



TRACES OF THE PAST

This year we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda which claimed more than one million lives.

The *Traces of the Past* exhibition gives faces and names to the victims and foregrounds the voices of survivors. Rwandan community members now living in the UK tell their stories of survival and meaning-making. In this exhibition they lend objects that embody precious memories of loved ones who they lost.

EXHIBITION BOOKLET





TRACES OF THE PAST

The objects on display materialise the everyday of the past: laughter, togetherness and precious family moments full of joy. Through the objects, survivors also recount inhumane acts of violence, the failure of humanity and how worlds broke apart.

The objects speak to the very human need to hold on to memories, photographs and the material culture that connect and keep us close to those whose “present absence” we encounter every day. A drum, a milk container, radio batteries, a board game, a sewing machine, and, in the absence of a tangible object, a photograph, come to life through oral history interviews. Webare, Caritas, Sophie, Appolinaire and Jean each share intimate accounts of their loved ones, what the objects mean to them, to whom the objects connect them with, and why it is so important to remember and honour those who died such cruel and unjust deaths. As Webare, Caritas, Sophie, Appolinaire and Jean affirm in their stories “we survived for a reason”, “we survived to talk” and to advocate that “genocide should never happen again anywhere”.

Traces of the Past encourages us all to foster empathy towards the “distant” suffering of those often perceived as “others”. We invite you to listen to and learn from survivors’ accounts and to acknowledge their resilience, strength and creativity in rebuilding their lives here in the UK. This invitation comes at a time of heightened xenophobia and rising right-wing populism at our doorstep. We encourage you to join survivors to advocate that genocide should never happen again, near or far.

Traces of the Past is situated within the ‘Bearing Witness – Kwibuka25’ project funded by the Public Engagement with Research Seed Fund. It is based on Dr Julia Viebach’s (African Studies Centre/Faculty of Law, University of Oxford) research on memory and justice in Rwanda and her ongoing project on Rwandan diaspora commemoration in the UK which draws on oral history methodology, artwork and community curation. The display has been curated in consultation with Rwandan community members living in the UK, led by Dr Julia Viebach with Jozie Kettle (Pitt Rivers Museum).

Partners: National Association of Rwandese Communities in the UK and the Rwandese Community in Oxford.

The Pitt Rivers Museum is committed to being a space in which people with varied lived experiences can find a platform to speak and present from their own perspectives, the stories that are most important to them and that have the power to bring people together. ***Traces of the Past*** is a vital part of this work.

This exhibition is dedicated to the grandparents, parents, children, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, cousins, friends and neighbours who were killed during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. It acknowledges the courage and resilience of survivors, not least their openness to share their stories with the public.

Milk Container (Icyansi)

Victim: Augustin Ndayambaje (father)

Lender: Caritas Umulisa

Location: Rutobwe, Muhanga

‘Augustin Ndayambaje was killed during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. His remains were never found. The object “Icyansi” is a milk preservation container. Augustin was a farmer and loved his cows. He believed that milk is more important than food and therefore essential in people’s lives especially in that of children.’

Text by Caritas Umulisa, Oxford.



Drum (Ingoma)

Victims: Angelique Ishimwe,

Alida Uwamahoro, Laurence (friends)

Lender: Angelique Ndamukunda

Location: Kigali

‘The drum, “ingoma” reminds me of my 3 best friends at secondary school that I lost. We were always together until 6 April 1994, which is the last day, I saw them. They introduced me to a traditional dance class. I liked dancing to traditional songs but didn’t know how to dance. Ingoma reminds me that they teased and told me to just follow the drum rhythm. Even when we were in class or during breaks, they used to play that drum rhythm. I miss them very much.’

Text by Angelique Ndamukunda, Oxford.

Radio Batteries

Victims: Bernard Gasigwa and

Marie Mukabusingo (parents),

Peter Munyurabahizi (brother)

Lender: Appolinaire Kageruka

Location: Nyarubuye

‘The batteries helped me to survive.

The radio was the only way to get information

on roadblocks and military movements during the Genocide.

To save the batteries I took them out each time after I listened to the radio. They are something tangible that remind me of how I

survived. My parents Bernard and Marie and my brother Peter

were laid to rest at the Nyarubuye memorial which my brother

helped to build. It is a special place to me. I named my son

Bernard to never forget my dad.’

Appolinaire Kageruka, Coventry.

Mancala Board Game (Igisoro game)

Victims: a father and siblings

Lender: Marie Chantal Uwamahoro

Location: Unknown

‘Igisoro reminds me of my childhood with my family.

Growing up in a family of 8 children, we used to gather outside in the compound and play board games. The most popular one

was Igisoro -a two game players and we would take turns and the rest of us would watch or play cards. We would also be listening to

the afternoon music on the local radio. Igisoro brings some memories of watching my father and mother playing games with my siblings

and having some laughters. The game reminds me of what I once had and lost, my brothers, sisters and a father. I can only remember

my loved ones through memories by looking at what used to bring us together as a family.’

Text by Marie Chantal Uwamahoro, Bedford.



Photographs

Victims: Rose Mukakarimijabo (mother),
Joseph Gatare and Bashire Pierre Niyoyita (brothers)

Lender: Webare (nickname)

Location: Kibungo, Birenga

'If I had something it would be flowers.
I took care of the roses in our garden.
And my mother's name was Rose.
She was an incredible mother who never
got angry with us children. My brother
Joseph used to look after me. Bashire was
very social and made us laugh. He was a
comedian. We siblings never fought and life
before the Genocide was full of fun.
My mother Rose was my friend,
my everything.'

Webare, Reading.



Bible

Victims: Tensiya Eliphaz (father),
Charles Ukulikiyimfura and
Dani Harelimana (brothers),
Odette Nyirahabimana (niece)

Lender: Sophie Masereka

Location: Nyakabanda, Kigali



'The bible belonged to my father who was a pastor.
He was killed in 1994 alongside two of my brothers and my niece.
The bible is the last blessing my father gave to my mother because
he knew that he would never see her again. The bible went on a
long journey and saved many lives along the way including that of
my mother. It is a precious object to me, full of wisdom. It is the only
object left from before the Genocide.'

Sophie Masereka, London.

Sewing Machine (in film)

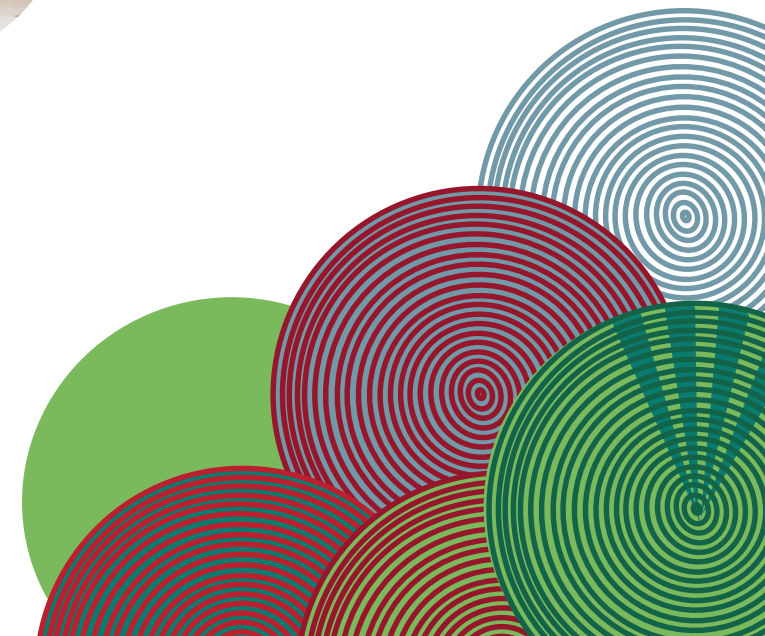
Victims: Gabriel (father) and
Domitilla (mother)

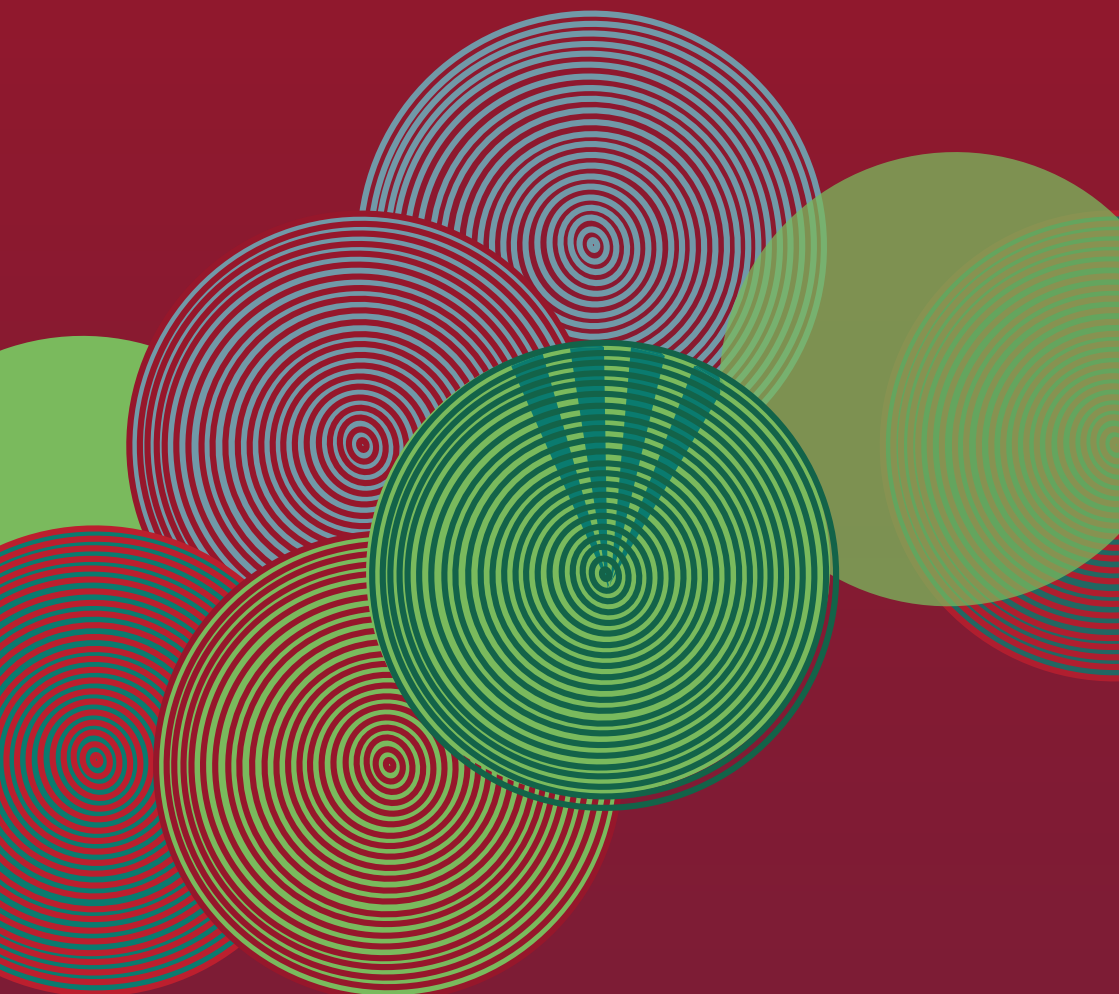
Lender: Jean Kayigamba

Location: Kigoma – Musange Commune,
Gikongoro

'My late dad was a local businessman.
He was a skilled tailor for ladies' garments of all kinds.
His business included selling special ladies' garments locally
known as "ibikoyi" (from African kikoy fabric). He sewed them
using a sewing machine of exactly the same make SINGER. This
was a profitable business because the people loved the garments.
It generated extra income which helped him to sustain us as family
and to pay for my high school tuition fees. I will never forget him.'

Text by Jean Kayigamba, Oxford.





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