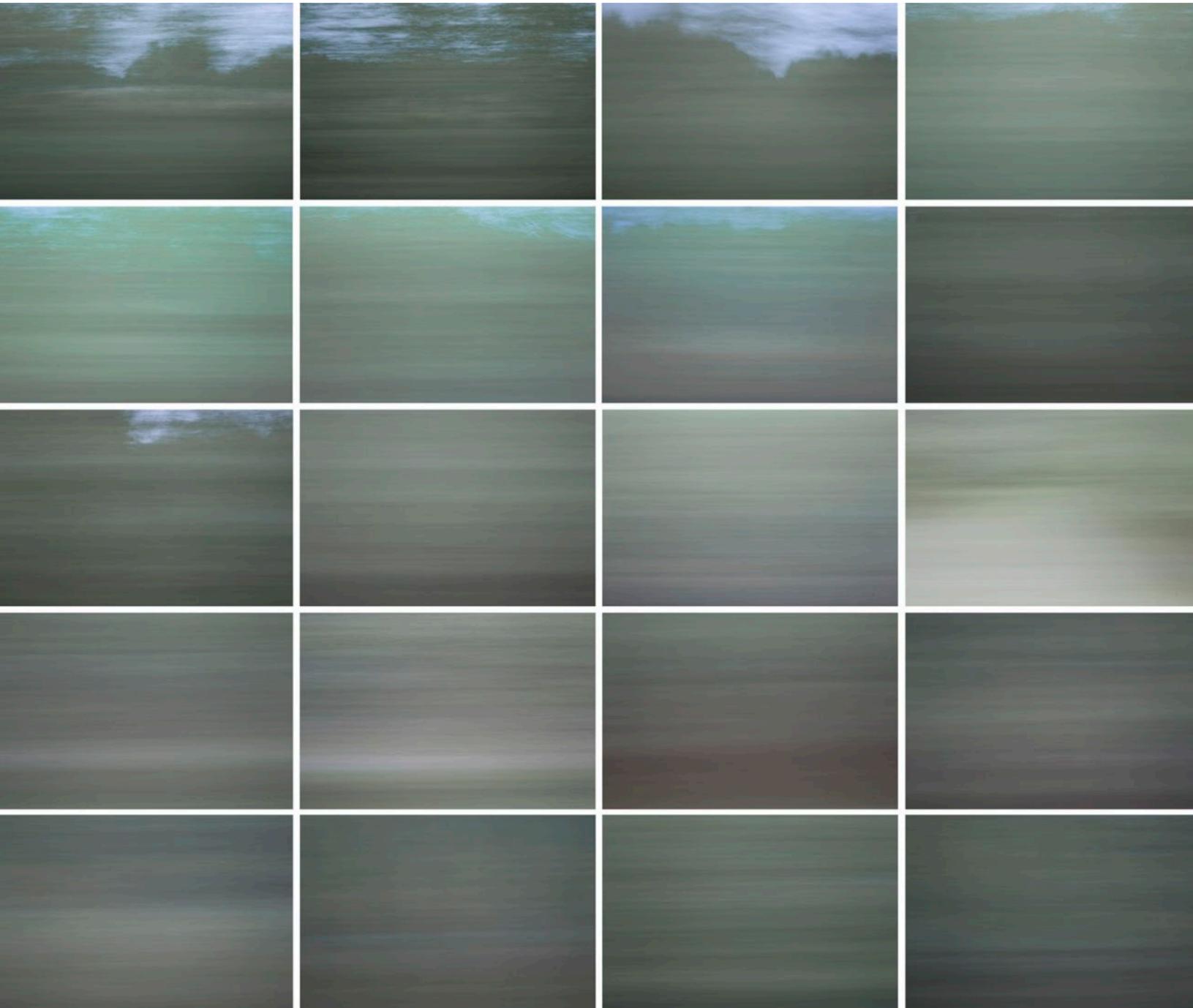




Amy Nasser

30 Years of
Fashion

and Works by
Annick Donkers
Barry Salzman
Frédéric Ducos
Jo Lauren
Jodi Bieber
José Roberto Bassul
Lucasz Sokol
Molly McCall
Ralph Gräf
Roshni Khatri
Samuel Feron
Sascha Rheker
Todd Darling
Yoshitaka Masuda



Barry Salzman

How We See the World

Barry Salzman is an award-winning contemporary artist who currently works in photography, video and mixed media. His projects have been shown across the globe and his work widely published. He is the recipient of the 2018 International Photographer of the Year award in the Deeper Perspective category from the International Photography Awards (IPA), for his project *The Day I Became Another Genocide Victim*, that endeavors to humanize victims of the Rwandan genocide.



© Barry Salzman by Klaus Enrique, NYC

Salzman was born in Zimbabwe and schooled in South Africa. He emigrated to the United States when he was 21. After an initial business career, he began working as a full-time artist. His interest in photography started when, as a teenager, he was moved to document racially segregated areas under Apartheid, in an effort to understand the racial inequality that surrounded him. Today, his work continues to explore challenging social, political and economic issues.

Salzman currently resides between New York City and Cape Town. He has an MFA in Photography, Video and Related Media from The School of Visual Arts in New York City, a Bachelor of Business Science degree from the University of Cape Town, and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

All images © Barry Salzman

Above: Last Mile to Anyplace IV, Chelm to Sobibor, Poland, from the series *How We See the World*, 2015
 Following spread: Beyond the Pictorial Dimension, Nyamure, Rwanda, from the series *How We See the World*, 2018



The broad themes I gravitate toward in my work relate to some of the challenging social, political and economic issues that confront us. Over the last 6 years, these have included the increasing universal fatigue around the Holocaust narrative, the fraying of the American Dream and society's complicit behavior in the recurrence of modern-day genocide. I am particularly interested in our role as public witness and the ethics of seeing. I try to make work that reflects on what we see when we look, and our individual and collective responsibility of bearing witness.

Recently, I have been looking a lot at the scraped abstract paintings by Gerhard Richter, many with a seeming horizon line representative of the layered landscape, the work of Anselm Kiefer (just about all of it), and the projects of Alfredo Jaar. Richter for references on abstraction, Jaar for conceptual and intellectual rigor in his projects that deal with socio-economic issues, and Kiefer for his nuanced handling of similar subject matter to my own and his bold use of mixed media. I would like to think that they are each referenced in my work. Drawing on Kiefer, I have started experimenting with some mixed media

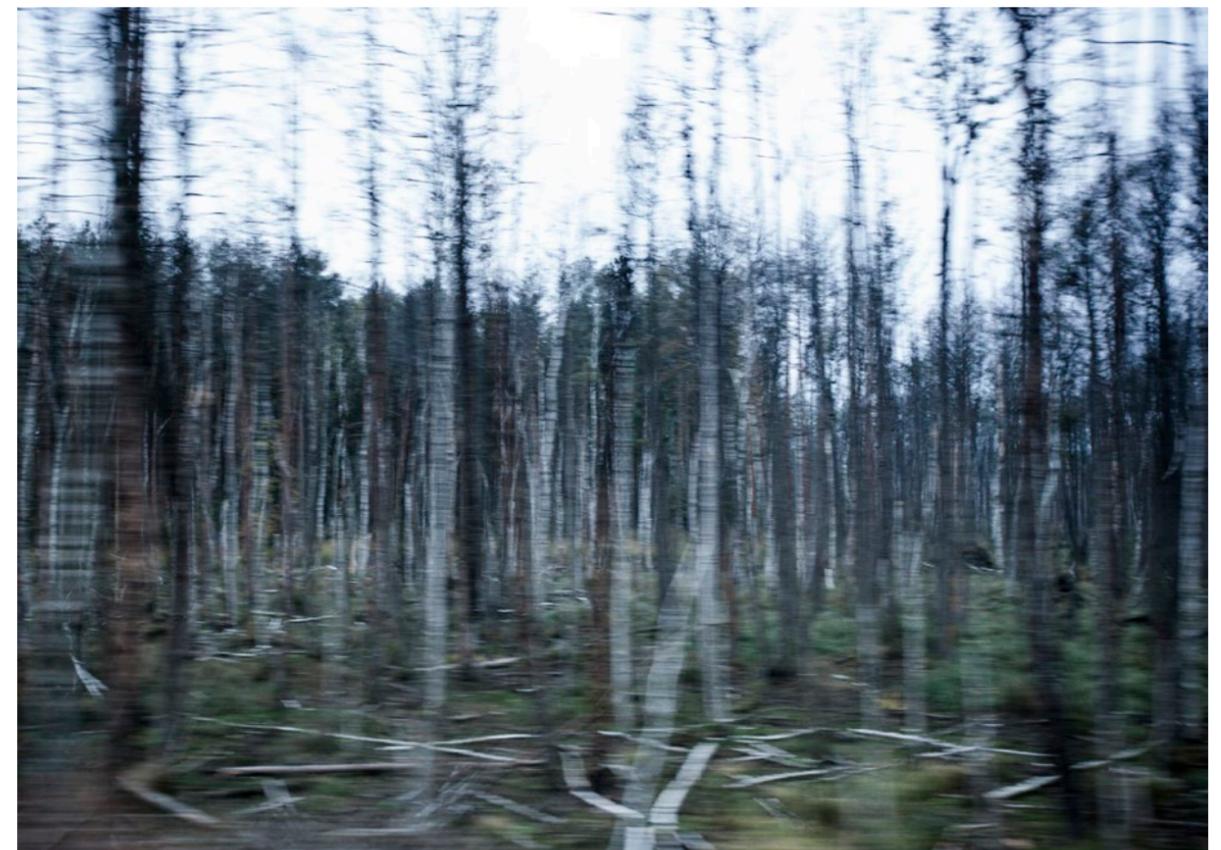
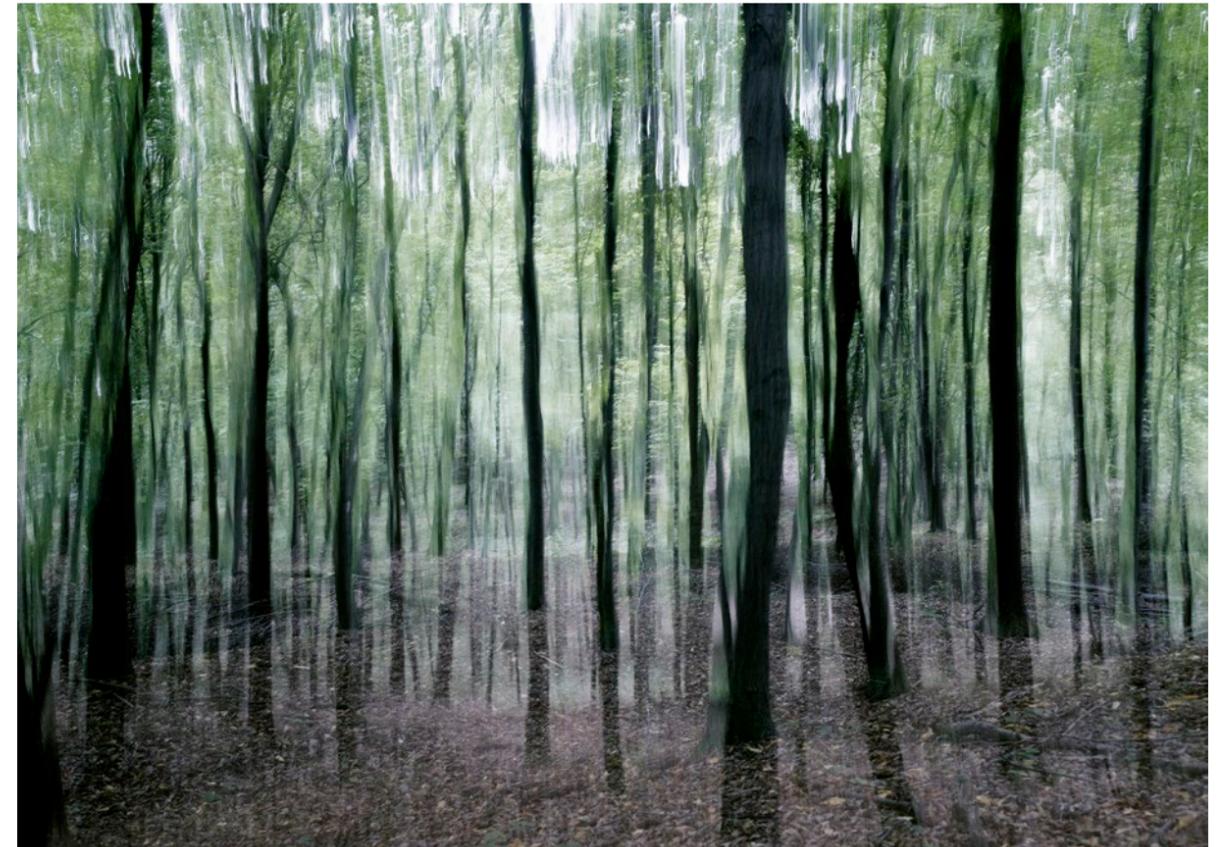
work. So far, I think I've been a little more successful applying watercolor washes over photographic images and a little less successful trying to integrate soil samples from the sites I work at into the picture's surface. My mixed media work is still very much in its early stages, but I certainly plan to build on it in the near future.

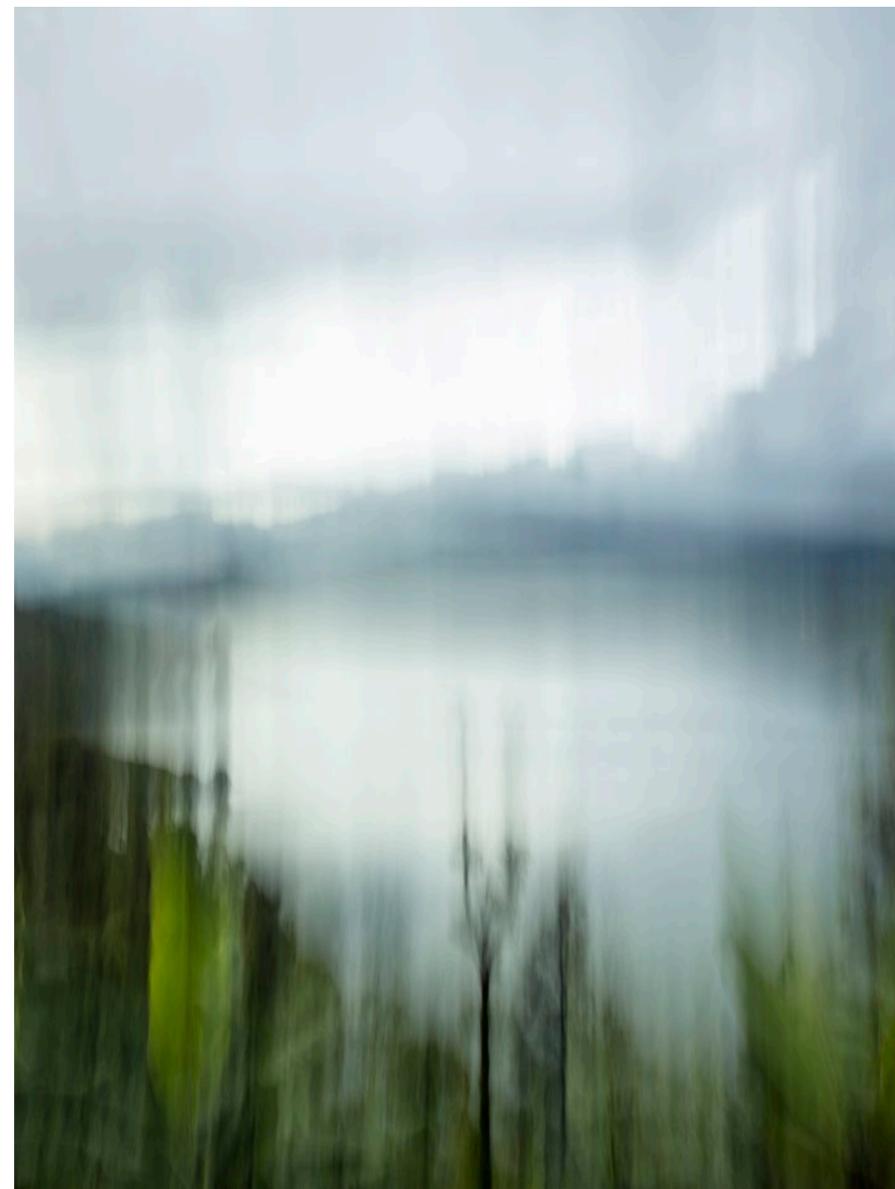
The mixed media experimentation aside, I generally keep my post-production work to a minimum. I like to think of my post-production workflow as analogous to basic darkroom techniques. By working within those parameters, I think of my work as closer to true photographic work than to a photography-digital art hybrid. I shoot RAW files, so there is always the basic file processing, contrast adjustments, sharpening, a little dodging and burning, and color balancing. Generally, that is all I do in post. I work primarily with a medium format camera with a digital back, despite the fact that often the abstract images I make are intentionally blurred. However, for the pieces that do rely on sharp focus in all or part of the image, the larger file size allows me to print exhibition work at scale, while still maintaining precise sharpness.

“I am particularly interested in our role as public witness and the ethics of seeing.”

Right page, top: *Deliriously He Ran Nowhere And Everywhere*, Chodów, Poland, from the series *How We See the World*, 2015

Right page, bottom: *Inhabited by Imagination*, Sobibor, Poland, from the series *How We See the World*, 2015





In 2015, I started working on an ongoing project called *How We See the World*. It is an extensive body of landscape images, mostly abstract, from sites of modern-day genocide. So far, the project includes work from Rwanda, Poland and Ukraine. The project title is from a 1938 lecture by René Magritte when he argued, “This is how we see the world,” while explaining his painting

“La Condition Humaine”. The painting shows a landscape through a window, the view partially concealed by a painter’s canvas on an easel.

On the canvas, we see a painting of what one assumes to be the part of the landscape obscured by the easel, but of course we never really know what the real landscape

looks like. Just as Magritte addresses the distinctions between reality and what we perceive it to be -- what we see when we look -- so, I hope, do my photographic works from sites of genocide.

I have made every image in this project within witness distance of the GPS coordinates of sites where acts of genocide

were perpetrated. Despite the dark events that occurred at each location, the images are aesthetic and abstract. The work interrogates how we see and bear witness. The project is intended to be a counterpoint to the way information on this topic is typically disseminated -- through the precise lens of the photojournalist, historian or documentarian.

Above: A Ravaged Land Healing, I-III, Karongi, Rwanda, 2018



Critical to the ideas I try to articulate in the work is the way that I have made each image -- in camera in a single exposure, with no compositing nor layering in post-production. The work depicts sites of trauma in abstract ways, often obscuring the detail typically used to connect image to place. The aesthetic treatment of the work reminds us of the ever-present and opposing forces of good and evil, dark and light, day and night. By using tools of abstraction in various ways, I try to expose the layered landscape, its complexities, varied interpretations and the memories it evokes, all dependent on time and personal perspective.

The conceptual anchor for this project is based on the writing of Dutch art historian Ernst Van Alphen. He writes that we stop hearing Holocaust narratives because they rarely allow for a personal response, since the appropriate response is “already culturally prescribed or narratively programmed.” He argues against “the unassailable axiom in Holocaust studies that historical discourse, such as documentary, is much more effective in teaching about the Holocaust

than imaginative discourse.” In doing so, he frames the debate between the approach of the historian and that of the artist. In truth, I believe that we need both to remain fully engaged with the challenging subject matter of genocide. It is the duty of the artist to push the viewer into what French philosopher, Georges Didi-Huberman calls “that difficult place of imagining.”

As an artist, I endeavor to engage the viewer’s imagination, often by using abstraction. Whatever impact a more didactic approach can have (the disciplines of the historian, archivist, documentarian, photojournalist or news reporter), I would argue has already happened. Yet the glaringly wide chasm between knowledge and action has still not been bridged. It is our collective inaction that makes us complicit in the recurrence of genocide around the world.

I hope that by engaging the viewer’s imagination, I am able to make work that is more personally resonant. And when something resonates with us personally, we are more inclined to take action.

Left page: *The Passive Backdrop to Human Theater I Karongi, Rwanda*, from the series *How We See the World*, 2018

Metaphorically, the landscape witnesses all. It sheds its leaves in cover-up and complicity. But through its rebirth, so it rejuvenates. It carries with it the traces of the past and promises of the future. It triumphs over trauma. It is inextricably intertwined with our darkest moments and brightest days. By engaging with history, trauma and memory in abstract ways, my hope is that viewers will interpret the images through the filters of their own experiences, as a reminder that “that place” can be “any place.”

Ligature: A Text by Ashraf Jamal

Ashraf Jamal is a Research Associate in the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg and a leading commentator on contemporary art in South Africa. He is the author of In the World: Essays on Contemporary South African Art, published by Skira in 2017.

A thing that tightly binds is an odd descriptor to apply to photographs that are pointedly abstract and layered in their complexity. And yet a ligature is an apt word to apply to Barry Salzman’s photographs of the killing fields of Poland, the Ukraine, and Rwanda. It is not only their ephemeral sheen that matters when regarding Salzman’s photographs of glades and forests, but their hidden content – the uncountable and unnamable dead that lie beneath their fecund and shimmering

surface.

Robert Pogue Harrison, the author of *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation, and Dominion of the Dead*, understands the intimate relationship between surface and depth, presence and absence, and the nature of this fold in our understanding of who and what we are. ‘Human beings ... are always already dead’, he notes. ‘This ... knowledge of finitude predetermines their most creative as well as their most destructive acts.’ It is this acute awareness of the Janus face of humanity which allows Salzman’s photographs to teeter on the brink of atrocity and grace. Between the dead and the unborn there is the living – you and I – whose lives are implacably determined by the choices we make. If Salzman elides a direct engagement with atrocity, it is not because he seeks to suppress it, but because he understands that ‘decadence begins with the loss of restraint’, which is why it must be tempered. His photographs are the ligatures that bind our forked nature – our darkness and our light. Before them we intimate the cruelty beneath the beauty, know that we cannot accept ourselves without accepting the evil that stalks us. ‘There exists an allegiance between the dead and the unborn of which we the living are merely the ligature’, Robert Pogue Harrison notes. A photograph – posthumous, an afterlife – traffics across this strait.



Right page, top: What Was and Will Be, Rutsiro District, Rwanda, from the series *How We See the World*, 2018

Right page, bottom: Defiant Blooms Kamonyi District, Rwanda, from the series *How We See the World*, 2018