

CAMERAWORK GALLERY
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VERA SALTZMAN EXHIBITS "O HUMAN CHILD" AT CAMERAWORK GALLERY,
AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

Award winning Canadian photographer, Vera Saltzman, notes, "My impetus for the series "O Human Child" came out of a desire to better understand the place I currently find myself, rural Saskatchewan. I turned to W.O. Mitchell's 1947 novel, *Who Has Seen The Wind*, hoping his words would help me gain a sense of the Saskatchewan identity. Through stories of everyday events, Mitchell writes of a young boy trying to make sense of life, death, and God and addressing universal themes in an authentic Canadian "prairie voice".

"As I read Mitchell's novel I began to question what life is like for children living in small prairie communities today. How do community and landscape shape their personal identity and sense of place? In a time when the online world has opened up for communication, learning, and entertainment, when family farms morph into commercial operations, and rural communities shrink with migration to urban areas, how will their childhood landscape impact them as adults?"

Her exhibit, “O Human Child” showcases portraits of children who live in rural Saskatchewan of a similar age (between ages 4 and 11) to those in *Who Has Seen the Wind*. The children are photographed in their own environments: in small towns or rural communities, on First Nations Territory and farms. In creating this series, Saltzman is taking a contemporary look at children growing up in rural Saskatchewan, considering how the tensions and complexities of childhood today both contrast and mirror those of Mitchell’s time.

Saltzman’s technique for posing her subjects was to recall historical portraits of unsmiling children—perhaps news or social documentary portraits—taken in austere situations. The children are looking directly into the camera, clear eyed, and invite the viewer to reflect on the issues today’s youth grapple with in rural Saskatchewan.

Vera describes one scene where Kennedy is standing in front of the town school that has been closed due to low enrolment figures, and it’s perhaps this—her sparse environment and lack of opportunity, her navigation from a child in the moment to a young lass who must think about her future—that defines this stoic defiance. It’s a beautiful portrait, celebrating the strength of youth, but not without melancholia, for which the black and white treatment is a perfect metaphor. Life marches on relentlessly, but progress can seem to be stagnant sometimes.” *

*Life Framer, Photography Platform and Awards www.life-framer.com/youthhood-2018/

The title of the exhibition comes from the refrain of the 1886 W.B. Yeats poem “The Stolen Child”. The poem is about the fairy tales we tell children to shield them from the harshness of the world—in this case the loss of a younger sibling.

Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a faery, hand in hand,

For the world’s more full of weeping than you can understand.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Canadian photographer Vera Saltzman focuses her attention on issues of identity and the development of a “sense of place,” the passage of time, and the fragility of life. She currently lives in Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan.

Saltzman received two Applied Arts Awards for creative excellence. Her series “O Human Child” was a finalist for the internationally recognized Julia Margaret Cameron Award and a Top 200 Finalist in the Photolucidia Critical Mass Awards. Images from the series have been shown at the 5th Biennial of Fine Art & Documentary Photography, Barcelona, Spain and at The Fence 2018, Calgary, Canada. Also, from the series the image Samuel is currently touring with the Fotofilmic18 Exhibition to Vancouver, Los Angeles and South Korea.

Her images have been published regionally, nationally and internationally including *Ottawa Magazine*, *Black & White Photography Magazine*, *British Journal of Photography*, *Photo Life*, *Seites*, *The Hand* and *Shots*. *The Creative Quarterly: The Journal of Art and Design* selected her work for their Top 100 publication. Her work has also been included in a number of online sites including Lenscratch, The Atlantic and Square Magazine.

Saltzman’s works are part of the permanent collections of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Art Gallery of Moose Jaw and Canada’s capital city of Ottawa. Vera Saltzman is represented by Slate Fine Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Camerawork Gallery is the nation’s oldest continuously running Fine Art Photography Gallery. It has been exhibiting monthly shows since 1970. The inspiration for the gallery initially arose from 20th Century master photographer and photography icon Minor White during his Portland Workshops that started in 1959.