela Bulišová and Mark Isaac to Ramapo College and Stockton University. There are countless lessons to be drawn from this exhibit, but perhaps the most important is the recognition that memory is not confined to books, monuments, or museums. It rustles through leaves, lingers in the soil, and speaks through the waters that remain.

Every victim has a name, and a face. By restoring humanity to the two million Jews murdered in what is known as the "Holocaust by Bullets," we refuse to let them be reduced to numbers and deny the perpetrators their final victory.

Even in landscapes marked by unspeakable tragedy, seeds continue to bloom, trees remain steadfast witnesses, and life emerges anew from the soil. It is a poignant reminder that both nature and humanity possess a profound capacity for resilience.

Irvin O. Moreno-Rodriguez
Director of the Sara & Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center
at Stockton University

A Curator's Vantage Point

When endeavoring to write on art about the Holocaust, there are names that loom in relation to experiencing art. One of the most referenced is philosopher Theodor Adorno, and his frequently misinterpreted critique about how impossible (or barbaric) it is to engage in cultural dialogue - such as writing poetry - after the Holocaust... a perspective later elaborated upon, and revised. Other well-known critical figures such as Susan Sontag have weighed in with views that have been applied to Holocaust images, using the innate characteristics of photography.

Landscape vistas and ideas have been melded by artists for hundreds of years. More recently, numerous artists, curators, and scholars have pioneered political readings of classical and traditional-looking landscape imagery. What can landscape “do” to convey other meanings in contemporary art? The term “political landscape” seems grossly inadequate when attempting to classify this art, and to point to the horrors behind images in *The Landscape of our Memory*.

The Prague artists Gabriela Bulišová and Mark Isaac are among the most thoughtful artists I have ever worked with. They introduced me to fresh areas of artistic and scholarly exploration that I was only vaguely aware of, in particular connecting genocide and ecocide. Speaking in the curatorial sense, I am so awed by their art that I have difficulty finding the right words to describe it. I strain for adjectives to frame the keenness of their haunting work, which is somehow mysterious and clear at the same time. Whether the imagery consists of a tree, water abstractions, or a Holocaust victim's face, the metaphorical palimpsests in their art are profoundly moving.

Interpretive material has been developed to accompany this austere installation of *The Landscape of our Memory*. I usually prefer to let the words of the artist prevail, and the publication and the wall text rely, in part, on articulate descriptions provided by the artists. The first version of this exhibition appears at Ramapo College, and then a larger iteration will be presented by co-curator Ryann Casey at the Stockton University Art Gallery.

Sydney O. Jenkins

Director of the Art Galleries, Ramapo College of New Jersey

THE LANDSCAPE OF OUR MEMORY

GABRIELA BULISOVA & MARK ISAAC

The Landscape of our Memory

The Landscape of our Memory is a long-term artistic project created by Gabriela Bulišová and Mark Isaac that addresses the “dispersed Holocaust” or “Holocaust by Bullets” by commemorating individuals who were killed in or near their hometowns rather than in concentration camps. Initial work was created under the auspices of two Fulbright Scholar grants in Poland, but the project now includes commemorations of those who lost their lives at the Terezín ghetto in the Czech Republic and mass killing sites in Ukraine.

Despite the widespread impression that the Holocaust was defined primarily by major concentration camps like Auschwitz, more than half of the Jewish victims died outside of these killing centers. Along with Jews, there were many other victims, including Ukrainians, Poles, Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, gays, and others. Sites of mass murder perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators are still being located today. Those that have already been discovered are often not memorialized or are poorly memorialized, and the tragic events have not been historically and culturally processed.

The project uses multiple artistic strategies, all of which draw directly on the landscape of the dispersed Holocaust, conveying an important environmental sensibility. By beginning a dialogue about the relationship of genocide and ecocide, the project also makes clear the contemporary relevance of this tragedy.

We need to do everything to tear unknown victims from mass graves in contaminated landscapes and from oblivion, and to restore their names, faces and stories.

– Martin Pollack

The centerpiece of the project consists of “anthotype” portraits of individuals murdered during the dispersed Holocaust. To produce these images, the artists gathered plants and flowers growing at mass graves, made photosensitive emulsions, and exposed them in the sun to create loving tributes to some of those who lost their lives. Because the plants are gathered from the mass grave site where the individual’s

body still lies, the final photograph may contain, at the molecular level, something of his or her remains. These portraits help restore each person's humanity and avoid consigning them to the status of faceless statistics.

To memorialize those for whom no name or photograph exists, the artists turned to "witness trees," which were already standing at the sites of atrocities, and "living memorial trees," which grew later. Both kinds of trees are known by scientists and scholars to contain human remains. Using a World War II-era analog camera, they created collaged, black-and-white silhouettes of witness trees. In addition, they made recordings of the interior sounds of these trees, which may be interpreted as a kind of testimony about the tragic events that occurred there.

Nature becomes representation...in the sense of making the victims present. Nature is a faithful companion and suffering's most intimate witness.

- Professor Roma Sendyka

The artists also relied on several other strategies that translate the traces of atrocities into a language we can understand. After gathering water from rivers where the ashes of victims were dumped, the artists used the "watergram" technique, which captures water in motion in the analog darkroom, to commemorate those who were murdered. They also employed the "lumen print" process, in which organic material is placed on photosensitive paper and exposed in the sun, to create abstract images that demonstrate the uniqueness of every individual lost in the Holocaust.

Finally, a video and sound installation (on view at Stockton University only) offers an intimate experience of places where unthinkable violence occurred. The installation combines matter-of-fact text descriptions of mass killing sites with recordings of what it sounds like to stand in those places today. This calls attention not only to the huge number of killing sites, but also to the everyday activities that now occur in and around them.

Photography is the inventory of mortality... Photographs state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward destruction, and this link between photography and death haunts all photographs...

- Susan Sontag

All of the diverse techniques draw directly on the landscape of the dispersed Holocaust, a strategy that acknowledges the growing scholarly consensus that genocide and ecocide are closely related. Recognizing these connections will better prepare us to avoid future genocides and ecocides, including the possible extinction of the human race as a result of the climate crisis.

For more on the project, please scan the QR code.



ANTHOTYPE PORTRAITS

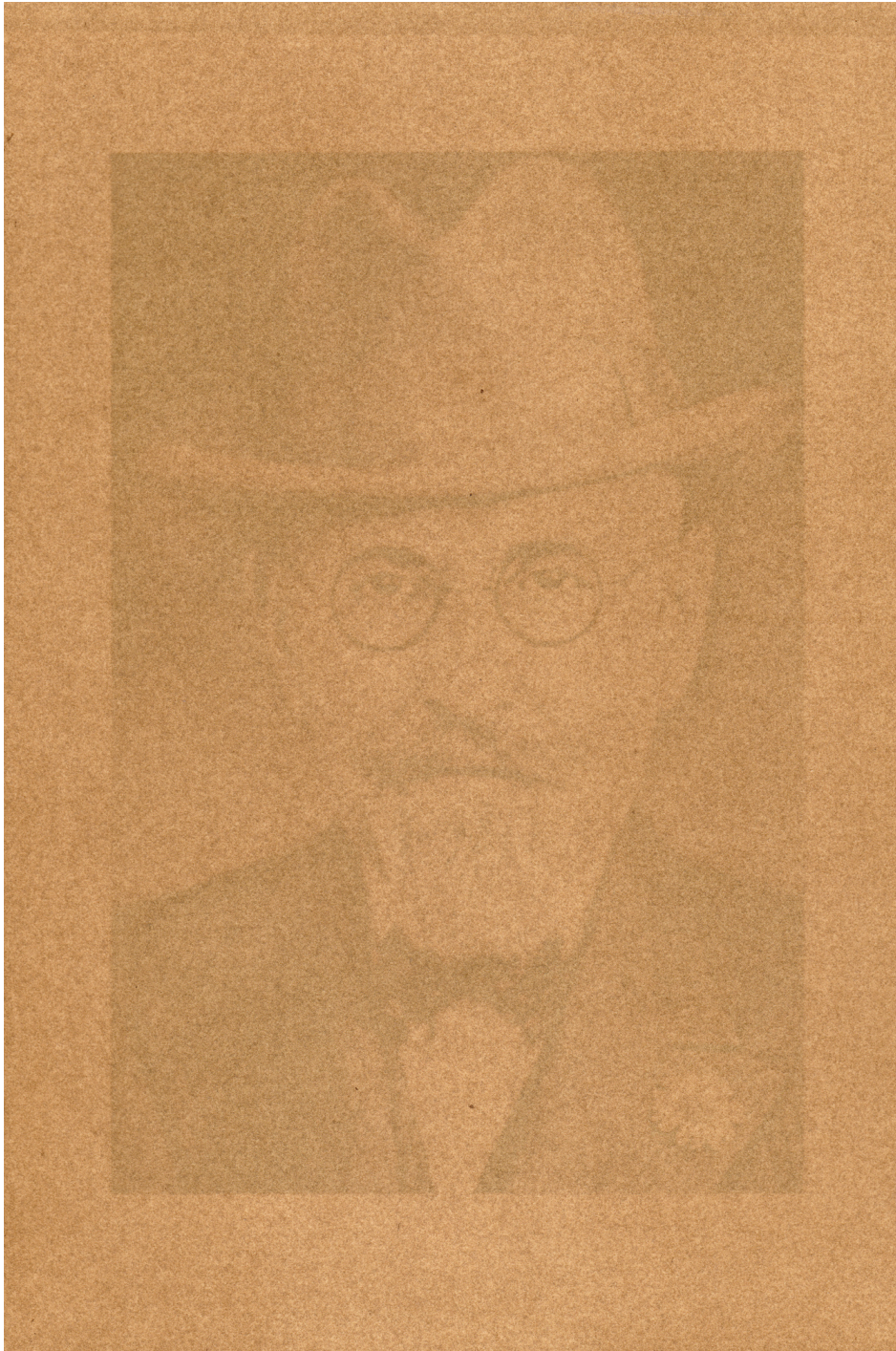
The artists created commemorative portraits of individuals murdered during the dispersed Holocaust using the antique “anthotype” technique, discovered in the 1840s, in which photographs are created from plant material. Leaves and flowers found at mass killing sites are blended to create an emulsion that is then painted onto art paper. A positive image, identified through painstaking archival research, is improved using cutting edge AI-assisted tools. It is then printed on acetate (plastic), placed on top of the emulsion, and exposed in the sun. Depending on the specific plant, exposures are completed in minutes, days, or even weeks or months.

Because the plant material is gathered from the mass grave sites where the bodies of the murdered individuals lie, the final photograph may contain, at the molecular level, something of his or her remains. The physical trace of these individuals restores their humanity and avoids consigning them to the status of faceless statistics. The prints, which do not contain sharp detail like contemporary photographs, exist in a liminal space, somewhere between being and non-being. If exposed to continued UV light, they will begin to fade away, much like human memory.

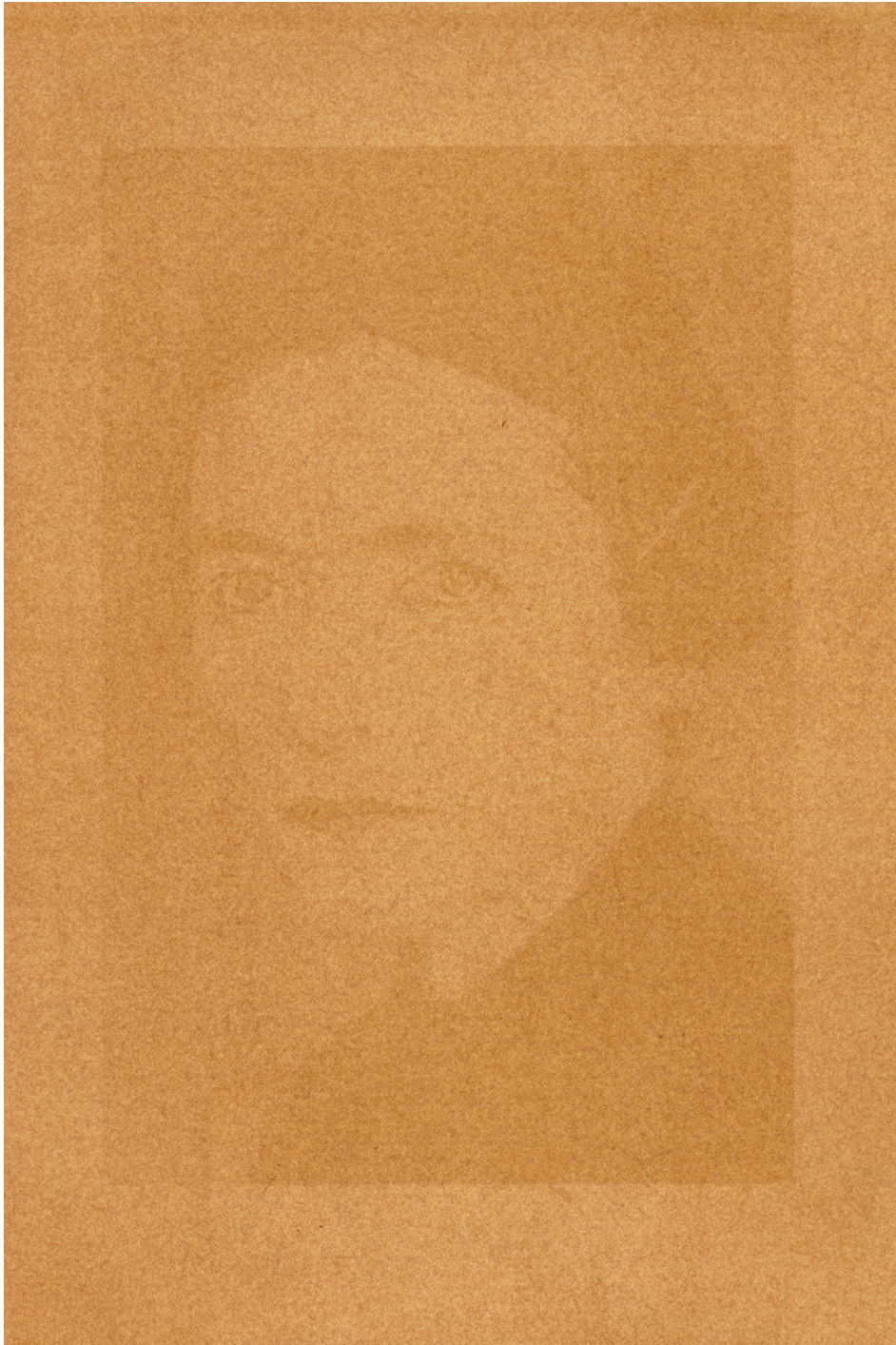
Anthotype printing is a 100 percent sustainable photographic practice that doesn't use any harmful chemicals.



Portrait of Dvora and Hershel Leipzig. Dvora, born in 1902, was murdered in Mielec, Poland in 1940. Hershel, born in 1895, was murdered in 1944. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Greater Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*), 2023.



*Portrait of Gustav Weissenstein, merchant, born on February 2, 1865, lived in Prague, Czech Republic, died at Terezín on April 19, 1943. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), 2025.*



Portrait of Františka Wienerová, small business owner, born on February 26, 1891, lived in Prague, Czech Republic, died at Terezín on April 24, 1942. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Red Clover flowers (*Trifolium pratense*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), and Common Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), 2025.



*Portrait of Avraham Zielicki, born in 1921, murdered in Białystok, Poland in June 1941. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Siberian Peashrub (*Caragana arborescens*) flowers, 2023.*



*Portrait of Walter Schablin, businessman and entrepreneur, born on May 7, 1899, lived in Prague, Czech Republic, died at Terezín on February 29, 1944. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Woolly Burdock (*Arctium tomentosum*), 2025.*



*Portrait of Mira Fuchrer, born in 1920, active in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, was murdered on May 8th, 1943, at the Mila 18 bunker in Warsaw, Poland. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and Black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) leaves, 2023.*

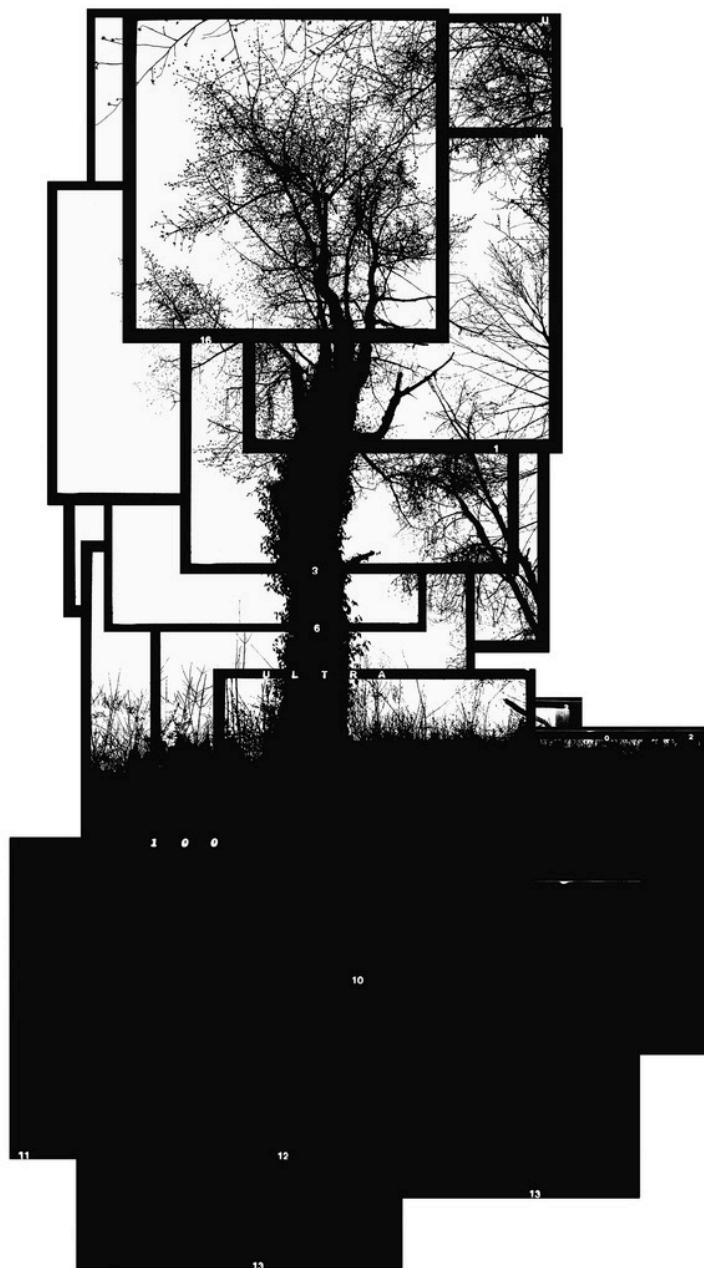


Portrait of Hencia (Helena) Bergman, a dental technician born in 1911, murdered in Tarnów, Poland in 1942. Anthotype on Arches watercolor paper with emulsion created from Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), 2022.

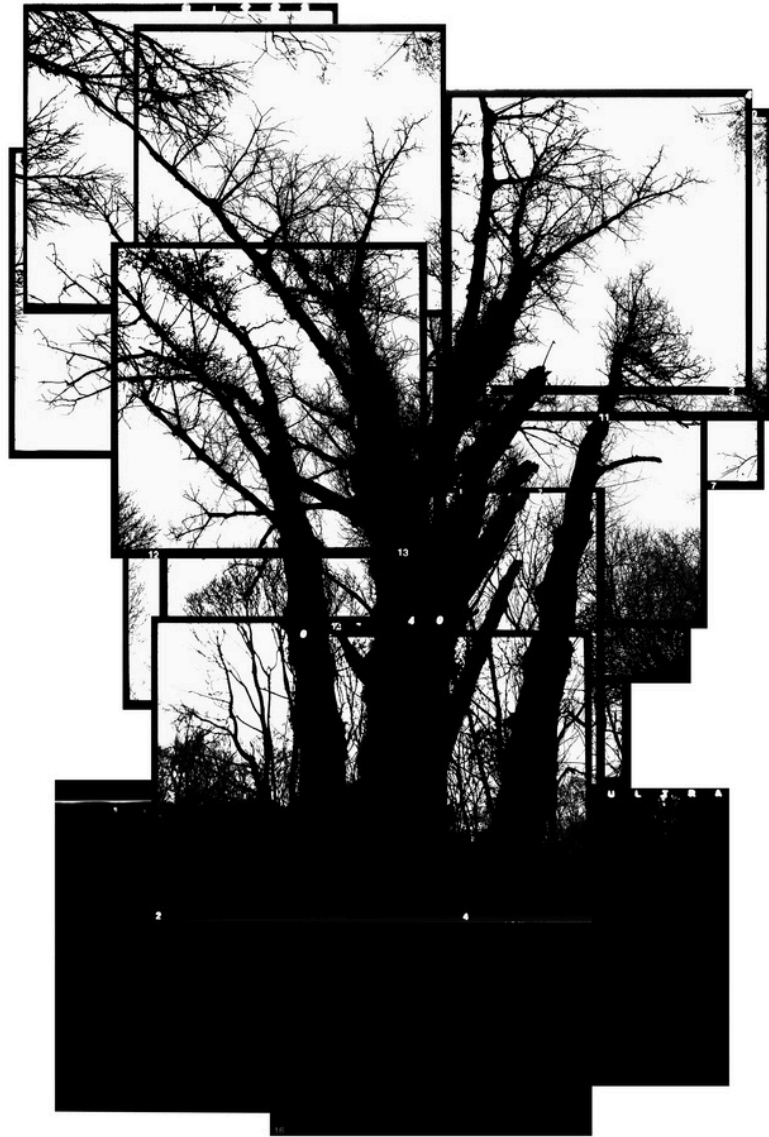
WITNESS & LIVING MEMORIAL TREES

In order to ensure proper memorialization of those for whom a photograph does not exist, the artists also work with the concept of “witness trees” or “trees as living memorials” to Holocaust atrocities. As has been noted by scholars, some trees existed at these sites at the time of the Shoah, and even those that grew later are drawing on the soil at the mass grave and now contain human remains. The artists used a World War II-era camera to create complex, collaged portraits of these trees from single frames of analog film. The resulting images are stark, black and white silhouettes, rising from the darkness into light, as if searching for truth, justice, and ultimately, reconciliation.

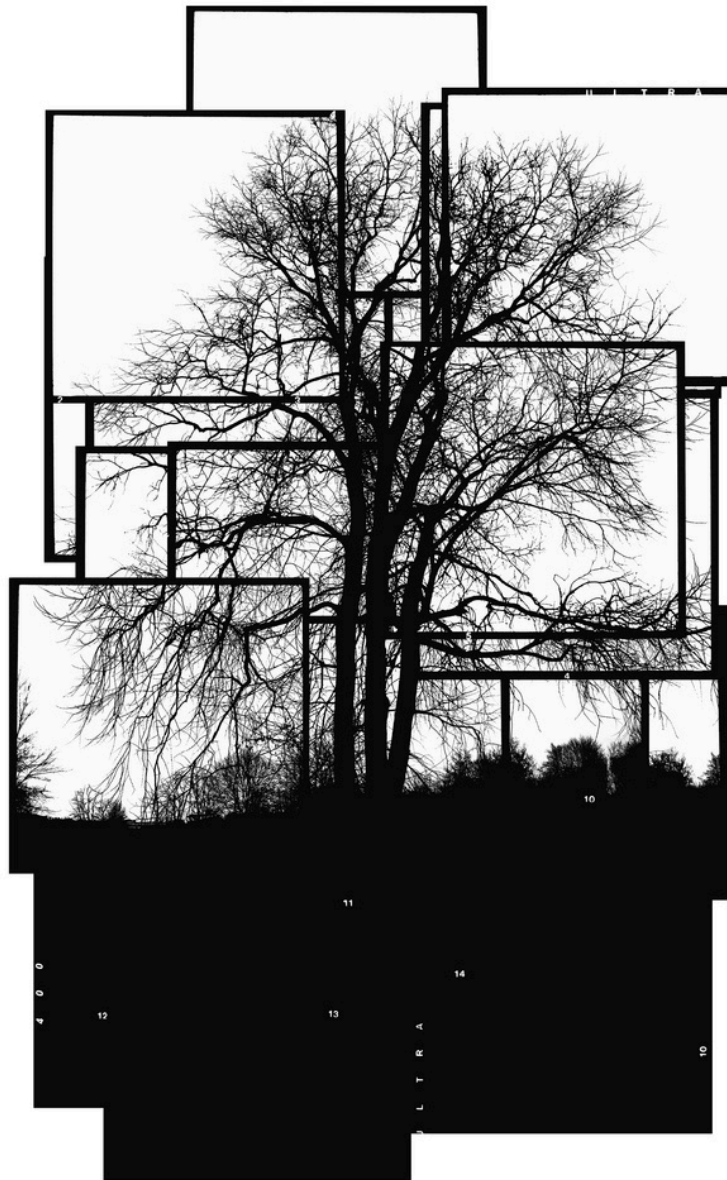
In addition, the artists used a contact microphone to make recordings of the interior sounds of “witness” or “living memorial” trees. It is increasingly recognized that trees have a rich internal life that includes sounds that are not normally heard by humans. According to scientists, these sounds may represent the transfer of water and other nutrients, but they may also signal stress or danger. This project gives witness and living memorial trees a voice for the first time. Because scientists and academics agree that these trees contain human remains, the recordings of their internal sounds represent the closest we can come to receiving “testimony” from them.



Untitled (Witness tree at a mass killing site in Sanok, Poland), archival inkjet print on canvas, 270 cm x 152 cm, 2023.



Untitled (Witness tree at a mass killing site in Okopowa Jewish Cemetery, Warsaw, Poland), archival inkjet print on canvas, 270 cm x 152 cm, 2023.

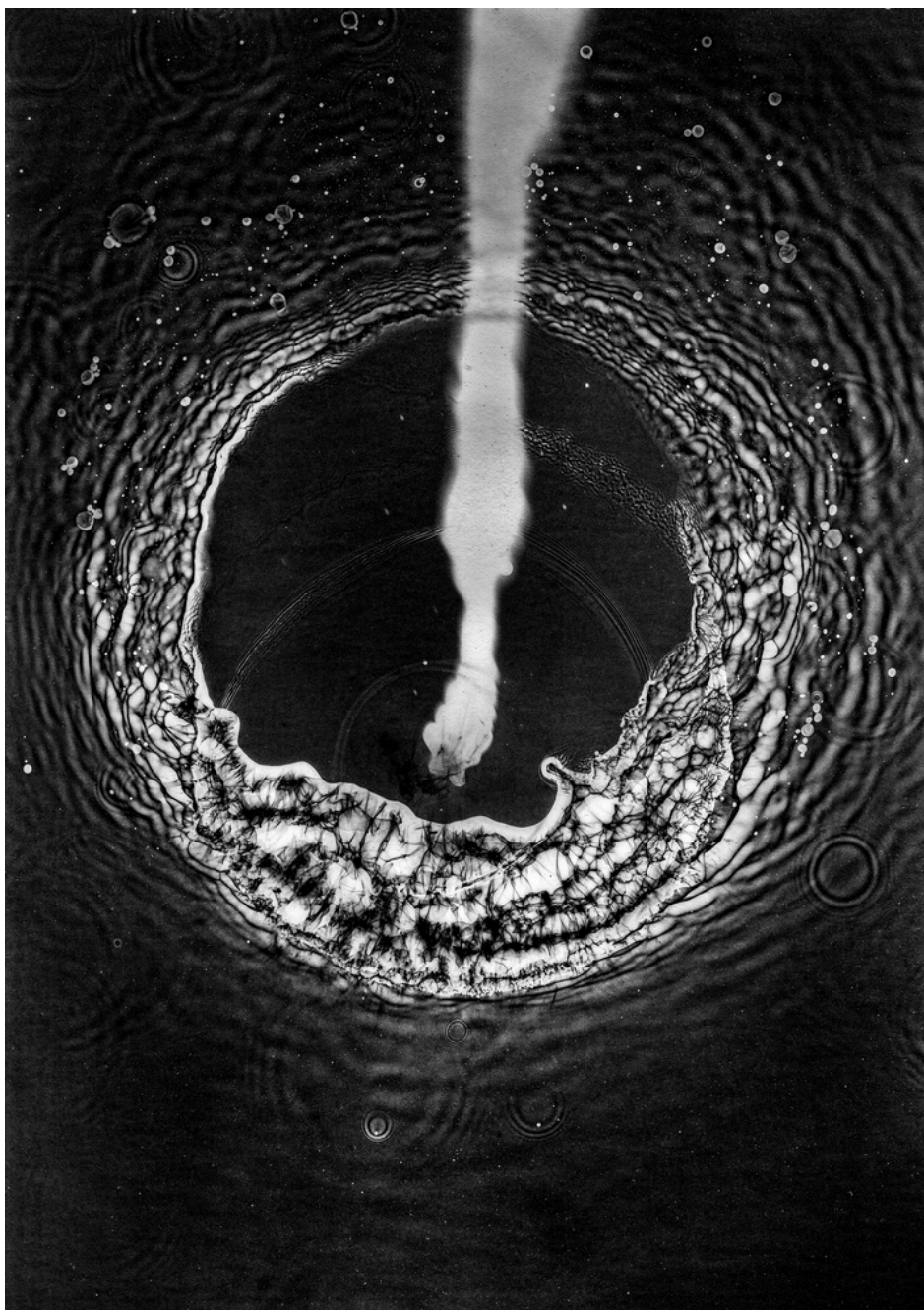


Untitled (Living memorial tree at a mass killing site in Siedlce, Poland), archival inkjet print on canvas, 270 cm x 152 cm, 2023.

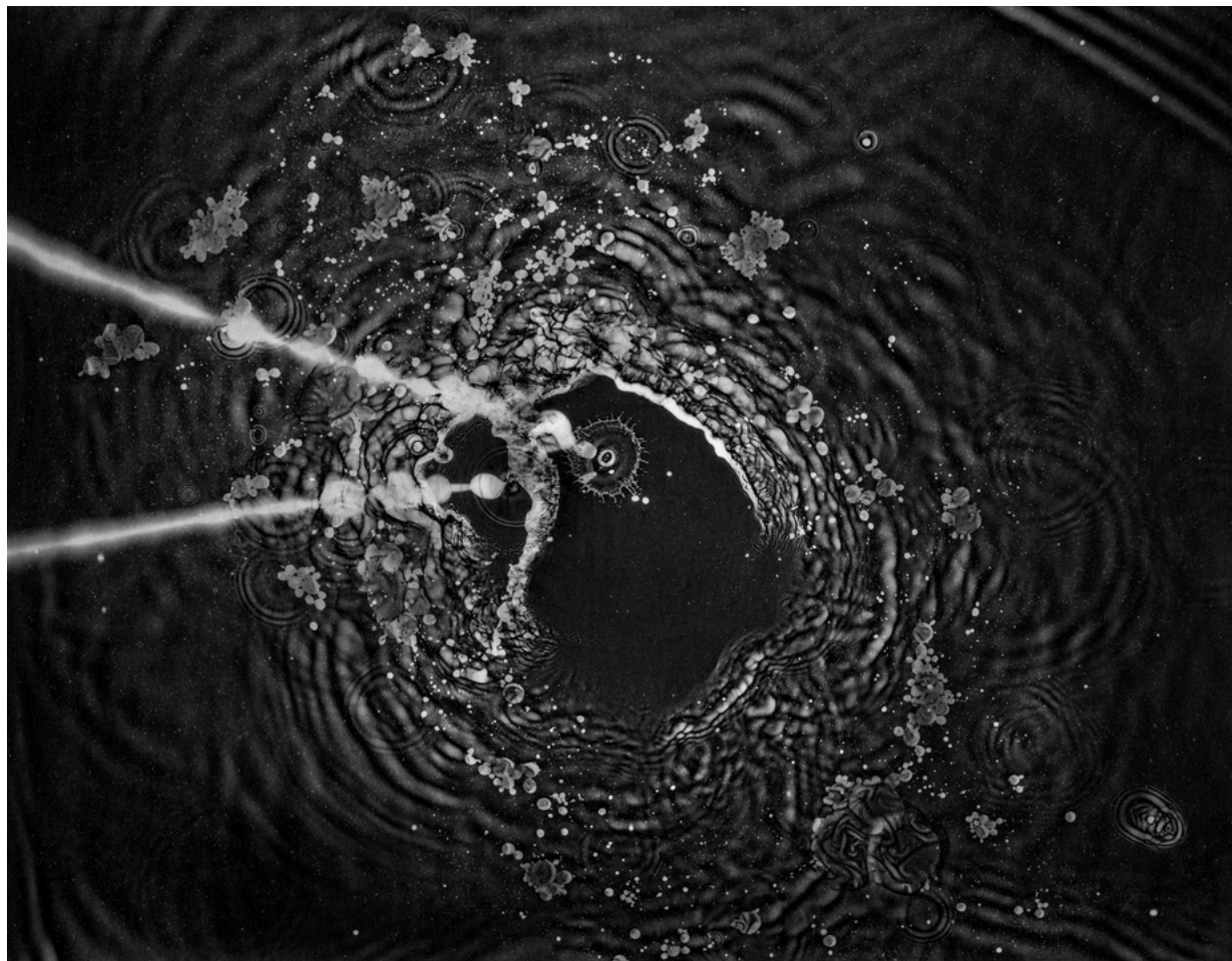
WATERGRAMS

The ashes of many Holocaust victims were disposed of in rivers. Near Auschwitz, large quantities of ashes were dumped into both the Soła River and the Wisła River. In the Czech Republic, the ashes of more than 22,000 people who died in the Terezín ghetto were dumped into the Ohře River. In other instances, the local waterways witnessed the atrocities that occurred in ghettos and work camps. For example, in Białystok, the Biała River ran directly through the middle of the ghetto.

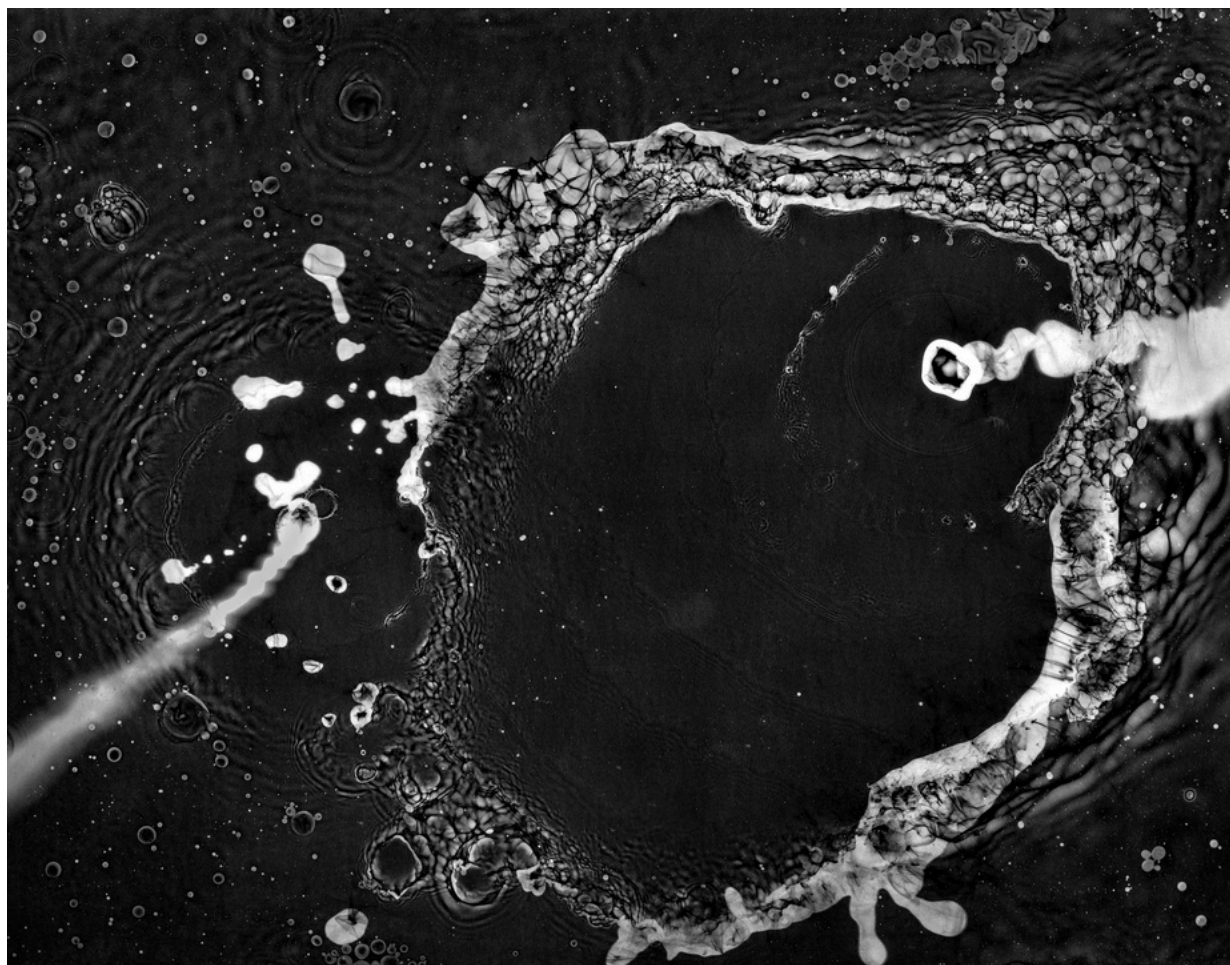
Just as trees and plants growing at mass grave sites contain the remains of victims, these rivers also permanently contain traces of Holocaust victims. The artists collected water from affected rivers and used it to create “watergrams,” a process of capturing water in motion as it is spilled onto analog photosensitive paper in a darkroom. Since the water may contain traces of the victims at the molecular level, the final image also bears witness to the atrocities that occurred at these sites.



Untitled (Watergram created with water collected in the Ohře River, Czech Republic), archival inkjet print, 100 x 77 cm, 2023.



Untitled (Watergram created with water collected in the Biała River, Poland), archival inkjet print, 100 x 77 cm, 2023.



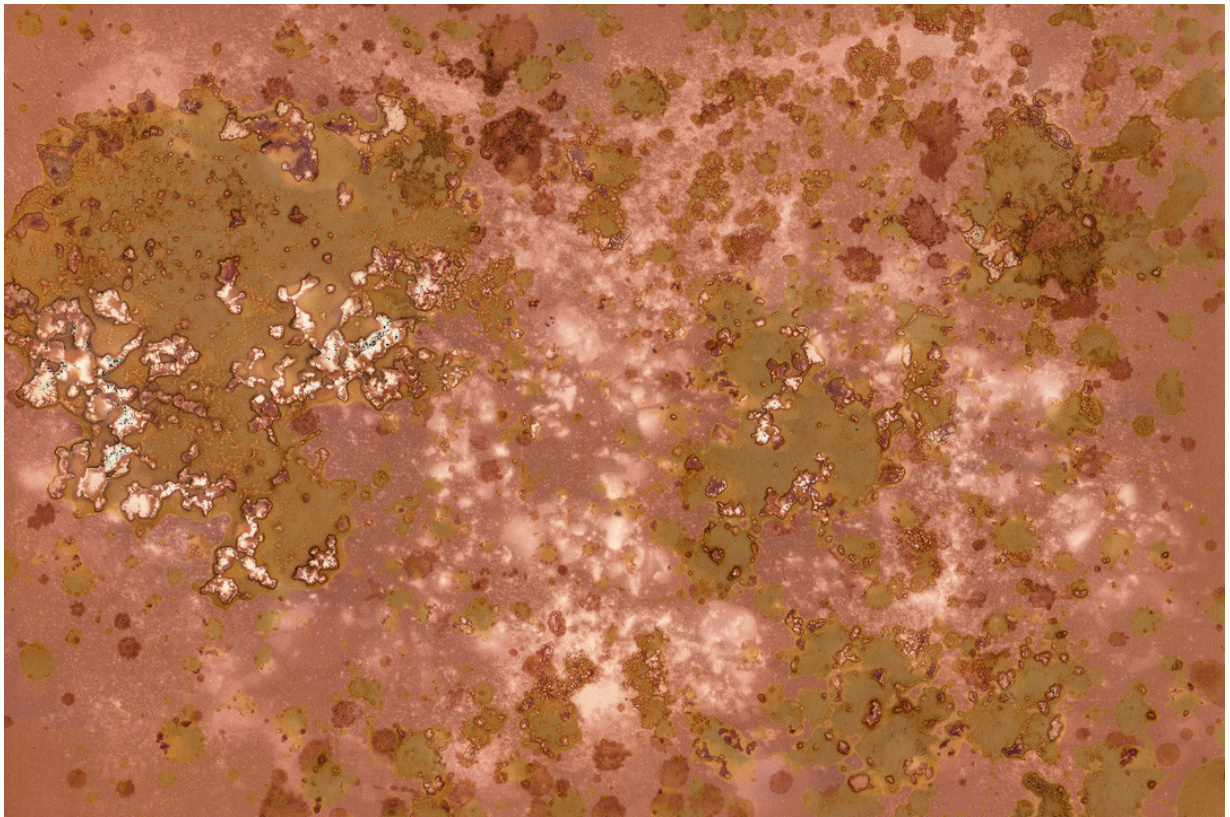
Untitled (Watergram created with water collected in the Biała River, Poland), archival inkjet print, 100 x 77 cm, 2023.



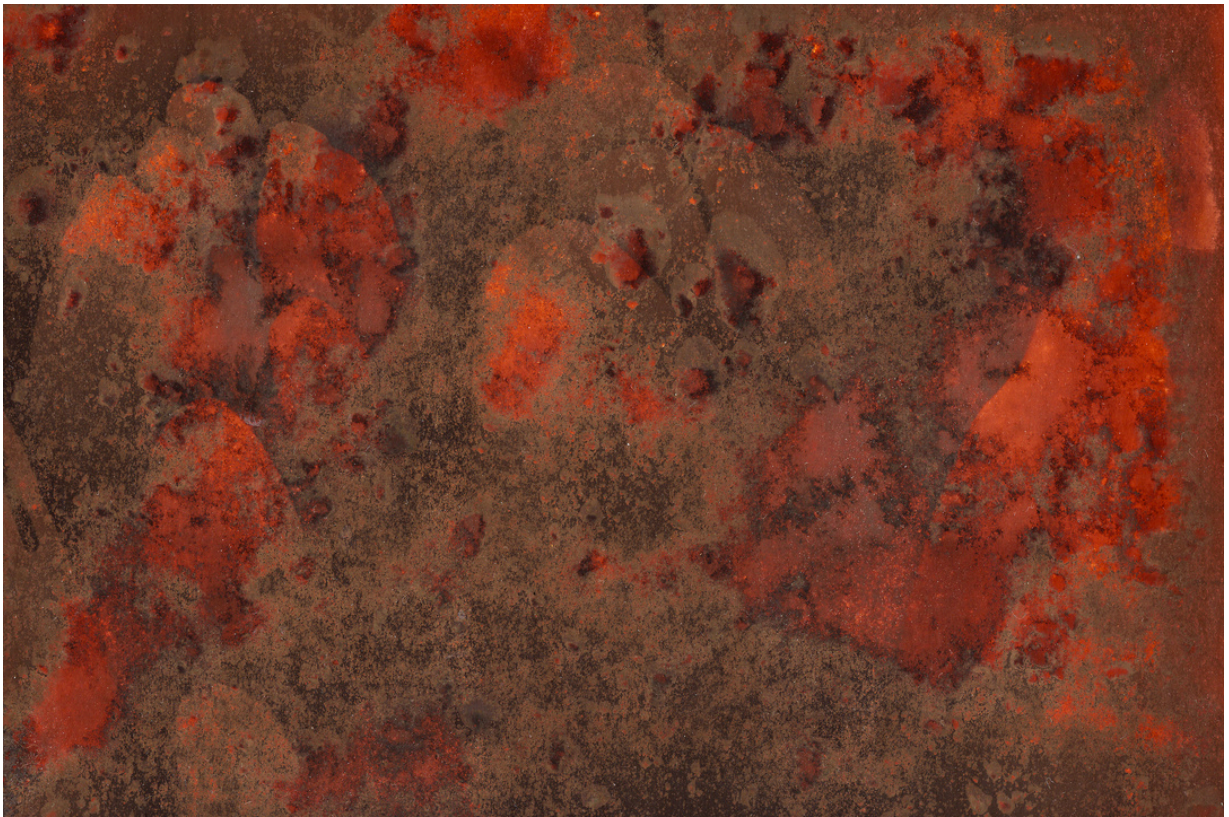
Untitled (Watergram created with water collected in the Wisła River, Poland), archival inkjet print, 100 x 77 cm, 2023.

LUMEN PRINTS

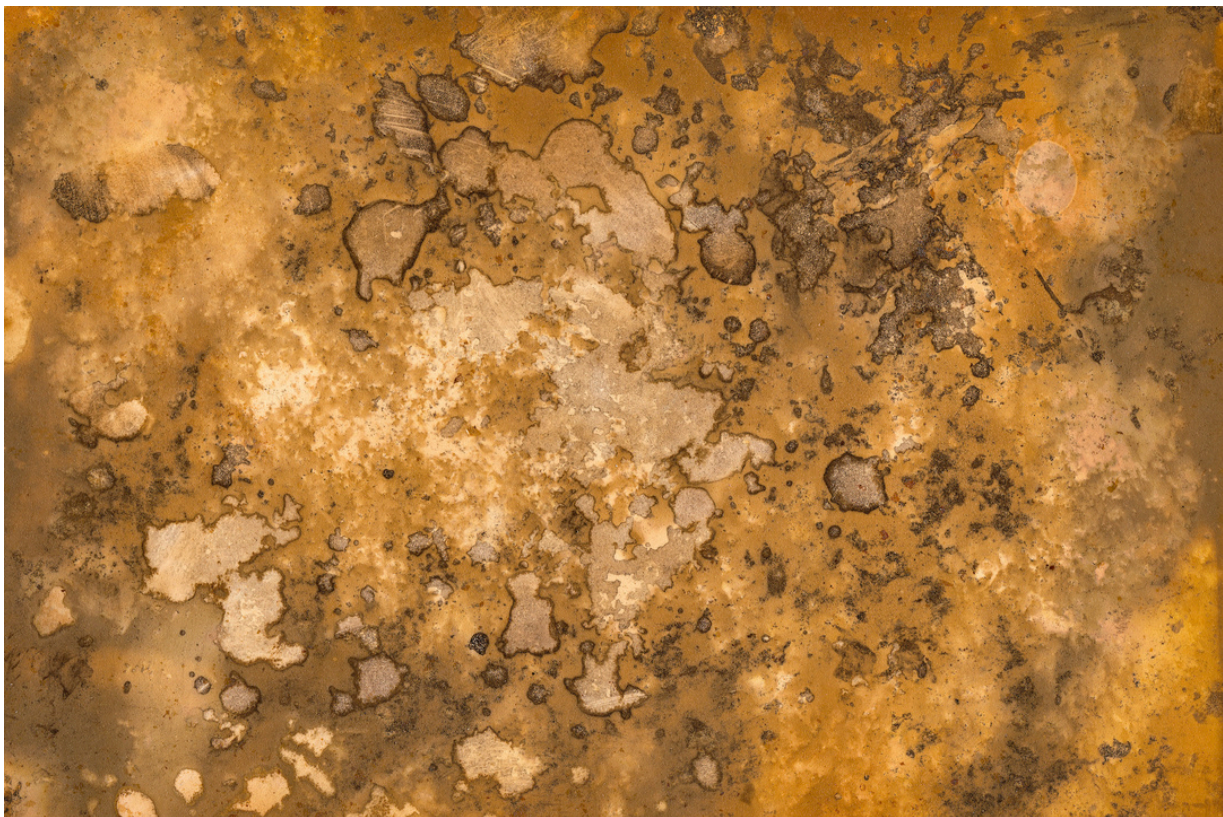
The artists also used another antique process, known as "lumen printing," to create abstract images that memorialize those for whom no name or photograph exists. In order to fully respect Jewish religious law and avoid disturbing the earth at killing sites, a small amount of soil was gathered from nearby the mass graves. It was then placed on analog photographic paper and exposed in the sun. The soil often bonded to an extent with the paper in a manner that may symbolically or literally contain molecular remains. The resulting images, which vary widely in terms of color, shape, and texture, suggest the diversity and uniqueness of every individual lost in the Holocaust. In order to emphasize their rich and unexpected colors, the lumen prints are displayed on a monitor.



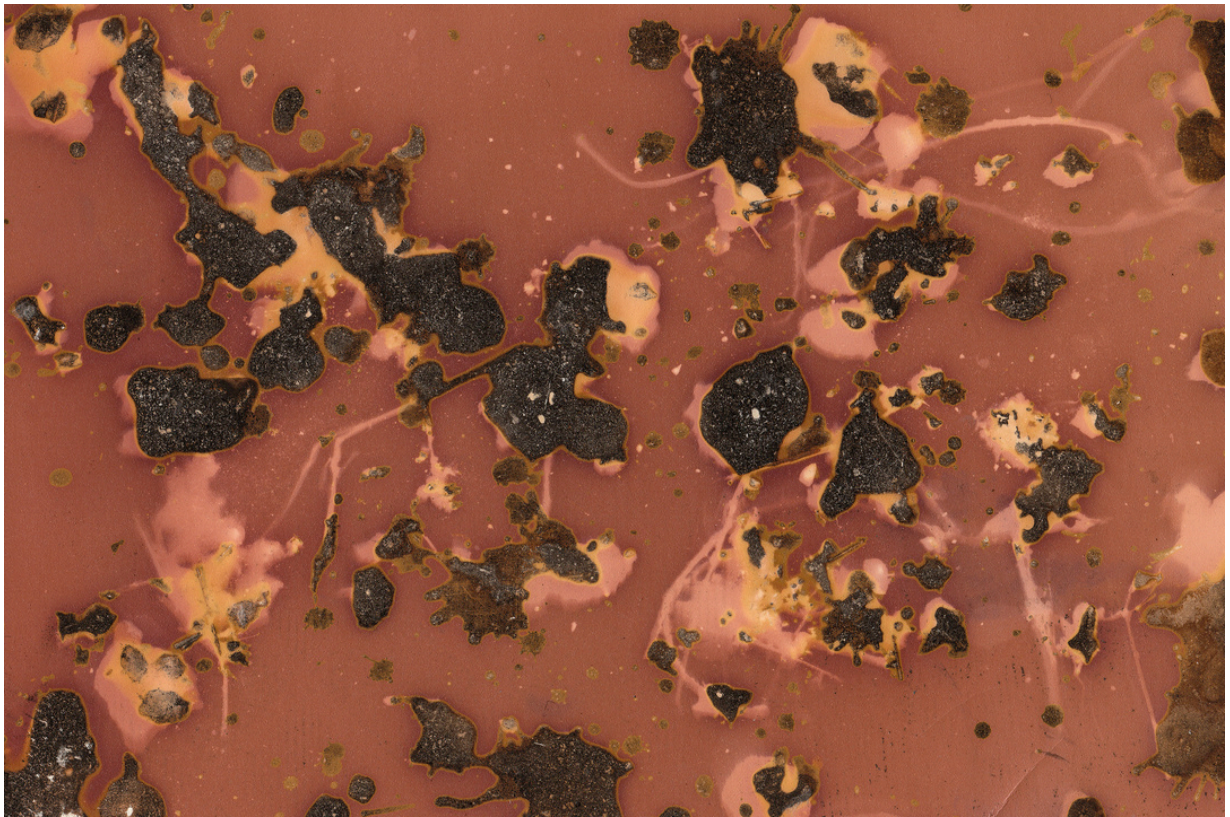
Untitled lumen print created with soil collected near the mass killing site in Siedlce, Poland, 29.7 x 21 cm, 2023.



Untitled lumen print created with soil collected near the mass killing site in Brzozow, Poland, 29.7 x 21 cm, 2023.



Untitled lumen print created with soil collected near the mass killing site in Kałuszyn, Poland, 29.7 x 21 cm, 2023.



Untitled lumen print created with soil collected near the mass killing site in Mszana Dolna, Poland, 29.7 x 21 cm, 2023.

VIDEO & SOUND INSTALLATION

The project also includes a video and sound installation in which descriptions of mass killing sites are projected from the ceiling onto soil placed on the gallery floor. These matter-of-fact descriptions were created by organizations devoted to identification and preservation of the sites. Visitors also hear sounds that the artists recorded at more than 45 mass killing sites around Poland. The installation calls attention not only to the huge number of killing sites in Eastern and Central Europe but also to the contemporary reality in and around these sites today. Some sites are meticulously cared for and memorialized, others may be neglected and forgotten, and still others are actively disrespected. The sounds recorded at these sites range from the ordinary to the unexpected, and in a handful of cases, the sound eerily echoes what might have been heard at the time of the tragedy.



Installation views of video and sound installation, Warsaw, Poland.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Mark Isaac and **Gabriela Bulišová** are artists who collaborate on intimate projects designed to bridge the gap between fine art and documentary practices. Their work includes photography, video, writing, music and installation focused on socially conscious issues such as environmental protection, trauma, memory, and reconciliation. Their commitment to these issues is fed by a passion to move beyond expanding awareness and engender meaningful changes in policy.

The duo, based in Prague, Czech Republic, both received an MFA in Photography from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD. Bulišová's numerous awards include two Fulbright Scholar Grants, the National Press Photographers Association's Short Grant, the Sondheim Prize, and Open Society's Moving Walls. She taught photojournalism at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, DC. Isaac has also received two Fulbright grants, was a semifinalist for the Sondheim Prize, and was named a notable photographer by FotoDC.

Their work has been exhibited in Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Great Britain, Poland, Siberia, Slovakia, South Korea, the United States, and Ukraine. Their visual art and writing have been published by *The Daily Beast*, *Politico*, *Smithsonian*, *Trix*, *National Geographic*, *ORF*, *Getty Images*, and *Narratively*. They are both founding members of Atlantika Collective, an international collective of artists, curators, and writers.

More information about their work can be found at bulisova-isaac.com, tombolo.substack.com, or atlantika-collective.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stockton University

Many thanks to the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of General Studies at Stockton University, especially the ARHU and GENS staff as well as the Visual Arts Faculty for their generous sponsorship and steadfast support of this exhibition. We also want to extend our deepest gratitude to the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center Executive Committee, whose leadership and commitment strengthen the work of Holocaust remembrance and education.

We also thank Ryann Casey, Allie Wilson, Brett Roach, and Rebecca Rodriguez whose invaluable contributions to research, curation, design, and installation shaped every stage of this project. Special thanks to Giovanni Bouillon, Stockton University Art Gallery student intern, for designing materials for *The Landscape of our Memory*.

And finally, special thanks to the incredible artists in this exhibition- Gabriela Bulišová and Mark Isaac- thank you for sharing your work with our community.

Ramapo College of New Jersey

First and foremost, we want to thank the artists Gabriela Bulisova and Mark Issac for allowing us to present their innovative work. We are also most grateful to Jacob Labendz for introducing us to the artists, and the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Ramapo College for significant funding assistance. Additionally, other Ramapo staff we extend thanks to include Dean Ken Goldstein, Robert Modafferi, Emily Rainbolt, Eva Fazzari, Violet Koci, and all of our wonderful student workers. Additionally, we thank Harrington Press, Walter Nowatka, Ellen Whitney, Ryann Casey of the Stockton University Art Gallery, and the Sara & Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center at Stockton University. We extend special appreciation to Mimi Weinberg for assistance with the curator essay.



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