

Ghosts: French Holocaust Children: A conversation with artist, curator, educator, historian and author Robert Hirsch

By Linda Gellman

Robert Hirsch's *Ghosts: French Holocaust Children* is a haunting photograph installation that commemorates the lives of French children murdered during the Holocaust. Hirsch is an artist, curator, educator, historian, former Executive Director and Chief Curator of CEPA Gallery, founder of Southern Light Gallery, and co-founder of North Light Gallery. His work has exhibited internationally in over 200 solo and group shows and he is an author whose books include *Seizing the Light: A Social & Aesthetic History of Photography*. The exhibit will be on display in the Bunis Family Art Gallery at the Jewish Community Center Benderson Family Building, 2640 North Forest Road, from Monday May 6 - Friday June 28, and is free and open to the public to tour during JCC business hours.

There will be a Free Opening Night Reception on Monday, May 6, 2019 from 7-9 p.m. in the Lippman Lounge and Bunis Family Art Gallery at the JCC Benderson Family Building. The evening will include a light reception, tours of the gallery, and the opportunity to meet the artist.

In conjunction with the exhibit, and the JCC Book and Arts Fair, Hirsch will deliver a lecture presentation: "Ghosts: An Artistic Mediation on the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism." The lecture and discussion will be held in the Lippman Lounge at the

JCC Benderson Family Building on Wednesday, May 22 from 7-9 p.m. Hirsch will examine the artistic, cultural, political, and personal principals that informed his art exhibit, *Ghosts: French Holocaust Children*. He will discuss how he created the installation, the history that informs the project, and Israel's place on the world stage. Additionally, Hirsch will review the interconnections involving photography and history. For more information visit www.jccbuffalo.org. Hirsch spoke with Linda Gellman about the photo show and what he hopes viewers will take away from the exhibit.



Opening Night Reception
May 6, 7:00- 9:00 p.m.
Sponsored by
Buffalo Jewish Federation
& Holocaust Resource Center

Robert Hirsch Lecture
May 22, 7:00- 9:00 p.m.
JCC Benderson Building/
Lippman Lounge



Linda Gellman (LG): What is the Ghosts backstory?

Robert Hirsch (RH): During World War II, over 11,000 Jewish children were deported from France to Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps in convoys that rolled until the day Paris was liberated by Allies. These children were among more than 75,000 French Jews deported under the Nazi extermination plan called the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." Of all the French Jews transported, only 2,564 survived the Shoah. At most 300 of these Jewish children prevailed. For the rest, all that remains are their photographs.

LG: How would you describe the body of work?

RH: Ghosts is a three-dimensional installation that is based on documents and photographs collected by author, lawyer, and Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld, which I have reinterpreted through two- and three-dimensional photographic representations to convey a haunting sense of lost human possibilities. It utilizes what I call a "post-documentary" approach, blending outer and inner realities to construct stories that examine the extreme boundaries of human behavior regarding identity, loss, memory,

and racism.

LG: How did the Holocaust personally affect you?

RH: All of my family members who remained in Europe were murdered by "Hitler's Willing Executioners." I think it is essential that, as the last of the Holocaust survivors die, contemporary artists and historians step forward to serve as the next generation of storytellers who can bear witness and keep alive the memory of what anti-Semitism tried to extinguish.

LG: What would you like the viewers to take away from Ghosts?

RH: If the Shoah is allowed to fade, Holocaust deniers and other Jew-haters will seize the opportunity to deliberately conceal, distort, and misapply the truth about the Shoah. Ghosts allows viewers to explore the space between art and history from the perspective that expressive, interpretive photo-based imagery can represent and convey a sense of the unimaginable.

LG: What is the significance of exhibiting Ghosts here?

RH: The involvement of the Buffalo Jewish Community Center is critical as



change is the result of local action. In this time of rising anti-Semitism and as remaining survivors pass on, it is vital to keep the knowledge about the Shoah alive so that future generations can call out and act to counter barbarous behavior from being inflicted upon any group of people.

LG: Any final reflections?

RH: If we allow this bigotry to target one group without challenging it, it is only a matter of time before other minority groups are pursued and persecuted as

well, affecting everyone's personal freedom. Therefore, combatting anti-Semitism is vital not only for Jewish people, but for anyone who values human life and the pursuit of social justice that transcends borders and epochs.

For more information about Hirsch's visual and written projects visit: www.LightResearch.net.

Linda Gellman is founder of CLICK Artistic Visual Creations and professional photographer

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2019 YOM HASHOAH 5779

NEVER AGAIN? How Anti-Semitism is Still Alive Today

Speaker: Kenneth Stern
Sunday, May 5, 11:00 am
Temple Beth Zion
805 Delaware Avenue,
Buffalo NY



Kenneth S. Stern is an attorney and award-winning author, and an internationally known expert on hatred and anti-Semitism, who was most recently the executive director of the Justus & Karin Rosenberg Foundation. He has testified before Congress, been an invited presenter at the White House Conference on Hate Crimes, and argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. Yom Hashoah Committee is co-chaired by Tara Cross and Ellen Dubie. **Anyone who can volunteer to drive people to the service, please contact Kelsey at the HRC Office, 716-634-9535 or kelsey@hrcbuffalo.org.**

Albright-Knox Art Gallery

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AN EXHIBITION IN HONOR OF RALPH C. WILSON, JR. | TREASURES FROM THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX AND THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS



Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853-1890). *Portrait of Postman Roulin*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 19 7/8 inches (65 x 50.5 cm). Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Buhl Ford II, 1996.25. Image courtesy of the Detroit Institute of Arts. | This exhibition was co-organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the Detroit Institute of Arts in honor of the hundredth anniversary of Mr. Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s birth. The exhibition and catalogue have been generously underwritten by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

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