



This is one of the last of the mass graves to be filled - late afternoon 21 APRIL - The pits (which we now realize were designed for use as mass graves) had already been dug by the ZAMBAT - UN FORCES on 19th APRIL - three days prior to the massacre of 2 APRIL - Was this just planning to cover all eventualities or did they know something? Mothers have been dumped in with their ~~dead~~ dead babies still attached to their backs. For a moment as the bodies fall through the air they are reanimated - then there is the sickening thump & they remain still forever - The young First. Soldiers at Kibeho would have seen more deaths than any First Soldier since WWII. They got to know the ~~deaths~~ families before the massacre - the ~~names~~ names of them ~~in~~ killed - and ~~more~~ more ~~than~~ ~~survived~~ ~~survived~~.

George Gittoes, *Mass Grave*
pencil on draftsman's paper
drawn in Kibeho, Rwanda, in 1995
acquired in 1996

(Accession number 90437)
Australian War Memorial

Mass Grave
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About the artwork:

A number of images completed by George Gittoes in Rwanda in 1995 depict extremes of pain cruelty and suffering.

In this work, Gittoes creates a powerful and disturbing image of a massacre in the Kibeho refugee camp in Rwanda. His drawing reflects the powerlessness and ineffectiveness felt by United Nations peacekeepers in being unable to prevent this kind of cruelty. In his text accompanying the image, Gittoes notes, "The young Australian soldiers at Kibeho would have seen more death than any Aust[tralian] soldiers since WWII. They got to know the refugee families before the massacre – then saw many of them ruthlessly killed." By drawing the grave close to the bottom edge of the picture, Gittoes invites the viewer to peer down upon the bodies. In this way, he creates a strong sense of viewer participation in the scene, inviting us to contemplate and reflect on the event witnessed. At the same time, Gittoes's image explores, on a universal level, historical associations with previous wars, conflicts and acts of genocide, as well as the ongoing survival of humanity in the face of these events.

Questions:

1. Describe what you can see in the painting?
2. Why do you think people would do this?
3. How would you feel if you were one of the soldiers?
4. What does this drawing teach us?
5. What is a "war crime"?
6. Are there any war crimes cases being heard around the world today?
Research these cases and give a presentation to your class.
7. What kinds of things are not allowed in war? Why?
8. Design a memorial to the victims of the massacre.