

Notes

Half a dozen small photographs, most the size of small postcards are the only images that survived of the Halter family of Chodecz in Poland. They were taken in the 1920's and thirties and sent by my grandfather to his sister in Lausanne.

These form the basis to three of the eleven paintings in the series *The Family I Never Knew* from which I have made these prints.

I waited over twenty years between painting the oil paintings and making the prints. It seemed appropriate now to scale down, to return towards those postcards that inspired the paintings in the first place – the matt quality of the paper, the images, smaller, shrinking away, more distant.

The photographs were frustratingly flat – and they were all I would know of people who were my aunts, uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents. The flatness of the paintings intentionally endorsed that two-dimensionality. They appear like paintings of photographs rather than paintings of people who live and whom you can walk around. They live in the same way as still-life. I could come no closer to them than to those photographs. Were I to attempt to paint them as if they were living people I knew or had known we be false, false to the reality of my experience.

It was not my experience to witness the killing, murder, humiliation and atrocities. That experience is second-hand, read-of, heard-of, “inherited”, whatever that means. My experience is of being part of a family and a people living after genocide. It is about a void. Today the *Shoah*, paradoxically, seems closer to the present than over two decades ago when I painted the paintings. Distance and time seem to refuse to conform to the simple sequential pattern of events that we are taught, the scheme within which we normally function. It is as if, with events of vast scale and moment, that the sound of those events takes time to echo off the walls of society. Delayed, it reverberates in politics and daily life.

I am troubled by art or literature on the *Shoah* that is itself not troubled by its own endeavour.

So these images reflect the gap, the space between the subject and one-who-was-not-there. If they are about anything, then these prints are about the limitations of the sympathetic imagination.

And as one, living now in Israel, a country and people overtly threatened with nuclear destruction, these images are also about incipient danger, about people and the hateful words used to characterize them, and about how words become deeds.

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