

Rematerializing Vision – Contemporary Dis/Embodied Art on the ‘War on Terror’

Pia Nottebaum (BA (Hons) / MA)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics

Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion
Lancaster University

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Abstract:

This inquiry into corporeal experiences of the ‘war on terror’ is pursued through the lens of contemporary art that, it is argued here, can be seen to innovatively trace war through its corporeal effects. In order to investigate the ways in which contemporary artists are commenting on the pivotal place of the body in war, the thesis examines contemporary artists’ responses to the ‘war on terror’ with a view to the ways in which artists endeavour to render the corporeal experiences of the ‘war on terror’ intelligible and conceivable for audiences untouched by the violence of war. Specifically, the research project explores artistic strategies that have been utilized by artists from around the globe since 9/11 that can be seen to problematize distanced perception of war. The thesis posits that as their commentary is timely, artists can be seen to critically involve themselves in the representation of the ‘war on terror’ and to participate in the writing of its narrative. It argues that by drawing on diverse media, a range of venues in and through which to present their work, and unique artistic strategies that raise the body to the centre of attention, artists such as those considered in this thesis can be seen to speak to the body in pain in innovative and thought-provoking works that trouble our ways of seeing and rematerialize vision of the ‘war on terror’.

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Chapter 1.1 Introduction

‘The most political decision you make is where you direct people’s eyes.’¹

– Wim Wenders

As warfare imprints itself not only on the minds of those who are directly affected by war, physically and psychologically, but also in the consciousness of whole societies and the history of humanity as a whole, war’s legacy as rendered in visual accounts merits detailed consideration, specifically since – at least for those who did not directly experience them – the circumstances and violence of war will predominantly be conceived of and remembered in the context of the ways in which they are conveyed in representations. Indeed, when war takes place, as it does for many of us, in distant places, far away from our own lives and thus firmly beyond our immediate sensorial experience, knowledge of the ways in which it is conducted, by whom, by what means, to what ends, and with what effects is largely governed by representations, in words and images alike, for without being rendered in representation any event would not be knowable except to those who experienced it directly.

It is in this context that this thesis examines how contemporary artists are contributing to the visual vocabulary of the ‘war on terror’ through works of art that provide a lens through which contemporary corporeal experiences of war can be perceived. Venturing into the research project from the point of view that art offers a unique way of comprehending ourselves, each other and our engagement with the world, the thesis examines artistic strategies employed in contemporary artworks that aim to shed light on the violent realities of the ‘war on terror’ and the corporeal experiences thus produced.

Specifically, the project explores the ways in which contemporary artists’ works can be seen to rematerialize audiences’ vision as the artists have developed strategies that unequivocally place the body and its experience at the center of their works. Accordingly, the following questions are at the project’s core: through what strategies are contemporary artists attempting to draw attention to the human cost of war? How

¹ Wenders cited in: Levi Strauss, David, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (New York: Aperture, 2003), 1

do they situate the bodies that they are referencing in their works in their endeavour to render the corporeal experience of the 'war on terror' intelligible and conceivable to audiences? And how do the artists situate the audience in relation to their works in order to prompt audiences to examine their ways of seeing?

Thus, taking as its premise that art can offer critical insights and prompt us to reflect, to think and to perceive anew, and that works of art can therefore play a role in our understanding of war, both the circumstances of more than a decade of violent conflict ensuing from 9/11 and the capacity of art for poignant socio-political commentary inform the following pages. The artists and artworks considered in the thesis speak to both these themes as they highlight art's ability to critically intervene in contemporary debates on war and violence in problematizing corporeal experience of warfare in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The artists considered here are both established and emerging practitioners, some with and some without formal training in their respective art forms. However, the view that is taken here is that these creative practitioners function as insightful commentators due to the subject matter of their works of art and their diverse engagements with the 'war on terror', rather than due to their biography or reputation.

As the discussions will show, artistic responses to the 'war on terror' have neither been scarce nor uniform. Rather, they have been innovative and provocative in the ways in which they aim to focus attention on corporeal experience and the ways in which they endeavour to convey the pain and suffering produced in the 'war on terror'. Recognizing bodies as significant sites in the waging of war, the artists that are considered in these pages appear to feel that what they present in and through their artworks represents something that needs to be seen. Creatively conveying corporeal experience of the 'war on terror' to those without first-hand experience of the violence of war can thus be seen to denote a participation in the representation of contemporary war and violence.

The ways in which contemporary artists involve themselves in the representation of the 'war on terror' is relevant to the study of international relations as

‘the way artists see and shape the world is intensely political’² and as representations form the basis of our perception and understanding of that which occurs in the world beyond our own immediate experience. Accordingly, as we are ‘largely educated by reports and imagery that are second hand’ when we have ‘no experience against which to test’ what is represented,³ the mediation of war becomes the primary mode through which knowledge of its nature is constructed. As representation is thus inextricably tied up with power, documentation of war, like war itself, is of political significance and represents a fiercely contested sphere in which a multitude of actors operate.

With regard to the human cost of war this means that the pain and suffering that war effects may be reflected as well as prescribed, acknowledged or disavowed, i.e. accentuated or occluded from view, and thus may vary greatly across different accounts, depending not only on who is undertaking the describing but also on the objectives and interests that underwrite and inform the descriptions. What is at stake then is the visibility of the corporeal experience of war and the injuring and tearing of flesh that characterize it. To whose experiences do representations of war give voice, and how does recognition or erasure of the effects that war yields on the body situate the body in war?

It is in this context that the thesis is concerned with the ways in which artistic accounts intervene in the matrix of war, corporeality and visibility and the ways in which such accounts bring the material reality of the pain and suffering produced in war into sharp focus. Speaking to the ways in which diverse categories of bodies are routinely produced in war as bodies are *inter alia* mobilized, drilled, sacrificed, disciplined and neutralized, contemporary artworks whose subject matter revolves around corporeal experience can be seen to provide a lens on the ‘war on terror’ that is body-centered.

Moreover, as the ways in which contemporary artists speak to and connect audiences to contemporary corporeal experience in war can also be seen to draw attention to the changes in both the character and the perception of war – specifically

² Danchev, Alex and Debbie Lisle, ‘Introduction: art, politics, purpose’, *Review of International Studies*, (35: 4: October 2009), 775

³ Mackinlay, John, ‘Questioning the Images of War’, *RUSI Journal*, (148: 5: October 2003), 1

with a view to the emergence of new sets of bodies, the types of violence that have come to characterize the 'war on terror', and the increasingly distant and disembodied vision of war – the artworks can also be seen to critically reflect on the specific circumstances in which the waging of war in the early twenty-first century is taking place. Thus, with a view to how developments in technology have brought about significant changes in the exercise of warfare, developing toward greater tactical capabilities and hitherto unknown competence in precision, which has led to the notion that warfare can be exercised in less savage ways and instead promises the possibility of 'humane warfare'⁴ that would be characterized by a decrease in the violence that is utilized in its exercise and necessary to effect its outcome, the thesis posits that contemporary artworks that can be seen to rematerialize vision can function as spaces in which technologized warfare is contemplated and challenged and that artistic accounts of contemporary warfare can illustrate in compelling ways what happens when 'soft bodies' are put 'into harm's way in front of hard objects'.⁵

Commenting on the changes in the technological landscape of the First World War which dramatically transformed the logistics of war, Walter Benjamin noted:

'A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.'⁶

The thesis aims to illustrate through the analysis of a number of contemporary artworks how works of art that address corporeal experience of the 'war on terror' forcefully reveal the fact that, a century later and in an even more technologically complex environment, the vulnerable and fragile body remains. This fact, it will be argued, is communicated in thought-provoking ways by means of innovative artistic strategies that contemporary artists utilize in order to facilitate and deepen audiences' understanding of the ways in which the 'war on terror' produces corporeal experiences of pain and suffering.

⁴ Lonsdale, David, 'Strategy' in: Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 54

⁵ Cotterrell, David, 'Memoir of a War Artist', *RUSI Journal*, (155: 5: October 2010), 80

⁶ Benjamin, Walter, 'The Storyteller' in: Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1970), 84

Throughout the following pages this introductory chapter discusses the theoretical background that forms the basis on which this research project inquires into the ways in which contemporary artists are commenting on the 'war on terror'. To this end, the chapter examines in some detail two pillars of research that inform this inquiry, namely the role of images and the place of the body in the context of international relations in order to situate the research project within a wider body of literature. Thereafter, the remainder of the pages of this chapter turn to an introduction of artistic responses to the 'war on terror', a formulation of the research project's central arguments, the project's conceptual framework, and an overview over the chapters that follow.

1.2 The Role of the Image in International Relations

As in the contemporary information environment 'our lives are increasingly mediated by technology' and as consequently 'our senses of self, our relationships with others, and our communities all are shaped by our daily interactions with and through machines',⁷ information technologies have emerged to constitute a key battle space in contemporary warfare. As a fundamentally human activity, war is carried out by human agents and involves the utilization of weaponry, yet the employment of physical force is not the only instrument of war – words, too, perform war, and so do images. Indeed, in the context of contemporary warfare images have taken on a central role – they can be seen to constitute, as James Gow and Milena Michalski note, 'the key weapons of modern warfare'.⁸

The significance of images in the waging of war has steadily grown over the course of the nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century in conjunction with the emergence of increasingly sophisticated visual technologies. Prior to the developments of such printmaking techniques as etching, aquatint and lithography, the technologies to 'create, reproduce and distribute written

⁷ Baym, Nancy, 'Tune in Tomorrow' in: Nightingale, Virginia and Karen Ross (eds.), *Critical Readings: Media and Audiences*, (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2003), 249

⁸ Gow, James and Milena Michalski, *War, Image and Legitimacy*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 10; see also: Kennedy, Liam, 'Securing vision: photography and US foreign policy', *Media, Culture and Society*, (30: 3: May 2008): 279-294

words far outstripped the technology needed to mass-produce paintings, drawings, carvings, stamps and other forms of visual communication` which indicates that historically `the creation of visual images was the province of illustrators, painters, draftsmen and artisans`.⁹

With the invention of photography in 1839 systemized documentation of what war looked like became possible. Whilst during the Crimean War the arrival of the war reporter on the battle scene marked the replacement of the soldier-correspondent and constituted a significant leap for journalistic practices in the history of journalism as the dispatch of newspaper reporters represented the beginning of an `organised effort to report war to the civilian population at home using the services of a civilian reporter`,¹⁰ information about war became more conceivable and accessible by means of war's visualization through the photographic medium. `For thousands of years most of the human race had never seen a battlefield, had been spared the eyewitness knowledge of the ugly indignities that war inflicted on those who engaged in combat`, notes Peter Maslowski, further stating that prior to the invention of photography `non-combatants "saw" war only through the less-than-accurate tales of surviving soldiers and sailors, epic poetry, a few historical accounts and stylized artwork`.¹¹

Yet, although early writing on photography deliberated the capability of photography to bring an end to war this quickly proved to constitute an erroneous belief. Initially `critics of war hoped that the new visual mode would help eliminate war as a means to deal with conflict if pictures would only depict human suffering realistically enough`.¹² Since it soon became apparent that they failed to do so, the optimism concerning an emancipatory potential that had been bestowed upon the medium soon dwindled. Nonetheless, the importance of photography as well as other forms of visual documentation for our perception of the world, and the domination of

⁹ Lindstrom, Robert, `Being Visual - Multimedia Literacy`, Presenters University, http://www.presentersuniversity.com/visuals_being_visual03.php, accessed November 12th 2009

¹⁰ Knightley, Phillip, *The First Casualty – The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo*, (London: Prion Books, 2000), 2

¹¹ Maslowski, Peter, *Armed with Cameras – The American Military Photographers of World War II*, (New York: Free Press, 1993), 3

¹² Möller, Frank, `Imagining and Remembering Peace and War`, *Peace Review*, (20: 1: Jan-March 2008), 104

the human psyche by imagery is undisputed. Indeed, it appears irrefutable that 'the making of the twentieth century world has had a distinctively visual aspect, that modernisation has involved the eye'.¹³

Undoubtedly, human beings are best equipped for visual information rather than information that is perceived through other senses. We are a visual species as our sense of vision exceeds the senses of hearing, smell, taste and touch to the extent that 'we pull in and send out far more information through our eyes than all our other senses combined' due to human physiology in which out of all the sense receptors it is the eyes that are by far the most powerful information conduit to the brain, allowing us to 'register a full-colour image, the equivalent of a megabyte of data, in a fraction of a second' as the nerve cells devoted to visual processing account for about thirty percent of the cortex of the brain in contrast to a mere eight percent of nerve cells devoted to touch and three percent for hearing.¹⁴

It is against this background of recognition of humans as visually oriented beings as well as in the context of an increasingly complex information environment that is part of what Lars Qvortrup calls a 'hypercomplex society' – characterized by increasing social complexity of which communication mechanisms constitute a significant feature and marked by 'communication events'¹⁵ – that coupled with the speed and reach of their dissemination in the form of electronic data transfer, the significance of imagery as a mode of communication cannot be doubted and that images have to be taken seriously.

As politically contested sites the images that are produced, disseminated and received via technological devices thus are at the heart of the 'image war' that has materialized in an era in which war is inextricably entwined with and coinciding with its representation. With an unprecedented instantaneity and simultaneity the 'war on

¹³ Fyfe, Gordon and John Law, 'Introduction: on the invisibility of the visual' in: Fyfe, Gordon and John Law (eds.), *Picturing Power – Visual Depiction and Social Relations*, (London: Routledge, 1988), 3

¹⁴ Lindstrom, op.cit.

¹⁵ Such as the events surrounding the publication of the Mohammed cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 that gave rise to social earthquakes in the Muslim world which Qvortrup argues could only occur in the Digital Age; see: Qvortrup, Lars, 'Understanding New Digital Media: Medium Theory or Complexity Theory?', *European Journal of Communication*, (21: 3: September 2006): 346-349 and Qvortrup, Lars, *The Hypercomplex Society*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003)

terror` has from its inception been mediated and fought across numerous outlets and by various actors – amongst them political figures, military spokespeople, and media journalists as well as bloggers, coalition soldiers and Islamist extremists, the latter actors in particular utilizing new media technologies such as the Internet as a platform via which to distribute their materials. From the publication of images that are censored in the mainstream media on diverse online sharing sites and in blogs, to the images produced by soldiers in the warzones shared on YouTube, MySpace and other online platforms, from the footage produced by Islamist extremists of attacks on coalition forces and of hostages, to Bin Laden's videos, the visual description of contemporary warfare has expanded to take place across a multi-media landscape in which information becomes much harder to control.

The 'war on terror` as the first truly digitized war in history is thus characterized not only by an increase in information that is circulating in a global communication space and by actors involved in its mediation, but also by the emergence of what Liam Kennedy calls 'visual blowback` that is enabled by new media technologies that have 'facilitated the explosion of imagery documenting violent international conflict and the real time experiences of warfare normally beyond the gaze of the media and of their audiences`.¹⁶ The multitude of imagery producing actors, the diversity of perspectives represented in and through such imagery, and the technologies utilized to produce and circulate imagery demonstrate the extent to which the waging of war and image technologies have become profoundly connected and interdependent in complex ways. What has emerged can be described as 'an instant public transformation of the mayhem and bloodshed into a matrix`¹⁷ that is *inter alia* comprised of the composed frames produced through embedded journalism, soldier blogs, cell-phone reporting, 24/7 news broadcasting and the YouTube war.

Images have thus come to 'dominate the various environments in which the legitimacy of armed campaigns in an era of rapid international and transnational change is contested – politically, socially, legally and communicatively` and as they constitute

¹⁶ Kennedy, Liam, 'Soldier Photography: visualising the war in Iraq`, *Review of International Studies*, (35: 4: September 2009), 818

¹⁷ Atkinson, Michael, 'Moving Targets`, *Modern Painters*, (20: 3: April 2008), 45

‘short cuts to understanding’ in that they ‘distil the essence of conflict’ images are central to the ways in which war is perceived and central to the competition for hearts and minds – so much so that the waging of the ‘war on terror’ to a considerable extent has become a struggle for retinal impression and could indeed be conceived as a ‘battle for hearts, minds and retinas’.¹⁸ In the context of this plethora of diverse imagery emanating from disparate sources it becomes apparent that diverse images serve different agendas and are utilized as much to question, challenge and resist as to legitimize and to affirm political power. In and through imagery and the technologies that are involved in image production, circulation and reception the violence of war is made both present and distant. Different points of view are pitted against one another in a conflict of perspectives.

Moreover, there can be seen to be a tension between the ways in which war and its violence are represented and perceived and war and its violence as they actually occur, or in other words, between the material reality of war and its violence and the pain and suffering that it effects and how they are shown and perceived in and through representations. This is because representations are man-made artefacts rather than simply found or given. When representations are recognized as constructions, it becomes apparent that they represent subjective documentations rather than objective copies of reality. Accordingly, it also becomes apparent that representations, as products of human creation, regardless of their form always and necessarily bear the marks of their makers and that they cannot objectively replicate reality. Nonetheless, as the discussion of these matters in Chapter 2 will show, a quest for realism, authenticity and accuracy has long accompanied the history of artistic renderings of the world and events within it and has long occupied producers of representations of all kinds.

It is in this context and against the background of recognition of representations as constructed and interpretative entities that the thesis posits that artists as producers of representations can, on the one hand, be seen to wrestle with the difficulty of finding ways and means to represent the world as-it-is, i.e. the world and events within it as they really are, and, on the other hand, be seen to often display recognition of the

¹⁸ Gow and Michalski, *op.cit.*, 1-5

challenges surrounding realistic representation in and through the conceptualization of their works. In their endeavour to refer to reality and in an attempt to find answers to the challenges of representation artists can moreover be seen to experiment with diverse, imaginative and innovative strategies in their inspection and representation of the world.

In the context of the growing significance of images it is also worth noting that growing attention in academic scholarship to the role of visual culture in our perception of the world and events within it is evident in the diverse scholarship on these matters. For instance, in what W.J.T. Mitchell termed the 'pictorial turn' and Gottfried Böhm referred to as the 'iconic turn', the paradigm shift from linguistic to visual representation and communication, there emerges a call for a science of images that engages in research into the function of images in the ways in which perceptions of the world are produced. The premise here is constituted in the notion that in an era of profound visual saturation the days of the hegemony of the word might be coming to an end. Rather than remaining word-text oriented what is needed then is thinking with and through images. Mitchell proposes that this turn entails 'a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, discourse, bodies, and figurality' and that it heralds the 'realization that while the problem of pictorial representation has always been with us, it presses inescapably now, and with unprecedented force, on every level of culture'.¹⁹

Yet, even as imagery has become the focus of inquiry in some quarters it stands to argue that a thorough acknowledgment of the notion that international politics and particularly power politics are to a great extent carried out through visual communication is still absent in much of the social sciences. In fact, since images continue to be subordinated to language in much of social sciences scholarship, it would appear that most of the social sciences disciplines are still 'subscribing to the traditional view of "man" as the "speaking animal" while ignoring that we receive most information through our eyes'.²⁰ Yet, as images constitute a central feature of global

¹⁹ Mitchell, W.J.T., *Picture Theory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 16

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102

communication practices and as they have become ever more significant in the waging of war it is undoubtedly the case that we can no longer discuss war, its nature and its effects without considering their representation.

Although there exists an established body of literature on the broad subject of media and war – particularly with regard to research on the ways in which media images influence war, inquiry into how images function as propaganda, and their ability to influence political decision making, thus representing research pertaining mostly to inquiries into journalistic visualizations²¹ – evidence of scholarly attention dedicated to artistic visualizations and the ways in which they can contribute to our understanding of global politics is only slowly emerging. It is in this context that the research project aims to contribute to the literature at the intersection between art and politics, specifically to the emerging literature on post 9/11 art that concerns itself with socio-political circumstances at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Within political sciences specifically, exploration of aesthetic engagements with political realities remains atypical. Alex Danchev and Debbie Lisle observe in this context that ‘International Relations too often merely *tolerates* scholarship on art, culture and imagination’ whilst Roland Bleiker similarly notes a lack of scholarly attention to the insights that are presented in and through the arts.²² It would thus appear that the scholarship of International Relations which for the most part remains distinctly linguistic-centered in its methodologies and research techniques has not yet taken a step towards a more comprehensive integration of images both as a subject of inquiry, and as a form of knowledge and medium of communication.

Drawing on Alexander Wendt, Bleiker observes that the defence of forms of insight stemming from reason remains prevalent in International Relations scholarship: knowledge and knowledge production are seen as valuable only when they are derived by means of scientific inquiry and methods – ‘poetry, literature and other humanistic disciplines’, asserts Wendt, ‘are not designed to explain global war or Third World

²¹ See for instance: Allen, Stuart and Barbie Zelizer (eds.), *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, (London: Routledge, 2004); Hoskins, Andrew, *Television from Vietnam to Iraq*, (London: Continuum, 2004); and Carruthers, Susan, *The Media at War*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000)

²² See: Danchev and Lisle, op.cit., 776 and Bleiker, Roland, ‘Art after 9/11’, *Alternatives*, (31: 1: January 2006), 77-99

poverty, and as such if we want to solve those problems our best hope, slim as it maybe, is social science`.²³

In contrast to positions such as Wendt's, Bleiker argues for the validation of 'an entirely different approach to the study of world politics`, namely an aesthetic approach in which not only reason but also other more sensuous forms of insight, such as imagination, sensibility and perception, are taken into account since 'we need to employ the full register of human perception and intelligence to understand the phenomena of world politics and to address the dilemmas that emanate from them`.²⁴ As Bleiker asserts, 'aesthetics is an important and necessary addition to our interpretative repertoire` because even though the insights that are communicated through works of art 'cannot always be verified by methodological means proper to science`, artistic insights can generate not only more diverse but also more direct encounters with political subject matter which 'can contribute to a more inclusive and just world order, for they challenge our very notion of common sense by allowing us to see what may be obvious but has not been noted before`.²⁵

It is in this light and against this background that examining contemporary artists and artworks that comment on and intervene in the 'war on terror` can be seen to represent a worthwhile undertaking, the more so when taking into account that 'the political issues most fundamental to International Relations – war, peace, order, justice – have always been fundamental to artists as well`, which suggests that artists are well suited to function as 'highly sophisticated analysts of the international sphere`.²⁶ Thus, thinking through diverse artistic strategies and exploring contemporary artworks' scope for, on the one hand, contributing towards a recovery of corporeal visibility in the context of the 'war on terror`, and, on the other hand, challenging audiences to examine their ways of seeing, constitutes a timely topic that presents an interesting research subject that poses a multitude of questions that evoke reflection on the current state of the world, our vision of and conduct in it.

²³ Wendt cited in: Bleiker, Roland, 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory`, *Millennium*, (30: 3: December 2001), 519

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 510, 519

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 519-520, 526

²⁶ Danchev and Lisle, *op.cit.*, 775

Investigation of artistic strategies aimed at enabling an engagement with corporeal experience in the 'war on terror' can furthermore be seen as pertinent since, just as images have not yet risen to represent a central focus of inquiry in International Relations, the body, as will be shown in the pages that follow, likewise has long been marginalized in the discipline.

1.3 Politics Incarnate

Our perception of the philosophical and social significance of the body has, throughout history, been shaped by competing visions and debates about the body as the site of contested notions in relation to *inter alia* power, health, and bodily normality and abnormality. Whilst inquiry into the meaning of the body for our understanding of the world has long been absent from theoretical inquiry in many social science disciplines – due to the 'privileging of abstract theorising'²⁷ that distanced social sciences from biology and psychology which consequentially also led to a distancing from the body itself – in recent decades scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the body.

Undoubtedly, scholarly engagement with the body to a great extent emerged out of gender studies.²⁸ Academic scholarship on the body across a variety of disciplines has then led to an 'incredible explosion of work on the body in theory'.²⁹ Bryan Turner suggests that the 'cultural thematisation of the body in contemporary society is a consequence of a variety of social changes and movements' which include the 'women's movement, gay liberation, technical changes in medical science, and commercial changes in the use of the body as an icon of contemporary consumerism'.³⁰ The rediscovery of the body at the end of the twentieth century can be interpreted as a

²⁷ Seymour, Wendy, *Remaking the body – Rehabilitation and Change*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 3

²⁸ Challenging notions of the body as biologically given and fixed in drawing attention to the cultural and historical specificity of the body, notably the work of Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Susan Bordo: *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)

²⁹ Holliday, Ruth and John Hassard (eds.), *Contested Bodies*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 1; see for example: Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Allen Lane, 1977); Turner, Bryan S., *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, Third Edition, (London: Sage, 2008); Featherstone, Mike, M. Hepworth, and B.S. Turner (eds.), *The Body, Social Process and Cultural Theory*, (London: Sage, 1991); and Shilling, Chris, *The Body and Social Theory*, (London: Sage, 1993)

³⁰ Turner, Bryan S., 'Foreword' in: Seymour, op.cit., v

response to the socio-political anxieties of our time as ‘the turn to the body in social and cultural theory has been seen as an intellectual response to the crisis of modernity – of universal truth and objective knowledge – the quest for certainty, stability and tangibility’.³¹

However, the place of the body in recent theoretical work is heavily contested as within the various theoretical conceptualizations there are polar formations that emphasize the body as either a pre-discursive given, i.e. the body as lived phenomenon, existing independently of any form of discourse, or as a product of discourse, i.e. the body as socially constituted through historical discourses, with both strands of theory engaged in a vigorously fought debate. Representing the most significant social constructionist approach, the work of Michel Foucault provides ‘a model for the view that bodies and minds, and the divisions between them, are the product of a variety of historically- and culturally-specific discourses’.³² Much of contemporary concern with the body certainly developed out of Foucault’s influential conceptualization of discourses of power that explored the body as a subject of regulation and surveillance.³³ Whilst Foucault was concerned with the body as a product of discourse, his analysis emphasizes the power of discourse over the investigation of bodies. In contrast, more recent theoretical work on the body acknowledges the concept of embodiment that recognizes the corporeality of the body. Bodies, then, are ‘the physical sites where the relations of class, gender, race, sexuality and age come together and are embodied and practiced’.³⁴ As embodied social agents, human beings can thus be understood as not simply having bodies but rather as being bodies.

It is in this context that the role of Cartesian dualism in postmodern theoretical concepts of the body becomes apparent as René Descartes’ famous dictum *Cogito ergo sum* initiated the ‘great modern project of individualism, materialism in science and the

³¹ Holliday and Hassard, op.cit., 2

³² Seale, Clive, ‘The Body and Death’ in: Cunningham-Burley, Sarah and Kathryn Backett-Milburn (eds.), *Exploring the Body*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 101

³³ See: Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Allen Lane, 1977) and Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981)

³⁴ Skeggs, Beverly, *Formations of Class and Gender*, (London: Sage, 1997), 82

mind/body dichotomy³⁵. In Descartes' thought, which profoundly influenced the Western philosophical tradition, it was the mind rather than the body that took center stage: Descartes proposed that 'the mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body' so that 'even if the body were to cease, it [the mind] would not cease to be all that it is'.³⁶ In contrast, Friedrich Nietzsche's suggestion that 'the body is a big sagacity, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd', directed at what he called 'despisers of the body', indicates that the body/mind dualism as theorized by Descartes 'was beginning to lose its privileged position in the logic of Western thought by the end of the nineteenth century'.³⁷

Indeed, Nietzsche's clear rejection of Cartesianism helped move Western thought toward an understanding of the body as inexorably enmeshed in the mind or soul and vice versa.³⁸ Whilst with the rise of consumerism the Cartesian body/mind dualism, and subjectivity founded on thought, has been displaced by an era in which the body has been elevated to a symbol of self-realization, a site of experimentation and identity formation; and as medical developments and technology are allowing us to undertake hitherto impossible alterations of our bodies, growing attention has also been directed to the body as a limitation and an 'impediment' to growth and possibility' since we continue to be confronted with the fact that our bodies are 'frail, unreliable, inefficient and vulnerable'.³⁹ Thus, even as we have increasingly begun to believe that our bodies are reconstructable, a notion which has emerged as a by-product of the search for possibilities to extend life, cure diseases and further facilitate the merging of humans and machines (as constituted in the notion of the cyborg), the fact remains that ageing and dying remain inevitable as the body is mortal and inherently temporary.

What becomes apparent against this background is that as we are increasingly concentrated on the body, it forcefully reveals itself as a site of profound contestation that is characterized by its dual nature: 'the body is both material and representation,

³⁵ Turner, op.cit., vi

³⁶ Descartes, René, *Discourse on Method and the Mediations*, trans. F.E. Sutcliffe, (London: Penguin, 1968), 54

³⁷ Nietzsche cited in: Jones, Amelia, 'Body' in: Nelson, Robert and Richard Shiff (eds.), *Critical Terms For Art History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 251

³⁸ Ibid., 252

³⁹ Seymour, op.cit., 6

and these two domains through which we come to "know" the body intertwine in complex ways.⁴⁰ The body, then, constitutes contested territory not only in theoretical conceptualizations but also in representation and interpretation. It is thus important to acknowledge that bodies represent the 'locus of thinking – the site from which thinking takes place' as well as the 'object of thought', and that 'bodies are read as well as written'.⁴¹ It is at this juncture that questions of power and authority enter the equation.

The body, writes Wendy Seymour, is a 'corporeal phenomenon, which not only is affected by the social system but also forms a basis for and shapes social relations'.⁴² Thus, whilst bodies constitute contested territory which gives rise to political repercussions and consequences for everyday life and our interactions with one another, the contested place of the body and its significance likewise materialize in the exercise of warfare, which revolves around corporeal participation. Nonetheless, the body remains conspicuously absent in both much of IR scholarship, in the approaches to power politics in international relations, and in the rhetoric with which they are communicated in political and military jargon, i.e. within both international politics and the discipline that studies it. Within IR scholarship, embodied experience and the ways in which the relationship between power and its subjects encompasses the influence of the former on the production and regulation of the latter falls largely outside the dominant conceptual frameworks. Rather, in a discipline that pivots around rationality, predictability and calculability the body and its sentient experience appear to represent a realm of thought that is abstracted.

Conceptions of the subject that depoliticize it by limiting the possibility of political action and thereby rendering it all but invisible within the political order, which, as Jenny Edkins puts it, confines subjects to 'activity within the boundaries set by existing social and international orders' and restricts criticism to 'the technical arrangements that make up the "politics" within which we exist as "subjects" of the

⁴⁰ Holliday and Hassard, *op.cit.*, 3

⁴¹ Ahmed, Sara and Jackie Stacey (eds.), *Thinking Through the Skin*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 2 and Holliday and Hassard, *op.cit.*, 16

⁴² Seymour, *op.cit.*, 10

state⁴³, enable a disengagement from subjectivity and the ways in which political circumstances affect embodied experience and being in the world. The overall absence of the body in international relations, specifically in Realist accounts that have long dominated the discipline, is similarly underscored by Michael Dillon and David Campbell who point out that 'the engineered blind spots of international relations' are nowhere more apparent 'than when we ask "Where is the body in international relations?"', further observing that the body represents a 'neglected yet crucial site [...] in the modalities of power and violence'.⁴⁴ Thus, even as considerations of the body and lived experience have evidently begun to emerge in recent decades in the work of feminists and poststructuralists, on the whole international relations remains mainly disembodied and the body largely negated in IR discourses.

This then also means that analysis of the body in its visual forms and the ways in which it is affected by power and violence that it is subject to remains at the periphery of our attention. It is these eclipses of the body that obscure it from vision that artists, it is suggested in these pages, can be seen to call critical attention to by presenting work that has been conceptualized to directly address contemporary corporeal experience. The negation of the body in a discipline concerned with peace and war, order, justice, relations of power and the international system appears as problematic as the masking of the violence that underwrites, represents and reproduces international relations and its elements in theory and practice. As violence has long been and continues to constitute the basic theme of politics and the '*ultima ratio* of politics', it follows that 'the basic subject of modern politics is therefore also a subject of violence' and thus markedly central to politics, international relations and violent conflict.⁴⁵ Yet, just as the body is abstracted from view, as is discussed subsequently,

⁴³ Edkins, Jenny, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 9

⁴⁴ Dillon, Michael and David Campbell, 'The political and the ethical' in: Dillon, Michael and David Campbell (eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 162

⁴⁵ Dillon, Michael and David Campbell, 'The end of philosophy and the end of international relations' in: Dillon, Michael and David Campbell (eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 1 [emphasis in the original]

so violence, too, is often obscured, or as Claire Thomas puts it, 'hidden in the way we talk about IR',⁴⁶ even as it represents a central theme of international relations.

Rather than naming it or its functions directly violence is often referred to indirectly and through euphemisms, described instead in such terms as 'force', 'strike', 'destruction' or 'attack', particularly in the context of violence utilized by states, which not only serves to legitimize violence exercised by the state, but also functions to normalize it as an integral part of the international system and to restrain insight into its destructive nature. In referring to violence in the context of direct violence in terms of military force in ways that avoid use of the term yet couple it with notions of legitimacy, this in turn leads to the normative use of violence being associated with illegitimacy and predominantly linked to descriptions of the actions of non-state actors, even as the respective actions might not be dissimilar.

Indeed, this is not a new phenomenon as the rationalization and justification of violence by the state, bestowed with the monopoly on legitimate violence, dates back to at least the seventeenth century and has constituted a 'central feature of modernity' that considers state violence as a form of legitimate counter-violence: 'we can find a common tendency in modernity to confront a preceding private, savage, and illegal violence with a public, ordering and legal power (of the state)'.⁴⁷

In the context of contemporary warfare in which Western military actions are carried out under the umbrella of a global struggle for security, and framed as a defence of civilization against barbarism, the violence exercised is presented as justified and constructive. 'Since military action is performed in the name of the common good of humanity', notes Jörg Meyer, 'it must not be represented as an act of violence, but celebrated as an intervention that counters violence and war'.⁴⁸ As state actors and the violence they exercise are thus not seen as violent and as this affects understanding of what and whose acts are considered violent and which are not, the ways in which we discuss violence have profound implications for the ways in which we perceive and

⁴⁶ Thomas, Claire, 'Why don't we talk about "violence" in International Relations?', *Review of International Studies*, (37: 4: October 2010), 1815

⁴⁷ Meyer, Jörg, 'The Concealed Violence of Modern Peace(-Making)', *Millennium*, (36: 3: May 2008), 562

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 566

think about violence, and by extension the ways in which we act in the political sphere and the ways in which we understand international relations. Since the 'words and language we use to express ideas also affect the ideas themselves' and as 'our language affects what can be said about the subject in hand',⁴⁹ it remains important to recognize the implications of the terms that are utilized to hide or re-describe violence, particularly as they not only give rise to assumptions about legitimacy, but also hinder the recognition that violence has concrete material effects on bodies.

However, the use of abstract terminology can enable us to forget or overlook that violence produces corporeal injury as euphemisms have a tendency to evade association with the destructive nature of violence. 'The danger in referring to an act of violence in some other way', Thomas points out, 'is that we can hide the fact that we are discussing something that does significant harm to individuals' and that 'it can make an act of extraordinary brutality sound normal'.⁵⁰ When violence is normalized in such a way that it is made to appear as an ordinary and routinely utilized means of addressing political conflict, it is not surprising that its effects are normalized as well, which materializes as particularly evident in war.

As a form of violence, war by definition constitutes a violent activity that has permeated the history of civilization to the extent that human history is a history of violent conflict. Emphasizing war as an instrument of politics and a means to address external threats, Prussian military thinker Carl von Clausewitz famously spoke of war as 'a mere continuation of policy by other means' – war, he reasoned, 'is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means'.⁵¹ Centrally, for Clausewitz, war is a form of social action whose inner logic requires that war as a means of achieving political objectives necessitates the willingness to destroy the enemy's forces and exhaust his will to fight. Clausewitz acknowledges that violence is intrinsic to war and refers to this fact in multiple ways, noting *inter alia* that 'it is inherent in the very concept of war

⁴⁹ Thomas, *op.cit.*, 1816

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1834

⁵¹ Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War* (1832), trans. 1908, ed. Anatol Rapoport, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1982), 119

that everything that occurs *must originally derive from combat*, that war 'is nothing but mutual destruction', that 'the essence of war is fighting' and that war is 'a clash between major interests, which is resolved by bloodshed'.⁵²

Despite his state-centric view of the world that led him to theorize the nature of war from a strategy and policy driven point of view – which has led some critics to argue that Clausewitz's writing is antiquated⁵³ – his strategic thinking continues to be influential even as warfare has developed to be increasingly irregular and asymmetrical in character. In particular, Clausewitz's analysis of war continues to inform strategic thinking and moreover finds resonance in the rationalized and abstract ways in which warfare continues to be articulated and exercised linguistically, which ultimately renders what inevitably is at stake in warfare, namely the ways in which war affects corporeal experience, elusive and unintelligible.

Sentient experience of warfare, however, is not only masked at the level of language but also in another dimension that similarly evacuates the corporeal effects of war from view. Increasingly, the bodies that are occupied in warfare are not only rendered abstract and remote discursively but also technologically. Michael Shapiro traces the trend in warfare to progressively turn subjects into 'objects of violence' that are obscured and de-realized, and in drawing on Max Weber's account of modernity which 'emphasises the intensification of the process of rationalisation where instrumental rationality displaces the intersubjective, reciprocal aspects of social relations', illustrates how reciprocal human interactions have increasingly been removed and severed in the exercise of warfare, principally due to developments in vision technologies that enable engagement from a distance.⁵⁴ That these most central elements of warfare, i.e. violence and bodies, and the effects of the former on the latter, are for the most part obscured, however, can in itself be seen to substantiate their central role in warfare.

⁵² Ibid., 95 [emphasis in the original], 236, 248, 149

⁵³ See for instance: Crevelde, Martin van, *The Transformation of War*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991) and Keegan, John, *A History of Warfare*, (London: Pimlico, 1994)

⁵⁴ Shapiro, Michael, 'That obscure object of violence: Logistics and Desire in the Gulf War' in: Dillon and Campbell, op.cit., 114

That war is fundamentally embodied is powerfully illustrated by Elaine Scarry who highlights that war is ‘the most radically embodying event in which human beings ever collectively participate’.⁵⁵ Indeed, the very fact that the weaponry utilized in warfare is collectively referred to as ‘arms’ since weapons are essentially an ‘extension of the human body’⁵⁶ can in itself be seen as evidence of the embodiment of war. Addressing the matter of violence much more directly than Clausewitz in naming its function unequivocally, Scarry asserts that the main purpose as well as outcome of war is the injuring of bodies. War, in its essence, is constituted in the activities of contest and injuring as ‘in participating in war, one participates not simply in an act of injuring, but in the activity of reciprocal injuring where the goal is to out-injure the opponent’.⁵⁷

The deaths and the suffering that occur in war are thus more than merely a by-product. Rather, injuring and killing constitute an elemental and necessary part in the quest to achieve political goals and are hence not an incidental but a direct consequence of war. The material effect of war then is that ‘war tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerates. War scorches. War dismembers. War *ruins*’.⁵⁸ The destructive nature of violence is similarly highlighted in Simone Weil’s renowned meditation on war, *The Illiad, or, the Poem of Force*, in which she compellingly draws attention to the devastating effects that materialize when force and flesh collide. Observing that in the encounter with violence ‘man’s flesh shrinks away’, Weil recognizes that the experience of war is accompanied by ‘the risk of being reduced to nothing in a single instant’ as in the circumstances of war the prospect of meeting death lies ‘locked up in each moment’ – violence thus not only injures but also extinguishes life, when it is ‘exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him’.⁵⁹

Still, the pain inflicted in war is generally excluded from view, evacuated by means of omission and renaming. ‘The fact of injuring tends to be absent from strategic

⁵⁵ Scarry, Elaine, *The Body in Pain – The Making and Unmaking of the World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 71

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 63

⁵⁸ Sontag, Susan, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (London: Penguin, 2003), 7 [emphasis in the original]

⁵⁹ Weil, Simone, ‘The Illiad, or, the Poem of Force’, trans. Mary McCarthy, *Chicago Review*, (18: 2: 1965), 6,9,19

and political descriptions of war` as evident in the fact that regardless of the abundance of war reports we read, see or listen to we rarely encounter the `acknowledgment that the purpose of the event described is to alter (to burn, to blast, to shell, to cut) human tissue`.⁶⁰ The injury caused is thus disowned and emptied of human content, especially by means of `technostrategic language` which defence analysts readily utilize when they speak of `clean bombs`, `surgically clean strikes`, `counter-value attacks` or `collateral damage` – all of which represent a rather `elaborate use of abstraction and euphemism` which conceal the sentient experience behind the words and avoid the `emotional fallout that would result if it were clear one was talking about plans for mass murder, mangled bodies, and unspeakable human suffering`.⁶¹

It is in this context that the language utilized to refer to the injuring and killing in war ceases to be a morally resonant one. When represented in ways that make them appear less real and less perceivable it is not surprising that violence and the corporeal suffering it produces fail to fully register. It also becomes apparent then that the ways in which bodies and violence are narrated and visualized are no small matter as they sustain and reinforce a particular way of perceiving the world. Mediations that distance us from the violence of war, making war's violence and its corporeal effects appear abstract and remote, represent mediations that essentially lead to the eradication of the corporeal experience of war rather than to its recognition and thus do not aid our understanding of war's human cost. What becomes apparent from this discussion is that war is carried out through the interplay between the exercising of power, the injuring experienced and the articulation and representation of war, as it is indeed the interdependence between these that makes war possible. It also becomes evident that bodies are not just read and written in scholarly work but also in military terminology and media representations.

They are, however, as the thesis will illustrate, moreover read and written in and through art. As representations delineate our understanding of war profoundly and as

⁶⁰ Scarry, *op.cit.*, 12, 64

⁶¹ Cohn, Carol, `Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals`, *Signs*, (12: 4: 1987), 691-692; see also Petley, Julian, `War without Death: Responses to Distant Suffering`, *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media*, (1: 1: December 2003), 72-85

accounts of violence are often characterized by a degree of blindness regarding corporeal experience, art can be seen to supplement the picture in bringing the body back into full view. The corporeal experience of war represented through art can be seen to contribute to a conception of war as an activity that routinely employs killing and injuring to attain political goals. Indeed, as the thesis aims to show, in conveying corporeal experience artists can challenge us to look directly at the carnage of war.

1.4 Art and the 'War on Terror'

In an era marked by a 'proliferation of devices to transmit images, sounds, voices and written accounts' that disseminate accounts of the 'war on terror' into every corner of the world, the question that arises is whether there still exists a place for the artist 'in this flood tide of imagery and opinions'?⁶² The thesis argues that there still remains a great deal for artists to say, and that rather than merely chronicling the human cost of war, artists can – and compellingly do – probe humanity's relationship with war's violence in ways that shed light on what human beings are capable of doing to one another. Whilst the thesis focuses on visual works of art that through their commentary intervene in political debates on contemporary war, it is worth noting the multitude of creative responses across a variety of creative fields.

There has been – and continues to be – no shortage of artistic responses to the 'war on terror'. Commentary by creative practitioners has not only extended over various genres within the arts broadly conceived, but has also emerged from around the globe. For instance, creative responses have taken the form of literary works and poetry, theatre plays and films, as well as emerging from within the music industry.⁶³

⁶² Mackinlay, John, 'Artists and War', *RUSI Journal*, (148: 2: April 2003), 66

⁶³ For literary works see for instance Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Richard Flanagan's *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006), Edward J. Jankiewicz's *Bring my Troops Home* (2007) and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008); for poetry Seamus Heaney's *Anything Can Happen* (2004), Brian Turner's poetry collection *Here, Bullet* (2005) and Matthew Hollis and Paul Keegan's anthology *101 Poems Against War* (2003); for war-related plays on the theatrical stage see for instance Christopher Shinn's *Dying City* (2006), Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006) and Donald Margulies's *Time Stands Still* (2009); for films see Peter Markle's *Saving Jessica Lynch* (2003), Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006), Mike Binder's *Reign over me* (2007), Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs* (2007), Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2009) and Gregor Jordan's *Unthinkable* (2010); for songs and albums Toby Keith's song *American Soldier* (2003) and Pink's *Dear Mr. President* (2006) as well as Bruce Springsteen's rock album *The Rising* (2002) and Country rocker Steve Earle's album *The Revolution Starts Now* (2004)

Within the visual arts specifically there is likewise a broad array of artistic reactions that address a variety of aspects of contemporary warfare. By way of illustration, on the theme of protest against war, British artist Mark Wallinger's installation *State Britain* – which in meticulously recreating activist Brian Haw's censored protest placards outside the Houses of Parliament speaks not only to the anti-war movement but also to freedom of speech and erosion of civil liberties and won Wallinger the Turner Prize in 2007 – comes to mind.

Addressing military technology and capabilities British artist Fiona Banner's *Harrier and Jaguar* (2010), a display of two military aircraft; British photographer Sarah Pickering's series *Explosion* (2005) depicting controlled detonations in military training exercises on a military base in the southeast of England; and British-Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum's *Nature morte aux grenades* (2006-2007), replica of hand grenades rendered in brightly coloured glass, all comment on the fetishization of instruments of destruction. The weapons industry and the military-industrial complex, on the other hand, are the subjects of Australian artist Jill Gibbons in her ongoing *War Mart* project for which she creates drawings of the arms trade.⁶⁴

Changes in the sphere of security strategies have likewise been variously addressed. For instance, German artist Hito Steyerl in her video installation *Red Alert* (2007) speaks to the state of exception and threat levels in an age of global insecurity, whilst American artist-geographer Trevor Paglen in his photography series *The Black Sites* (2006) traces the locales of classified military activities, secret prisons and rendition practices in the 'war on terror'.

The surveillance environment, in contrast, is explored in Bangladeshi-American artist Hasan Elahi's *Tracking Transience: The Orwell Project* (2008) in which the artist tracks and documents his whereabouts to clear himself of suspicion after being subjected to investigation by the FBI, as well as in American artist Jill Magid's video

⁶⁴ For further information see, for Mark Wallinger's work: Tate, 'Mark Wallinger: State Britain', <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/mark-wallinger-state-britain>, accessed June 12th 2010; for Fiona Banner's work see artist's webpage at: <http://www.fionabanner.com/works/harrierandjaguar/index.htm?i81>, accessed May 7th 2011; for Sarah Pickering's work see artist's webpage at: <http://www.sarahpickering.co.uk/Works/Explosions/workpg-01.html>, accessed January 12th 2012; for Mona Hatoum's work see: Palmer, Kathleen, *Women War Artists*, Tate Publishing, London, 2011, p. 53; and for Jill Gibbon's work see artist's webpage at: <http://www.jillgibbon.co.uk/>, accessed June 2nd 2011

performance *Evidence Locker* (2004) in which the artist placed herself for a month within the surveillance system of the city of Liverpool and cast herself as the main protagonist in the surveillance footage recorded by Liverpool police.⁶⁵

Artistic consideration of media coverage of the ‘war on terror’ is exemplified in the work of German artist Oliver van den Berg in his wooden sculptures *Kameras* (2007) that speak to the constructed nature of media reportage; in German artist Mischa Kuball’s installation *CNN* (2009) that draws attention to the ways in which world events are conveyed through fragmented mediations; and likewise in Spanish artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle’s installation *Phantom Truck* (2007) that, in alluding to the American government’s statements about the suspected existence of biological weapon laboratories in Iraq, investigates the manipulation of information that gives rise to the emergence of rumours and lies. Conversely, the devastation of the build environment is addressed in British sculptor Gerry Judah’s series of large-scale sculptural canvases exhibited under the title *Country* (2009) that depict the destructed landscapes resulting from contemporary violent conflict.⁶⁶

Arguably, works such as these give an indication not only of the multitude of war-related themes that artists have been addressing, and of the range of art forms utilized to do so, but also of the critical and analytical eye with which artists attend to these socio-political realities, revealing them as observant and perceptive commentators on the history of their time. Indeed, as the aforementioned works of art represent but a small selection of artistic responses, it would appear that artistic examinations of the ‘war on terror’ have followed many different paths of inquiry and have been as diverse thematically as they have been plentiful. Whilst the presence of the body might not

⁶⁵ For further information on these artworks see, for Hito Steyerl’s work: *Modern Painters*, ‘Portfolio – Hito Steyerl’, (20: 3: April 2008), 67; for Trevor Paglen’s work see artist’s webpage at: <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=blacksites>, accessed June 10th 2011; for Hasan Elahi’s project see artist’s webpage at: <http://trackingtransience.net/>, accessed May 5th 2012; and for Jill Magid’s work see artist’s webpage at: <http://www.jillmagid.net/EvidenceLocker.php>, accessed February 2nd 2011

⁶⁶ For further information on these artworks see, for Oliver van den Berg’s work: Nöring, Hermann, ‘Oliver van den Berg – Kameras’ in: Nöring et al. (eds.), *Bilderschlachten – 2000 Jahre Nachrichten aus dem Krieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 426-427; for Mischa Kuball’s work: Albers, Katja, ‘Mischa Kuball – CNN’ in: Nöring et al. (eds.), *Bilderschlachten – 2000 Jahre Nachrichten aus dem Krieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 88-89; for Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle’s work see artist’s webpage at: <http://inigomanglano-ovalle.com/index.php?/projects/phantom-truck/>, accessed April 5th 2011; and for Gerry Judah’s work see artist’s webpage at: <http://www.gerryjudah.com/paintings/exhibitions/country>, accessed June 21st 2011

always be immediately apparent in the aforementioned works, and whilst it appears to represent less of a concern than in the works of art that constitute the focus of the inquiry here, the body is arguably always already waiting somewhere in the shadows even as its presence might be referenced merely subtly or indirectly.

As the thesis posits that whilst war may ruin entire economies, alter national boundaries and flatten the built environment, its destructive forces most devastatingly affect the body as the central site on which war's violence materializes, the works of art that form the basis of the inquiry in these pages are works that have been identified as works that concern themselves specifically with the problematic of corporeal experience in the 'war on terror' and works that can be seen to contribute to a rematerialization of audiences' vision. Rematerialization of vision is here conceived of as a process of reappearance and return in and through which the central place of the body and the corporeal experience of pain and suffering in war are rendered perceptible and visible. In bringing corporeal experience back into full view, the rematerialization of vision can moreover be seen to call attention to the lack and absence in the public consciousness of that which it makes appear discernible.

As such artworks as those considered in the later chapters bring the body into view they can be seen to problematize distanced perception of war and trouble audiences' ways of seeing by challenging them to inspect their perceptions. The artists can be seen to achieve this, it is suggested here, by innovatively situating both the bodies that they are referring to in their work, and the audience in relation to the work. As the thesis aims to show, it is the interdependence and interplay between the two that renders corporeal experience perceptible and has the capacity to alter audiences' vision.

The thesis not only contends that the corporeal experience of the 'war on terror' has emerged as a central theme in works of art in recent years, but also that the imaginative ways in which artists situate the body and the audience can be seen to demonstrate that they exhibit awareness of difficulties in the representation of war and violence. The thesis endeavours to demonstrate this trend – the identification of which is based on the review of one hundred and twenty-four contemporary works of art, dated between 2001 and 2011, that address various aspects of the 'war on terror' – by

way of examining a selection of artworks in which different sets of bodies are explored. The works of art that have been examined span a vast array of art forms, encompassing *inter alia* multimedia installations, video films, sculptures, performances, paintings, and drawings – most of which were exhibited in museums and galleries – as well as graffiti, posters, patchwork quilts, street performances, and travelling installations – that were predominantly presented in public spaces.

Specifically, the thesis considers four sets of bodies, three of which represent sets of bodies that have emerged as pivotal in the ‘war on terror’. These three central sets of bodies are indentified by Martin Shaw as ‘Western combatants, civilian non-combatants, and enemy combatants’.⁶⁷ Although there are further sets of bodies that are occupied and produced in war – such as refugees, aid workers, war reporters and political leadership figures – the aforementioned sets of bodies feature most prominently in the contemporary configuration of war. Markedly, centrality of these figures, brought to the fore in political debates, in military rhetoric and in media coverage of the ‘war on terror’, is reflected in the prevalence of the same figures across various artworks on the ‘war on terror’.

Whilst there exist a considerable number of works of art that emphasize these three figures, there appear to exist noticeably fewer artworks on other figures that are likewise involved and caught up in war. For example, British artist Dexter Dalwood’s painting *The Death of David Kelly* (2008) addresses the controversy surrounding the death of scientist and biological weapons expert Dr. David Kelly in 2003, whilst American artist Rachel Mason’s small porcelain figures of political leaders such as George W. Bush, Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden, which are part of her *The Ambassadors* series (2008), present an archive of the world’s most powerful wartime figures. In contrast, British artist David Cotterrell’s series of films and photographs exhibited as part of the Wellcome Collection’s *War and Medicine* exhibition (2008) chronicles the work and the difficulties faced by medical staff in military hospitals in

⁶⁷ Shaw, Martin, *The New Western Way of War*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 107

Afghanistan.⁶⁸ Despite works such as these, however, on the whole artworks that address other such figures remain conspicuously scant.⁶⁹

For the purpose of this thesis, Shaw's category of 'enemy combatant' is here broadened and conceived of as 'suspect'. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, it takes into account the difficulties in establishing which of the individuals who have been labelled 'enemy combatants' and been subjected to various methods of control, containment and elimination were actually guilty of the activities they were accused of. Since the distinction between 'friend and foe' has become increasingly muddled in times of asymmetrical warfare and in the face of an 'enemy' who does not openly disclose himself, remaining largely concealed among the civilian population in the absence of clear markers such as discernible military uniforms, and since enmity has emerged to encompass mistrust of 'otherness' and 'foreign bodies' more generally; the broader category of 'suspect' appears more fitting here.

Secondly, the designation of 'enemy combatant' appears to represent an unsuitable categorization as its parameters have not only continuously been subject to change – increasingly widening in application – since the concept of the 'enemy combatant' emerged in 2001 but also as it represents a controversial and contested aspect of the American government's judicial paradigm for the treatment of suspected terrorists and insurgents as well as a categorization that is problematically and ambiguously situated between domestic and international law.⁷⁰

In addition to considerations of the figures of the 'soldier', the 'civilian' and the 'suspect', a fourth category considers the figure of the 'survivor'. This category incorporates the three former figures into a broader and unifying category in which the political demarcations of the first three sets of bodies are dissolved. As the

⁶⁸ See the artists' respective webpages at: <http://www.dexterdalwood.com/Work%20pages/Paintings%20pages/2008/pages/Death%20of%20David%20Kelly.html>, accessed March 5th 2011; <http://rachelanmason.com/ambassadors.php>, accessed April 5th 2012; and <http://www.cotterrell.com/exhibitions/4192/war-and-medicine/>, accessed June 5th 2010

⁶⁹ This observation is based on the review of one hundred and twenty-four contemporary works of art, created between 2001 and 2011, that address various aspects of the 'war on terror' that were examined in the context of this research project

⁷⁰ For an insightful overview of the shifting parameters of the concept of 'enemy combatant' see: Danner, Allison, 'Defining Unlawful Enemy Combatants: A Centripetal Story', *Texas International Law Journal*, (43: 1: October 2007), 1-14

classification of survivor may also refer to and encompass other sets of bodies that can be identified in war, such as the aforementioned aid workers and war reporters, it should be noted that the figure is broadly and indiscriminately conceived. Similarly, the figure of the survivor is considered irrespective of the duration of war, in the sense that bodies are here considered to have survived war when the aftermath of the experience of war, i.e. their life after war, begins for them individually.

In other words, it is acknowledged that considerable numbers of individuals – such as for instance Army Veterans who were discharged from service due to injuries sustained in combat, or refugees who have escaped war's violence – are already survivors before a war has officially ended and before the violence has ceased. By the same token, the thesis recognizes that the figure of the survivor signifies a lasting classification and as such denotes the most durable figuration – those who survive war arguably remain survivors for the rest of their lives. Accordingly, with a view to the physical and psychological pain and trauma that war produces, the survivor can be seen to denote a condition and seen to be involved in a continuous effort and struggle.

Importantly, all four figurations consider these bodies of war beyond notions of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. This is due not only to the fact that the 'victim'/'perpetrator' dichotomy represents a simplified conception that appears inapt here as the different sets of bodies encapsulated in the figurations are not neatly locatable in this dualism and not always and consistently exclusively 'victims' as bodies on the receiving end of violence nor exclusively 'perpetrators' of violence, but also, and more importantly, due to the fact that the corporeal experience of war that is considered here is prioritized over the figures' political role in war. In other words, what is of interest here is what bodies are subjected to and experience rather than what they do in war. This means that concern lies with the effects of violence, with what violence does to bodies, rather than with the sources of violence, and the ways in which artists endeavour to make these experiences accessible and intelligible for audiences.

Accordingly, the figures are taken into account beyond their political categorizations in consideration of the figures' experiences on the grounds of being human. On the grounds of this commonality they are seen as equally susceptible to pain

and suffering, as it is the very condition of corporeality, the circumstance of having a body, that forms the basis of corporeal vulnerability. With this in mind, the thesis endeavours to illustrate how contemporary works of art that comment on the experience of different sets of bodies in the 'war on terror' not only shed light on the toll of warfare on the respective figures but also, when considered together, can remind us that war and its violence take a toll on all involved and draw attention to the fact that, as Rainer Fabian puts it, 'those human beings we see killing, bleeding and dying, raging, weeping and sorrowing' in representations of war are 'all individual living creatures; became victims or killers in the circumstances of war'.⁷¹

The conceptualization of these four figures as the basis for the inquiry suggested itself as a suitable framework for the research project as its premise, as previously suggested, is derived from the notion that war happens on the body and can thus be traced in the various corporeal experiences that war produces. Correspondingly, the thesis suggests that analysis of artworks that address the experiences of different figures in the 'war on terror' enables exploration of the ways in which contemporary artists are visualizing and conveying the place of the body in war. In and through the artworks and the artistic strategies that underlie them, the thesis argues, the body is afforded a visibility that brings the human cost of war into full view and vision of the 'war on terror' can be seen to be rematerialized. Accordingly, contemporary artworks that provide a window on corporeal experience are here considered to amount to an autopsy of the pain and suffering effected through war's violence.

Prior to discussing a number of artistic responses that address the experiences of the different figures in the later chapters, the following chapter situates contemporary creative commentary on the 'war on terror' in the context of the history of art on war in order to illustrate the tradition in which contemporary artists follow. Following on from the themes discussed in this chapter, the chapter examines in greater detail the difficulties that artists have always faced, and continue to face, in their attempts to convey the corporeal experience of war in ways that render pain and suffering

⁷¹ Fabian, Rainer, *Images of War – 130 Years of War Photography*, trans. Fred Taylor, (Sevenoaks: New English Library, 1985), 9

accessible and comprehensible to audiences. It is against the background of the themes discussed in this chapter and those investigated in the following chapter that the chapters that follow thereafter – examining contemporary artists’ strategies for the visualization of corporeal experience in detail – will illustrate that contemporary artists can be seen to innovatively connect audiences to the experiences of diverse sets of bodies in the ‘war on terror’.

Specifically, focusing on the figure of the soldier, Chapter 3 discusses two recent artworks, one by Steve McQueen and one by artist duo Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, and the ways in which the artists speak to Western soldiers’ service and sacrifice. Chapter 4, in contrast, discusses works of art by Jeremy Deller and Wafaa Bilal, both of whom turn their attention to the figure of the civilian and illustrate the realities of daily life in the line of fire. Following thereafter, in Chapter 5, two works addressing the figure of the suspect and the experience of incarceration and torture are examined, one a work by Gregor Schneider and the other a work by Regina José Galindo. Finally, a work by Evelina Rajca that focuses on the figure of the survivor and the survivor’s struggle to come to terms with the experience of war is discussed in Chapter 6. The concluding chapter, Chapter 7, briefly revisits the diverse artistic strategies that these contemporary artists have utilized in their respective endeavours to communicate corporeal experiences of the ‘war on terror’ and to challenge viewers’ ways of seeing in order to then discuss the ways in which artist can be seen to exhibit recognition of the difficulties that they face in the visualization of war and violence. Synthesizing the themes discussed throughout these pages, the chapter moreover considers how such works of art can be seen to function in international relations and what the study of contemporary artists’ works can contribute to the study of International Relations.

Chapter 2.1 Art, War and Bodies in Pain

‘Artists can help to connect global issues with the experience of those who have lived through them, making history emotionally and politically comprehensible.’¹

– Krzysztof Wodicko

The themes discussed in the previous chapter situated the investigation into the ways in which contemporary artists are attempting to convey corporeal experience of the ‘war on terror’ in the context of broader debates on the role of images and bodies in international relations. Building on these themes, this chapter traces the trajectory of the history of Western art on the subject of war and maps a number of challenges that artists face in the visualization of violence and war. The themes discussed in this chapter are of relevance for the exploration of the ways in which contemporary artists are responding to the ‘war on terror’ as they can be seen to bear on the ways in which artists are conceptualizing their works. The chapter begins by considering art on war through a historical lens on Western art as it is this background against which an informed analysis of contemporary artworks on the ‘war on terror’ becomes possible.

The canon of Western art on war is important to consider as it places contemporary artists and their artworks within the context of a broader art historical narrative. Since the utilization of a vast diversity of art forms as well as the exploration of a broad spectrum of aspects of contemporary warfare become clearly apparent in the consideration of contemporary artworks on the ‘war on terror’, there can be little doubt about the influence that the history of Western art on war has on the representation of contemporary war and violence. Therefore, the historical overview can be seen to assist in understanding contemporary works of art as the most recent instances of artistic exploration in a long tradition of artworks on war. In addition, the historical lens provides insights into the ways in which artists have historically grappled with the challenges of conveying the experience of war to audiences.

The chapter then turns to examining in more detail a number of difficulties that artists who are attempting to visualize pain and suffering effected by the violence of

¹ Wodicko cited in: Cahan, Susan, *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 163

war have faced and continue to face. Specifically, the matter of legitimacy of documentation in the absence of eye-witnessing, the impossibility of mimetic representation, and the ethical implications of imaging suffering – all of which complicate artistic rendering of the experience of the body in war – are considered throughout the following pages. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which artists can respond to these challenges, followed by an assessment of artists' ability and suitability for creative commentary that addresses and communicates the human cost of war in competent ways, both innovatively and convincingly. The themes discussed in this chapter provide the background and context in which contemporary artists and their artworks are considered in the chapters that follow, in particular with a view to the artistic strategies that are being developed in order to convey the corporeal experience of the 'war on terror' in ways that can be seen to foster the rematerialization of audiences' vision.

2.2 Depicting War in Art

In the context of war as a subject of art, art and war can be considered to 'represent opposite poles of history and society: the creative versus the destructive, the human versus the inhuman'.² Constituting one of art's great themes, the portrayal of warfare has a long history as artistic rendering of war has gone on since time immemorial. Underwriting its creation, art on war has thus kept company with violent human interaction since at least the fourth millennium BC when early settlements of 'our ancestral hunter-gatherers' gave rise to both the legacies of conflict and art that have since been 'connected and merge and remerge in the art-historical trajectory from then until now'.³

From the depiction of war in the *Royal Standard of Ur* dating from ancient Mesopotamia, to the figures decorating the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens, and the *Bayeux Tapestry* that tells the story of Duke William of Normandy's conquest of

² Molyneux, John, 'Art versus War', October 2nd 2006, <http://johnmolyneux.blogspot.com/2006/10/art-versus-war.html>, accessed March 14th 2010

³ Brandon, Laura, *Art and War*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 13; for a further survey of Western art on war see also: Paret, Peter, *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997)

England in 1066, the depiction and memorialization of military might in Western art developed early on to encompass a variety of materials and forms yet overall remained uncritical of the conduct of war. In fact, critical accounts of war as rendered in Western art did not emerge until the seventeenth century in contrast to former centuries when war was often celebrated and glorified in art – as evidenced in the abundance of depictions of kings on horseback, cavalries ready to engage their enemies, and heroic deaths in battle.⁴ However, notable early examples of critical representations of war are exemplified in French artist Jacques Callot's description of the Thirty Years War in his *Les Misères et les Malheurs de la Guerre* etchings (1633) that are considered to constitute 'the first anti-war images in western art'⁵ due to their graphic depiction of looting, arrests, hangings, torture and executions that portray the inhumanity of war.

Similarly, nearly two hundred years later, Spanish painter Francisco de Goya's series of eighty-two prints *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, which, prompted by Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Spain in 1808, show 'humanity fallen into a hell' in their 'macabre, horrific, disgusting, and unutterably bleak' portrayal of mutilated and terrorized bodies.⁶ Likewise, French painter Édouard Manet's *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian* (1867) depicting the death of the French-installed Emperor Ferdinand Maximilian by firing squad in Mexico, captured by Manet in three large-scale oil paintings, an oil sketch, and a lithograph, is also worth mentioning in this context.⁷ Yet, as these artworks can be seen to represent rare cases of early critical Western art, it is arguably precisely due to their rejection of the glorification of war that the works of Callot, Goya and Manet are so renowned. Undoubtedly, their legacy laid the groundwork for the emergence of visualizations of war that are candid in their illustration of the suffering inflicted in war.

⁴ For an insightful discussion of the ways in which celebration of war and glorification of the warrior dominated not only the Western tradition of art but also other art traditions until the 18th century see the work of Theodore K. Rabb: *The Artist and the Warrior: Military History through the Eyes of the Masters*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) (especially Chapters 3, 4 and 5)

⁵ Sutherland Harris, Ann, *Seventeenth-Century Art & Architecture*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005), 258

⁶ Brandon, op.cit., 32

⁷ See John Elderfield's book for a detailed exploration of Manet's works on the execution of Maximilian: Elderfield, John, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006)

In the early twentieth century the canon of Western art generally developed to examine war with a more critical eye as the unprecedented scale of the First World War represented a turning point in Western art's relationship to war. The emergence of aerial bombardment in the context of significant developments in aircraft technologies, the nature of trench warfare, and mass conscription meant that the death toll soon reached unparalleled heights. Furthermore, 'total mobilization meant that an entire generation of artists, writers and poets now experienced war, not as spectators, but as participants' which resulted in art that was 'direct, brutal and far more intimate than anything the art establishment had seen before'.⁸ For instance, Henry Tonks' drawings of facial wounds; John Singer Sargent's large oil painting *Gassed* (1919) replete with both living and dead bodies; Paul Nash's barren landscapes in his *We Are Making a New World* (1918), *The Ypres Salient at Night* (1918) and *The Menin Road* (1919); as well as C.R.W. Nevinson's depictions of the aftermath of battle in *The Harvest of Battle* (1919) and *Paths of Glory* (1917) encapsulated the horror of war from the British perspective, whilst Félix Vallotton's *Verdun* (1917) and Fernand Léger's *The Card Game* (1917) documented the French experience.

Akin to the abstraction and cylindrical forms in the cubist works of Vallotton and Léger, the paintings of Italian Futurist painter Gino Severini, such as his *Plastic Synthesis of the Idea of War* (1915) and *Armoured Train in Action* (1915), portray war as highly mechanized in their abstraction of the human form. The German record, in contrast, is dominated by expressionist artworks that chronicle the traumatic experience of the First World War: Max Beckmann's painting *Auferstehung (Resurrection)* (1918) depicts wounded and naked bodies in agony, George Grosz's paintings *Shell* (1915) and *Explosion* (1917) show the obliteration of life through the destructive force of weaponry, and Otto Dix in his series of etchings *Der Krieg (War)* (1924) variously depicts soldiers as lifeless bodies that have 'maggots gnaw[ing] at their entrails' or, when alive, as 'unkempt, unhealthy, poorly equipped, and wallowing in horrific trench conditions'.⁹

⁸ Mackinlay, 'Artists and War', op.cit., 66

⁹ Brandon, op.cit., 55

Whilst the majority of the aforementioned artworks present an unsentimental and literal account of the terror of bombardment, the misery of the trenches and the scale of the killing and injuring, the First World War also gave rise to Dadaism, 'the only art movement born of conflict',¹⁰ which in its conceptualization as anti-art was characterized by disillusionment with art and with the world at large and, marked by a rejection of aesthetics, was aimed at offending audiences through its nonsensical appearance. Whilst many artists had thus proven to be critical observers on the frontlines of the First World War, the artistic record of the Second World War is in particular characterized by artworks that capture life in wartime on the homefronts and by the rise of female war artists in the history of Western art. Stanley Spencer's paintings of shipyard machinery and workers at Port Glasgow; Henry Moore's depictions of Londoners as sleeping, maggot-like figures sheltering in London's Underground during the Blitz; Evelyn Dunbar's hospital and nursing paintings; Elsie Hewland's portrayal of war workers' children in a nursery school; and Laura Knight's illustration of factory worker Ruby Loftus are key examples that document the pervasiveness of the war and the mobilization of the domestic front for the war effort.

In contrast to such instantaneous artistic responses to war waging, as knowledge of the scale of the atrocities of the Holocaust only began to emerge in the post-war era, artists began to address the persecution and mass annihilation of Jews belatedly. In the early 1950s American painter Morris Louis addressed the Holocaust *inter alia* in his abstract painting *Untitled (Jewish Star)* in which the Star of David is partly erased and obscured whilst American video artist Beryl Korot tackles the subject in her video installation *Dachau* (1974) for which she filmed footage that depicts the architecture of the camp and captures tourists moving through the spaces of the camp.¹¹

A further fifteen years later German artist Anselm Kiefer spoke to the horror of the Holocaust and the Third Reich in his sculpture *Sprache der Vögel (Birdsong)* (1989) which, comprised of different materials and in large scale format, takes the form

¹⁰ Ibid., 132

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of Morris' and Korot's works as well as other artists' abstract works on the Holocaust see: Godfrey, Mark, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)

of a stack of burnt books atop which the artist has placed a pair of spread wings. In similarity with Morris' and Korot's works, Kiefer's sculpture is noticeably marked by the theme of absence which is made forcefully apparent in the abstraction that all of these artists employ. Indeed, as the bird's head is literally replaced by the pile of books, Kiefer's sculpture in particular can be seen as indicative of a development in art in which artists made representations of the Holocaust faceless, turning instead to allusive and metaphorical gestures due to the recognition that the subject appears to defy artistic visualization.

The erasure of human faces and bodies from artistic depictions can be considered to constitute a direct consequence and expression of the inability to imagine and capture the magnitude of the systematic extermination of bodies. Jay Winter speaks to this point in observing that in their attempts to understand and to relay this period of destruction some artists 'felt unable to attach a human face to their depictions' in the context of an enterprise that had sought 'to erase entire peoples, gassing and slaughtering millions until their faces disappeared into an empty void'.¹² It is also worth noting that the Holocaust art of Morris, Korot and Kiefer is indicative not only of the continued attempts of artists to grapple with this particular history but also of the growing diversity in media that artists began to utilize in order to comment on war and its devastation.

Whilst until the Second World War artistic documentation of war in Western art was predominantly rendered in paint, ink and pencil, the second half of the twentieth century saw an expansion of art forms through which artists addressed the subject of war. This diversification of artistic media is evident in many of the artworks that emerged in response to the various conflicts in the latter part of the last century. The Vietnam War, for instance, was critically addressed by American artist Martha Rosler in her *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72) series of photomontages in which images of the war and images of American consumerism and lifestyle collide, and in American sculptor Mark di Suvero's art installation *The Artists' Tower of*

¹² Winter cited in: Sampson, Nicolas, 'The Carriers of Memory', *Urban Times*, March 28th 2012, <http://urbantimes.co/2012/03/the-carriers-of-memory-a-university-of-cambridge-research-piece/>, accessed May 12th 2012

Protest that was erected on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles in 1966 as a symbol of protest against the war.

The Cold War, in contrast, constituted the subject of British artist Colin Self's *Beach Girl: Nuclear Victim* (1966) which alluded to the growing nuclear threat of the time through a sculpture of a life-size body that, missing an arm and a leg, is charred and blackened. Similarly, almost two decades later, the sculpture of another artist, American sculptor Robert Arneson, entitled *General Nuke* (1984), spoke to the escalating nuclear arms build-up on both the American and Soviet sides in its depiction of a military leader with a missile for a nose, bloody teeth and a helmet on to which acronyms for nuclear weapons have been inscribed, the figure sitting atop a pedestal of stacked, charred miniature corpses.¹³ Whilst Arneson's and Self's works convey the threat and consequences of apocalyptic nuclear war, there is perhaps no work of art that speaks more eloquently to nuclear danger than Russian artist Garry Bardin's animated film *Conflict* of 1983. In the film, wooden matches that represent opposing armies compete over territory and are drawn into a battle in which all eventually perish.¹⁴

The conflict in Northern Ireland, on the other hand, has been depicted through the medium of photography in the photo-text works of Irish artist Willie Doherty who has been documenting 'The Troubles' for over twenty years in such compositions as *Unapproved Road II* (1995) in an attempt to speak to the fallout of sectarian violence through the depiction of broken landscapes; as well as by Northern Irish artist-photographer Mary McIntyre whose images, such as *Veil I* (2006), likewise capture contested spaces of the conflict. Both these artists speak to the sectarian violence in a subtle yet clear manner. Considering the coded ways in which both artists portray the tensions, their works fall into the category of fine art photography which has a relatively short history as an art genre and is informed by the notion that 'the producer

¹³ Brandon, op.cit., 84

¹⁴ See the artist's webpage at: <http://www.bardin.ru/eng1983.htm>, accessed May 2nd 2010; the animation can be seen here: Garri Bardin, YouTube Channel, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_f12CihXP8&feature=BFa&list=UUdHXb62Cuj24S9VtGtOCCZg, accessed May 2nd 2010

of a given picture has aimed at something more than a merely realistic rendering of the subject'.¹⁵

The utilization of still images also underwrites the creative practice of Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko whose projection art spans his long career. Intervening in the public sphere through projections of images on to public structures and monuments, Wodiczko commented on the First Gulf War and the involvement of the Spanish navy by illuminating the Arco de la Victoria in Madrid – one of the city's largest structures and a monument to Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War – with the images of a M-16 rifle and a petrol pump nozzle.¹⁶ In projecting contemporary images on to a monument of the past, the projection not only juxtaposes but also connects a violent history with the violence of the present, if merely for a fleeting moment due to the projection's ephemerality.

Other conflicts in the last decade of the twentieth century also gave rise to imaginative works in different art forms. Renowned cases in point are represented in Chilean-born artist Alfredo Jaar's photography and installations relating to the genocide in Rwanda, *The Rwanda Project* (1994-1998); American artist Jenny Holzer's mixed-media series *Lustmord* (1993) in which she draws attention to the rape of women in the wars in the former Yugoslavia and Scottish artist Graham Fagen's *Theatre* (1999), a multi-media installation commenting, akin to Holzer, on the ethnic conflicts in the region.

Whilst the trajectory of Western art on war highlights that throughout history artists have always been observant commentators – to the extent that it can be ascertained that when there is war there are artists documenting it – it also indicates that at times artists are inclined to revisit wars of the past. Bearing witness to the fact that wars can continue to loom large in the imagination of artists long after the violence has ended, some artists endeavour to revive the memories of wars in bringing them back into the present from a perspective of hindsight. German artist Gunter Demnig's stumbling blocks memorial project *Stolpersteine* (1995-present), for instance, directs

¹⁵ Jones, Bernard E. (ed.), *Cassell's Cyclopaedia of Photography (Literature of Photography)*, (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 'Artistic Photography' entry

¹⁶ Krzysztof Wodiczko describes his Madrid projection in: Cahan, op.cit., 163

the gaze back to the concentration camps of the Nazi era whilst Canadian artist William MacDonnell's painting *On the Erasure of Angels* (1994) returns the viewer to the end of the First World War in its depiction of the 1918 Armistice signing in a railway carriage in the Compiègne Forest in France.

What becomes clearly apparent in view of the history of Western art is the expansion of art forms that artists have drawn on for their documentation of war and its human cost. Specifically, there exists evidence of a development from durable and enduring mediums such as painting and sculpture to newer and more ephemeral mediums. The diversification of art media has to a large extent been facilitated by developments in technology that equipped artists with new tools for their artistic expression. As artists continuously adopt new modes of documentation – and indeed have often been at the forefront of the utilization of new technological developments – this demonstrates that technology has infused the development of art on war, just as increasing technologization has significantly impacted on the waging of war.

When considered in its entirety, the picture that emerges in view of the history of Western art on war is one in which art on war not only constitutes 'a record of civilization when life takes second place to death' but also an archive of humankind 'portrayed at its best and at its worst'.¹⁷ In offering this documentation, be it as celebration, protest or memorial pieces, artworks have played a role in shaping attitudes towards war in the public imagination whilst they in turn have also been shaped by and reflected on public mindsets. As society has moved beyond sentiments of glory and dying nobly in war it has developed to view war in an increasingly negative and disapproving manner. Howard Zinn suggests in this context that whilst the influence of works of art on the transformation of attitudes to war is 'impossible to measure' quantitatively, they can be seen to influence public attitudes as they 'work slowly over a period of time like wind and water eroding rock'.¹⁸

That artistic mediations over the course of the twentieth century in particular have had an effect on public feelings towards war is similarly emphasized by Winter

¹⁷ Brandon, op.cit., 131

¹⁸ Zinn cited in: Burton, Sarah, 'Truth in the Hands of Artists', *AlterNet*, November 24th 2003, http://www.alternet.org/story/17242/truth_in_the_hands_of_artists, accessed June 15th 2010

who asserts that artists have ‘played a key role in giving form and voice to the view that war is an exercise in futility, without redeeming features’.¹⁹ The vast chronological span of artistic observations demonstrates that artists have long gravitated towards the subject of war and warrants the assumption that they will continue to do so. Indeed, it stands to reason that war and its devastating effects on bodies will continue to represent a topic of investigation for artists across an array of genres in the foreseeable future, in all likelihood giving rise to works of art addressing aspects of contemporary warfare that are as of yet unrecognized, overlooked or yet to unfold.

2.3 The Limits of Representation

As is evident in view of the Western history of art on war, artists have long scrutinized various aspects of war, on the homefronts and on the frontlines alike. In this context, artists have struggled with diverse challenges in the representation of violent conflict. Specifically, seeking to place the violence inherent in warfare in the realm of the conceivable, artists have long endeavoured to portray the experience of warfare as realistically and accurately as possible. The attempt to depict the realities of war in an unflinching and detailed manner that addresses the pain and suffering directly and resolutely is encapsulated in the advice of Italian Renaissance painter Leonardo Da Vinci who urged painters to be candid and unwavering in their visualization of war’s ghastliness:

Make the conquered and beaten pale, with brows raised and knit, and the skin above their brows furrowed with pain . . . and the teeth apart as with crying out in lamentation. . . . Make the dead partly or entirely covered with dust . . . and let the blood be seen by its color flowing in a sinuous stream from the corpse to the dust. Others in the death agony grinding their teeth, rolling their eyes, with their fists clenched against their bodies, and the legs distorted.²⁰

Two notable considerations arise from Da Vinci’s recommendation: namely to what extent art on war can be considered to constitute a factual record of warfare with regard to the artist’s liberty to employ creative imagination, as well as whether entirely accurate depictions lie in the realm of possibility. It is in the context of the first

¹⁹ Winter cited in: Sampson, op.cit.

²⁰ Da Vinci cited in: Sontag, Susan, ‘Looking at War’, *The New Yorker*, December 9th 2002, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/12/09/021209crat_atlarge, accessed June 20th 2010

consideration that the notion of the eyewitness account with its assumed properties of realism emerges. Can artistic renderings of warfare that are created in the absence of the artist's firsthand experience of war be deemed to constitute accurate depictions? The very definition of the term 'war art' offers some insights here. What does and what does not constitute 'war art' remains contested, with conceptualizations spanning from very inclusive to rather narrow definitions. Art historian Laura Brandon, for example, suggests that "war art" means art shaped by war, regardless of medium, and 'consists not just of masterpieces by well-known artists' but may also include 'an anonymous poster by an anti-war protester'.²¹

In stark contrast, a much more narrow classification is proposed by Michael D. Fay, an official United States Marine Corps combat artist, who stresses that 'war art is witness art',²² which entails the prerequisite of the artist having been present in the war zone. Traditionally, such 'witness art' has predominantly been produced by artists who have been officially commissioned to record aspects of warfare and who generally have either accompanied troops or were military personnel themselves. Consequentially, the majority of such art chronicles war from the perspective of soldiers whilst it also tends to portray the hardware of war in the form of, for example, weaponry, planes, warships and trucks.

It also denotes a classification of 'war art' that revolves around an ancient pact between the warrior and the artist: the artist promises to immortalize the warrior through his art. Boris Groys speaks to this ancient pact in noting that historically the 'artist was able to bestow fame on the warrior and to secure this fame for generations to come' as the artist had the power to inscribe the heroic action 'into the memory of humankind'.²³ Yet it is in this context that the restrictive nature of such art becomes apparent. Not only is it bound with issues of power as the witnessing of war that is enabled by officially sanctioned access to war zones is often biased towards the military and subject to military control and censorship, but it is also often restricted in

²¹ Brandon, op.cit., 3

²² Fay, Michael D., 'Witness Art', The Joe Bonham Project, March 31st 2011, http://joebonhamproject.blogspot.com/2011_03_01_archive.html, accessed April 22nd 2011

²³ Groys, Boris, *Art Power*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), 121

its documentation of war due to a lack of mobility within the war zone which means that what is being witnessed – and accordingly captured in works of art – merely represents that which could be directly observed. Therefore, ‘witness art’ is ultimately only able to offer a limited insight, a small fraction of a greater whole.

Whilst it should be noted that ‘witness art’ and the experiences and events that it relays can also originate from other individuals – such as soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians in the midst of war – rather than exclusively from officially appointed artists with access to the theatres of war, the notion that ‘war art’ is ‘witness art’ irrespective of who is translating the witnessing into art curtails the field of affiliation enormously. Undoubtedly, not all art that emerges from witness accounts of war and violence is created instantaneously, such as in sketches and drawings, but rather it is often produced afterwards.

Accordingly, an artist who has been present in the war zone may draw on written accounts of war such as official reports or war diaries as well as on documentation through photography in order to support the reconstruction of events. The resulting artwork may thus be compromised not only by the fact that elaboration or fictional elements may emerge from the artist’s desire to produce a compelling work but also since what is rendered artistically may represent a synthesis of the eye-witness experience and other sources of information. Both an aspiration to enhance the work aesthetically and the fusion of a multitude of informational influences that impact on the work’s content can be seen to impair its accuracy. Nonetheless, the concept of ‘war art’ as an eye-witness account of war has long underwritten the portrayal of war and remains strong, especially since audiences expect art on war to be at least to some degree factual.²⁴

When artists present work that does not adhere to the principle of accurate depiction of war but rather artwork resulting from metaphorical or extremely imaginative artistic practice, such artwork raises the question of whether works of art have to be rooted in specific facts in order to convey something factual about war. The artworks of Scottish painter Peter Howson who was officially appointed to document

²⁴ Brandon, *op.cit.*, 96

the conflict in Bosnia and a series of photographs by French artist-photographer Sophie Ristelhueber addressing the violence in the former Yugoslavia can be seen to exemplify such interpretative and inventive rendering. Howson's series *Bosnia* (1994) portrays a variety of war scenes although not all of the scenes captured in the paintings – such as depictions of rape – had been witnessed by the artist which meant that Howson had exercised artistic liberty to speak to the depravity of the war.²⁵

Similarly utilizing creative license, Ristelhueber alludes to the marks left on bodies in her series *Every One* (1994) which does not, however, depict actual war-torn bodies but scarred bodies that she had photographed in a Paris hospital. Even though her images lack authenticity, for Ristelhueber the 'stitches, cuts and wounds' that she captured with her camera represent a metaphor that 'speaks clearly about the conflict'.²⁶ Whilst it could thus be argued that works of art such as Howson's and Ristelhueber's lack legitimacy as documentations of war due to the extent to which they fictionalize their subject matter, there can be no doubt that in addressing the violation of bodies they, in visualizing the tearing of flesh, speak to one of war's most fundamental realities.

More to the point, if all art on war that was created in the absence of actual witnessing was to be discarded from the history of artistic visualization of war, the canon of 'war art' would be considerably reduced. Indeed, even Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) – the artwork that has not only most forcefully addressed the Spanish Civil War but also the one that has come to constitute the most famous artwork on war of all time – would have to be discounted as Picasso did not experience the bombing of the city of Guernica but rather relied on newspaper accounts of the destruction.²⁷

Moreover, as Picasso included a variety of symbols in his painting, such as a small flower that is growing on a broken sword held by a deceased soldier, it stands to

²⁵ See: Jackson, Alan, *A Different Man: Peter Howson's Art, from Bosnia and Beyond*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1997) and the artist's webpage at: <http://www.peterhowson.co.uk/Works.aspx#>, accessed July 21st 2011

²⁶ Ristelhueber cited in: Lane, Guy, 'Sophie Ristelhueber Interviewed', *Foto8 Magazine*, August 11th 2009, <http://www.foto8.com/new/online/blog/967-sophie-ristelhueber-interviewed>, accessed June 10th 2010

²⁷ Ray, Beverly, 'Analyzing Political Art to Get at Historical Fact: *Guernica* and the Spanish Civil War', *The Social Studies*, (97: 6: July/August 2006), 169

argue that he employed artistic liberty to embellish the scene of destruction in order to insert a symbol of optimism, arguably in an attempt to point to the renewal of life and the promise of a peaceful future. Thus, whilst some of the elements in the painting – such as the agonized civilians, soldiers and animals – can be considered to be based on fact, other elements are clearly entirely fictional. Nonetheless, *Guernica*'s significance as a critical account of war remains undisputed. The fact that Picasso drew on newspaper reports for his symbolic response is moreover indicative of the growing role of the mass media in the representation of war in the twentieth century.

In this context, it could be argued that with the expansion and intensification of war coverage across a variety of media the necessity for artists to experience war directly decreased significantly, in the sense that the more coverage of war was provided by the media the more artists were able to produce accounts that were to a considerable extent factual. When considering this in conjunction with the aforementioned constraints of 'witness art' it becomes apparent that artists working from a distance might actually be better equipped to communicate war and its violence.

Taking into account that they have the opportunity to approach the subject 'with more knowledge, reflection, and understanding' than the artist at war it would appear that 'the long view, complemented by a wider contextual standpoint, is the more valuable testimony of events'.²⁸ It can therefore be suggested that bestowing legitimacy merely on those works of art are inextricably anchored in the notion of the eye-witness arguably over-emphasizes and over-evaluates the significance of a factual foundation in the depiction of experiences and events whilst it simultaneously under-evaluates and even dismisses the role of artistic liberty in the image-making process.

Thus, the view that is taken in these pages is that 'war art' can be considered as constituting an amalgamation of information that has been reviewed, impressions that have been collected, and thoughts and ideas that have been developed, all mired with creative imagination. In this view, then, artists are entitled to address facets of war that are either known or suspected but have not been witnessed directly. In communicating the violence of war and the pain and suffering that it entails such art is here considered

²⁸ Brandon, op.cit., 91

to be infused with legitimacy precisely because it endeavours to convey something factual about war. Accordingly, the viewpoint that is taken here asserts that art on war can speak to war and its disastrous effects on bodies even if it is not rooted in facts.

With this in mind, 'war art' can be considered to stem from a global community of artists, all of whom are entitled to comment on war and violence through their creative practice. Moreover, such a stance allows for a view of 'war art' as a broad window on war's destructiveness – a place in which the violence of war is rendered visible through multiple perspectives. 'War art' as both documentation and interpretation then constitutes an expression of artistic imagination emerging from an artist's distinctive way of seeing the world. In this context it can furthermore be suggested that the insight into war that an artist is visualizing in an artwork in turn offers an opportunity of access to war for audiences. Thus, taking into account not only what it shows but also what it enables, the view that informs these pages closely corresponds with the view of one of the contemporary artists discussed subsequently, British artist Jeremy Deller, who suggests that 'war art' is 'a way of bringing back home the horror of it, if you want, or the visceral elements of it'.²⁹

Conceptualized in this way, art on war can arguably convey more than merely inscribe war into the annals of history and immortalize those who were mobilized in war, therein serving as a place of remembrance. Although 'memory, memorial and remembering' represent significant themes in the history of art on war and whilst 'artists play a key role in how society remembers and comes to terms with past conflicts',³⁰ the stance taken here calls attention to art's capacity to convey the experiences of war in ways that attempt to make the suffering and pain conceivable and comprehensible to audiences. Yet, this endeavour is in some measure hindered by the constraints with which all representations are afflicted, namely the impossibility of reproducing reality authentically.

Da Vinci's advice to artists to render the consequences of war vividly and realistically, as indicated earlier, does not only give rise to the question regarding the

²⁹ Deller speaking in: 'The Genius of British Art: The Art of War', presented by Jon Snow, *The Genius of British Art Series*, Series 1, Episode 6, November 7th 2010, Channel 4, United Kingdom

³⁰ Palmer, Kathleen, *Women War Artists*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 71

application of artistic license in the visualization of war but simultaneously calls attention to the quest of replicating life accurately, in such a way that it portrays that which it seeks to show mimetically. Yet, the futility of such a pursuit has long been established. As Herbert Marcuse puts it, 'the artist's desperate effort to make art a direct expression of life cannot overcome the separation of art from life'.³¹ As all documentation – regardless of the medium chosen for the task – is man-made and thus entails interpretation and choices, an entirely accurate reproduction of life lies outside the realm of possibility. Rendering the world involves the construction and communication of meaning and thus constitutes a *re*-presentation rather than pure reflection. Nonetheless, even as documentations are incapable of reproducing reality in such a way that mirrors or duplicates life in its exactness, which denotes the 'ideal of mimesis – a perfect resemblance between signifier and signified', representation 'is still widely seen as a process of copying which, ideally, erases all traces of human interference so that the "artistic" end-product looks just like the original'.³²

Driven by the ambition to document the world as-it-is, in the sphere of art the quest for mimetic representation long dominated the history of art as the value of art was determined in accordance with its ability to create representations that were characterized by their life-like properties.³³ Yet, whilst mimetic approaches to representation seek to narrow the divide between the represented and its representation, i.e. the gap between reality and that which refers to it through representation, other approaches turn in the opposite direction, away from realism in representation and toward more openly inventive imaging of the real.

Art movements such as surrealism and abstract expressionism paved the way for an increasing consciousness of the limits of art with regard to its inability of replicating reality. Indeed, it would appear that awareness and acknowledgment of this gap informs the move to abstraction in the artistic portrayal of warfare. In this context both realistic and abstract depiction of war and violence that were evidently employed by

³¹ Marcuse, Herbert, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 50

³² Bleiker, 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory', op.cit., 511-512

³³ Graham, Gordon, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 88

artists throughout the twentieth century can be viewed as locked in a struggle over which was better suited to illustrate war's destructiveness. It would further appear that this struggle continues.

However, regardless of the artistic approach taken, as that which the artwork refers to can merely amount to an interpretative image of the real and as the artwork constitutes a product of human creation, representations of the world and events within it signify a distancing from reality in the process of their rendering. Nonetheless, the tradition of philosophical reflections on art proposes that in the encounter with works of art, valuable insights can be gained.³⁴ Thus, even as artistic documentation of the world entails a move away from the real in the process of its rendering, the work of art as the result of artistic productivity in turn enables access to reality in and through the work of art. Yet, in the specific context of war and violence art's fictitiousness is further complicated by art's conversion of real world content toward the beautiful.

As art aestheticizes the subject of its rendering, in the documentation of war and violence art is problematically afflicted by this condition. Since beauty has always been a stipulation and criterion in the judgment of art, the documentation of the suffering and pain that materialize in war represents a difficult subject in terms of aesthetics. Nevertheless, as artistic documentation encompasses all facets of life and human action, the portrayal of horror, cruelty and ugliness has always been a subject of artistic attention. Accordingly, scholars and artists alike have long wrestled with the problematic of the imaging of despair and agony, specifically with the realization that art that depicts suffering can be beautiful, that there can be beauty in pain.

Indeed, the aestheticization of pain and suffering that occurs in art has led to increased suspicion and critique regarding the aesthetic. Benjamin and Adorno, in their writings, such as Benjamin's *The Author as Producer* and *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, contemplate how suffering is turned into an object of consumption when aesthetic representation of it is perceived as art, rendering suffering aesthetically appealing and consequentially

³⁴ See for example: Sallis, John, *Transfigurements: On the True Sense of Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Buss Mitchell, Helen, 'Aesthetic Experience' in: Buss Mitchell, Helen, *Roots of Wisdom – A Tapestry of Philosophical Traditions*, (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), 305-333

pacifying and erasing its political significance. Adorno emphasizes that the capacity to recognize suffering is eroded in the process of the commodification of suffering that characterizes the culture industry. Explaining how the distance between the consumer and the plight of the subjects who are presented for consumption through documentation is reinforced, he writes that 'while the artwork's sensual appeal seemingly brings it close to the consumer, it is alienated from him by being a commodity that he possesses and the loss of which he must constantly fear'.³⁵ Noting that the 'beautification of tragedy' gives rise to depictions that 'ultimately reinforce our passivity towards the experience they reveal', Ingrid Sischy similarly criticizes the aestheticization of suffering, noting further that 'to aestheticize tragedy is the fastest way to anaesthetize the feelings of those who are witnessing it'.³⁶

The diminishing of suffering in the process of rendering it aesthetically is thus by a range of critics seen as 'a way of mistreating the subject and inviting passive consumption, narcissistic appropriation, condescension, or even sadism on the part of viewers'.³⁷ However, art's culpability with regard to rendering its content in such a way that aestheticizes it is not one that it can shed. As David Levi Strauss points out, 'to represent is to aestheticize; that is, to transform', elaborating that representation 'presents a vast field of choices but it does not include the choice not to transform, not to change or alter whatever is being represented. It cannot be a pure process, in practice'.³⁸ Speaking of the inevitability of 'aesthetic sublimation', Marcuse correspondingly notes that 'under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily sublimated: the immediate content is stylized, the "data" are reshaped and reordered in accordance with the demands of the art form'.³⁹

Yet, it is precisely because art cannot be released from aestheticizing its subject matter that art's obligation is to be found in another sphere. Even as the full reality of

³⁵ Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (London: Continuum, 1997), 16

³⁶ Sischy cited in: Levi Strauss, op.cit., 8

³⁷ Reinhardt, Mark, 'Picturing Violence: Aesthetics and the Anxiety of Critique' in: Reinhardt, Mark., H. Edwards and E. Duganne (eds.), *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 14

³⁸ Levi Strauss, op.cit., 9

³⁹ Marcuse, op.cit., 6

the experience of war and violence remains inaccessible through aesthetic representation, art must not cease to address it:

Art draws away from this reality, because it cannot represent this suffering without subjecting it to aesthetic form, and thereby to the mitigating catharsis, to enjoyment. Art is inexorably infested with this guilt. Yet this does not release art from the necessity of recalling again and again that which can survive even Auschwitz and perhaps one day make it impossible.⁴⁰

That art is, for better or worse, saddled with a responsibility to attend to the painful experiences of humanity is equally implied in Adorno's assessment of the matter. 'But then what would art be, as the writing of history, if it shook off the memory of accumulated suffering', Adorno inquires and argues that 'it would be preferable that some fine day art vanishes altogether than that it forget the suffering that is its expression and in which form it has its substance'.⁴¹ As these circumstances demonstrate, whilst artworks refer to something other than themselves in that they point to the reality of life that they endeavour to arrest, the reality of life ultimately lies beyond the work of art, beyond the image of the real that art affords. Whilst the limits of artistic documentation are particularly evident in the context of the impossibility of mimetic representation, art's aestheticization of the agony in the world similarly constrains aesthetic documentation of violence, suffering and pain.

2.4 Ethical Implications of Representation

In view of the limits of representation that complicate documentation of the experience of bodies in war, the task of responding and of re-creating in art by means of translating war's human cost into visual language presents itself as one mired in difficulties. In consideration of the matters previously taken into account it becomes apparent that the representation of war and the violation of bodies is closely entwined with ethical implications. As representations of the violated body raise ethical questions with regard to both the manufacture of depictions and their reception, these questions are relevant for those who mediate pain and suffering and those who perceive it alike.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 55

⁴¹ Adorno, op.cit., 338

A number of critics have compellingly suggested that visual representations of the body in the context of war and violence are afflicted not only by the aestheticization and commodification of suffering that reduce the impact of what they depict, but also by the exploitation of the subjects who are appropriated in the documentation. Prominently, Sontag has spoken eloquently of these matters, suggesting that in their documentation image subjects are degraded and dehumanized since 'the act of taking pictures is a semblance of appropriation, a semblance of rape'.⁴²

Documenting distressed bodies can thus be seen as an act of abuse as it entails intrusion on the image subjects' privacy in recording their vulnerability and defencelessness for the eyes of others. Sontag asserts that documenting 'is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability' and that 'to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed'.⁴³ In this sense the subject's dignity is violated in a second wounding, as an additional injury to the one that is recorded is inflicted in the very act of documentation. This also means that subjects are reduced to a documentation of their suffering and fate.

During the Vietnam War, for instance, when photographers and journalists were relatively unrestricted in their access and, as Fabian notes, 'swarmed over the combat areas like locusts', the documentation of the consequences of warfare was such that 'often the last thing dying soldiers saw was the zoom lens of a photo-reporter'.⁴⁴ In his writing on the editorial decisions regarding whether or not to publish images of dead and dying bodies, John Taylor points out that it has become 'quite common to see images of the human body at the limits of endurance' in the context of media coverage that turns 'traumatic events into stories' and graphically represents pain and suffering in words and pictures alike.⁴⁵

⁴² Sontag, Susan, *On Photography*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 24

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14-15

⁴⁴ Fabian, *op.cit.*, 30

⁴⁵ Taylor, John, *Body Horror – photojournalism, catastrophe and war*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 2

This raises profound ethical questions about the principles of image production in the context of war and violence, regardless of whether the motivation for documentation is driven by commercial interests, the notion that the public has a right to know or a quest to document in order to criticize. In a similar vein to Sontag, contemplating the ethical implications of war coverage, Val Williams considers the voyeuristic aspects of war and proposes that 'watching other people making war is perhaps as questionable as watching other people having sex', further asserting that as viewers we become voyeuristic gazers as we encounter war as 'spectators and consumers of something which seems hardly to touch on our own lives'.⁴⁶

Addressing the notion of a pornography of war in the context of the ubiquity of images of violence and war, Jean Baudrillard highlights that the sheer accumulation of images results in atrocity becoming a banality. 'It all becomes a parody of violence, a parody of the war itself, pornography becoming the ultimate form of the abjection of war', which Baudrillard asserts, 'is unable to be simply war, to be simply about killing, and instead turns itself into a grotesque infantile reality-show, in a desperate simulacrum of power'.⁴⁷ Whilst Sontag's and Taylor's observations draw attention to image production and distribution, Williams' remarks emphasize the reception of violent imagery. Baudrillard on the other hand not only comments on war as banal spectacle but further alludes to the power of images as they take on a life of their own and elude control of their makers.

The observations that emerge from the scholarship of critics such as these clearly indicate that ethical implications arise not only with regard to the documentation and reception of suffering, but also in a complex interplay between producers and consumers in the context of demand and supply dynamics. This becomes even more evident when taking into consideration the desensitization and habituation that occur with repeated viewing that lead to viewers becoming less responsive to imagery of violence and suffering. Sontag pointed to a weakening of feeling over thirty years ago when she noted in *On Photography* that 'the vast photographic catalogue of

⁴⁶ Williams, Val, *Warworks – Women, Photography and the Iconography of War*, (London: Virago Press Ltd., 1994), 90-91

⁴⁷ Baudrillard, Jean, 'War Porn', *Journal of Visual Culture*, (5: 1: 2006), 86

misery and injustice throughout the world has given everyone a certain familiarity with atrocity, making the horrible seem more ordinary – making it appear familiar, remote ("it's only a photograph"), inevitable.⁴⁸ Similarly, Geoffrey Hartman speaks of 'routinized images' and stresses that sensibility and compassion are 'finite and easily exhausted' which means that 'sooner or later coldness sets in', whereas Sissela Bok and Susan Moeller independently from one another describe the growing indifference to atrocity imagery as 'compassion fatigue', the foundation of which is overload.⁴⁹

As audience apathy is understood to result from over-exposure and over-consumption of violent imagery and signals a diminishing impact of images more generally, those who produce and circulate imagery in turn ceaselessly seek to provide both more dramatic imagery and new ways of relaying information in order to maintain audience attention. 'Compassion fatigue ratchets up the criteria for stories that get coverage', Moeller states, and thus image production is largely driven by the objective 'to forestall the I've-seen-it-before syndrome'.⁵⁰ Whilst it could be contended that objectification, voyeurism, and 'compassion fatigue', all of which appear to diminish the suffering depicted in atrocity imagery, constitute matters that are merely relevant to documentary depiction such as in photography and film footage and less so in artistic representation, they can be considered to emerge as similarly problematic parameters in art as well. Certainly, with regard to voyeurism and the matter of a second wounding of the depicted subjects, it would in fact appear that artistic representations are less afflicted in this due to art often not rendering violated bodies identifiable in their individualities and thus not revealing their specific identities.

On the other hand, however, precisely because the identities of the depicted subjects are often not discernible, artistic representation of violated bodies could be considered to be as liable as journalistic depiction with regard to generalizing the pain it depicts when subjects are documented as anonymous bodies. Denying them their

⁴⁸ Sontag, *On Photography*, op.cit., 20

⁴⁹ See: Hartman, Geoffrey, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 100, 154; Bok, Sissela, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment*, (Reading: Perseus Books, 1998) and Moeller, Susan, *Compassion Fatigue – How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*, (London: Routledge, 1999)

⁵⁰ Moeller, Susan, *Compassion Fatigue – How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 2

singularity and specificity in turning them into representations of their plight can not only be seen to take the documented experience outside and beyond its specific context, but can also be seen to lead to a problematic detraction of attention away from the particular circumstances that are documented in the representation. Nonetheless, this inevitably occurs since, as John Berger notes, every single depiction of pain and suffering 'becomes evidence of the general human condition'.⁵¹ It is also in this context that as viewers we perceive the representation of atrocity in the form of 'generalities of bodies' in a 'pervasive depersonalization' that turns them into an 'anonymous corporeality'.⁵²

Importantly, Sontag emphasizes the danger of considering such imagery in general terms: when depictions are perceived as universal icons of the horrors of violence and war this equates to dismissing politics as such a reception fails to acknowledge the evidence the images provide for the specific political circumstances in which the depicted subjects suffer.⁵³ Yet, regardless of whether or not the specific political circumstances of the suffering are recognized, and even in cases where the singular specificity of the documented subjects is acknowledged and identified, the subjects remain stripped of their agency and dignity when in depictions of suffering they come to be defined – and perceived – not by their agency but by their suffering and powerlessness. Presented and seen as bodies absorbed in their pain the subjects are then conceived as victims and identified by their existence as suffering bodies.

Moreover, such documentation can be seen to take on the role of speaking on the subjects' behalf, as those who produce documentation assume the authority to represent and frame, whilst those who are documented have little or no power regarding the ways in which they are represented, nor control over how what has been captured of them is circulated. Thus, even as documentation might be aimed at lending a voice to the suffering of the subjects that it represents, with the aim of drawing attention to a specific instance of suffering, by its very nature documentation at the

⁵¹ Berger, John, *About Looking*, (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1980), 40

⁵² Feldman, Allen, 'On Cultural Anesthesia: From Desert Storm to Rodney King', *American Ethnologist*, (21: 2: May 1994), 407

⁵³ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, op.cit., 8

hands of others entails the surrender of authority to them, dependency on their intentions, and will inevitably bear the marks of the producer's own perspectives and motivations. The rendering of pain and suffering thus remains burdened by these ethical implications, in factual and creative accounts alike.

With regard to the problem of 'compassion fatigue', on the other hand, ethical considerations of the pain of others at first glance appear to concern merely the reception on the part of audiences, whose attention span, it is often asserted, is short and who tire quickly of the material and messages they consume. Susan Carruthers, for instance, points to spectatorial inattention to news of war and averse audiences who soon resort to 'turning-off' and prefer to disregard the suffering of others.⁵⁴ To what extent and in what ways inattentive audiences pose an ethical problem has been the subject of debates surrounding the question of responsibility in the context of spectatorship of atrocity imagery, and in the context of these debates it has been noted that the notion of responsibility of looking at images of atrocity is afflicted by predicaments.

Whilst *not* looking at such imagery might no longer constitute a viable option seeing as we are permanently exposed to images in an information environment characterized by 24/7 news cycles and thus often encounter them haphazardly whether or not we actively seek them, *not* looking might likewise 'not seem to be a morally tenable position'.⁵⁵ Since the act of looking represents a political act, spectatorship can be considered to constitute a requirement for political participation. Failing to do so would mean to forego politics in the sense that knowledge represents a prerequisite for action and that if one does not know, one cannot adequately act, whilst not knowing is moreover often considered to pre-empt accountability. Averting one's gaze then amounts to ignoring the suffering of others and signals an indifference and negligence that represents an attempt to sidestep responsibility to attend to the depicted violence. Thus, 'it would seem to be mandatory for individuals to look because not looking

⁵⁴ Carruthers, Susan, 'No one's looking: the disappearing audience for war', *Media, War & Conflict*, (1: 1: April 2008), 70-76

⁵⁵ Möller, Frank, 'The looking/not looking dilemma', *Review of International Studies*, (35: 4: October 2009), 781

would position them outside the realm of the political and thus deprive them of the possibility to act politically`.⁵⁶

Yet, looking at images of atrocity and thereby bearing witness to the suffering resulting from war and violence is accompanied not only by complex questions about what can be done and what would constitute an `appropriate` or a `right` response – which in itself is subject to debate as notions of `appropriate` and `right` are neither stable categories nor universally applicable and will thus be conceived of differently in different contexts – but also accompanied by a sense of powerlessness and pessimism in the face of violence. Consequently, when the sense that nothing can be done about suffering arises, constituting itself in the experience of a sense of hopelessness, this can lead to a situation in which `people may feel so helpless from seeing repetitive shots of horror that they do not want to see more than they are already seeing`.⁵⁷ Indeed, it would thus seem almost natural that as a result we would want to see less as `every atrocity image reminds us of our incapability to prevent atrocities, thus showing our political and moral failure`.⁵⁸

Since striving for alleviation of the suffering appears impossible to attain seeing as the pain depicted generally occurred *prior* to the moment in which it meets the viewer's gaze, this means that in the act of looking we `must observe suffering *without* being about to interfere`, yet nonetheless, as Sharon Sliwinski maintains, the `helplessness and horror of bearing witness to suffering brings with it the demand for a *response*`.⁵⁹ Berger on the other hand suggests that in response to images of violence there are only two reactions: `We are filled either with despair or indignation. Despair takes on the other's suffering to no purpose. Indignation demands action.`⁶⁰ Particularly because this might represent a limiting and somewhat restrictive notion, it raises important questions about both the scope for hope despite a sense of hopelessness and

⁵⁶ Ibid., 783

⁵⁷ Zelizer, Barbie, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 218

⁵⁸ Möller, `Imagining and Remembering peace and War`, op.cit., p. 105

⁵⁹ Sliwinski, Sharon, `A painful labour: responsibility and photography`, *Visual Studies*, (19: 2: October 2004), 155-156 [emphasis in the original]

⁶⁰ Berger, *About Looking*, op.cit., 38

about what anger can be translated into. Indeed, hope and anger can be seen as interrelated.

That there is room for hope is underscored by Sliwinski who proposes that 'hope resides in the simple fact that the same images that horrify and immobilize can also provoke outrage'.⁶¹ Viewing images of atrocity might moreover be 'translated into a sense of one's own responsibility for and involvement in the depicted scene and the conditions from which it emerged', whilst in contrast it could also be argued that the act of looking and therein 'attending to others' suffering, might be the very beginning of responsibility itself and thus spectatorship in itself can be considered to constitute an adequate response.⁶²

Arguably, at the very least depictions of violence can prompt us to pose questions such as those put forward by Sontag: 'Who caused what the picture shows? Who is responsible? Is it excusable? Was it inevitable? Is there some state of affairs which we have accepted up to now that ought to be challenged?'⁶³ – which in itself constitutes no small feat. However, the perimeters in which viewers can and do respond to representations of pain and suffering are certainly not easily demarcated as exposure to such imagery might elicit a diversity of reactions – ranging from feelings of anger and frustration, to a sense of guilt or incrimination in what is depicted, to a sense of entertainment or voyeuristic pleasure, to a complete absence of responsiveness and emotion – since reactions cannot be generalized but rather are determined by individual viewers and the sentiments they personally bring to the encounter. The multitude of possible responses notwithstanding, as has become apparent, 'not looking does neither answer the core question of how to respond adequately nor would it seem to be a morally acceptable position towards the suffering and pain of others'.⁶⁴

This proposition might bear even more validity when taking into account that the responsibility to make sense of representations of pain and suffering could be considered not to be the producer's but the viewer's. 'The photograph is not my

⁶¹ Sliwinski, 'Camera War, Again', op.cit., 91

⁶² Möller, 'The looking/not looking dilemma', op.cit., 788 and Sliwinski, 'A painful labour: responsibility and photography', op.cit., 159 [emphasis in the original]

⁶³ Sontag, *On Photography*, op.cit., 117

⁶⁴ Möller, 'The looking/not looking dilemma', op.cit., 788

problem – it's yours`, American documentary photographer Garry Winogrand would reply when he was asked about his photographs, their purpose and their meaning.⁶⁵ It could thus be suggested that the same might hold true for creative accounts of pain and suffering, or indeed by extension for any visual or verbal account regardless of medium.

2.5 Responding Artistically to the Pain and Suffering of War

Undoubtedly, as the artist's intention does not determine the reception of the artwork and as the artist does not retain authority over the work once it has been presented for view, what audiences ultimately make of and perceive in and through an artwork, how they experience and decipher it, whether they engage with or reject it, is up to them and beyond the artist's control. Yet, it is the artist's purview and prerogative to conceptualize artworks in such a way as to avert or circumvent the problem of 'compassion fatigue' and in ways that increase the chances for the artwork not only to attract but also to retain audience attention. Likewise, an artist can choose not to create work that runs the risk of engendering voyeuristic viewing due to explicit and degrading visualizations of violated bodies.

With this in mind, it could be argued that the ethical questions that are tied up with the matters of response and responsibility in the context of depictions of pain and suffering, including further the problem of voyeurism and 'compassion fatigue' which at first glance appear to be problems of spectatorship rather than image production, are to begin with matters to be addressed on the part of the producer. To this end artists can endeavour to create works that do not as easily cause viewers to be overwhelmed by the works' subject matter as can be the case in the encounter with atrocity imagery that often leaves viewers 'momentarily immobilized'.⁶⁶ This might be accomplished not only by foregoing graphic rendering but also by constructing a space for viewers in the encounter with the artwork in which their role and involvement exceeds observational partaking.

⁶⁵ Winogrand cited in: Travis, David, *At the Edge of the Light – Thoughts on Photography and Photographers, on Talent and Genius*, (New Hampshire: David R. Godine, 2003), 92

⁶⁶ Sliwinski, 'Camera War, Again', op.cit., 89

Accordingly, this then constitutes a question of viewer agency. Even as there can never be absolute certainty that audience conduct adheres to the conduct envisioned and intended by the artist, arguably artists can by means of design enable and facilitate as much as they can hinder and impede audience agency, i.e. determine whether or not there is a space build into the artwork for activity on the part of the audience that goes beyond the relegation to observation and looking. In a similar fashion artists can choose whether or not, or to what extent and in what manner, audiences are included in the artwork's creation and bestowed with a degree of authorship when their participation in and through the artwork is designed to constitute a requirement for the work to take form.

Precisely because artistic practice is characterized by creativity, resourcefulness, imagination, originality and vision, artists are well suited to address the complex subject matter of pain and suffering in innovative ways. It therefore comes as no surprise that creative visualizations are much more diverse in content and form than those produced in the mass-media context. Groys remarks in this regard that even though 'the art world seems to be very small, closed in, and even irrelevant compared with the power of today's media market', the range of visualizations generated in the former far exceeds that of the latter as 'the diversity of images circulating in the media is highly limited compared to the diversity of those circulating in contemporary art'.⁶⁷ That there is 'a role and a need' for creative practitioners to comment on war and its violence is maintained by David Cotterrell who refers to artists as 'lay observers' who rather than exclusively documenting in a factual manner can lend poignant resonance to the subject. Artists 'subjectively interpret and mediate the range of emotions at play', Cotterrell notes and argues that this means that 'when the standard formats of articles, photographs, films and news bulletins fail to convey the essence of the resonant experiences of war, art provides its own language to do so'.⁶⁸

Works of art and the commentary that they present can thus be understood to offer unique insights into the experience of warfare, in particular with regard to the

⁶⁷ Groys, *op.cit.*, 128

⁶⁸ Cotterrell, *op.cit.*, 78-79

human cost of warfare which they can communicate with great sensuous capacity. Thus, whilst creative renderings of pain and suffering cannot help but to abstract and aestheticize, and whilst artists appropriate the subject matter through their subjective perspectives, choices and framing in much the same way as anyone who produces accounts of any aspect of lived reality, representations of war and violence in art can not only shed light on but also engender new perspectives and understanding of warfare and the corporeal experiences that are produced by it.

Even as artists continue to wrestle with the challenge of realistic representation and experiment with different ways and means to document pain and suffering convincingly, it stands to argue that artists generally exhibit understanding of the impossibility of mimetic representation and moreover that awareness of this is often detectable in works of art. Speaking to this point in commenting on the limits of art, Jaar observes that 'there is this huge gap between reality and its possible representations. And that gap is impossible to close. So as artists, we must try different strategies for representation'.⁶⁹ Moreover, as aspects of abstraction, interpretation and creation render works of art fictitious even as they draw on and aim to represent experiences and events, it could be argued that in the very act of creatively addressing the painful experience of violated bodies there already resides an acknowledgment of extraction and construction.

Thus, whether artists choose to visualize the pain and suffering that result from violence and war in a graphic and direct manner that entails the depiction of bodies in distress and in that sense represents artwork whose subject matter is embodied, or whether they opt to address the subject in a more indirect manner that abstains from the visualization of damaged bodies but rather alludes to them through subtle references or by means of substitution through objects, thereby representing artwork that is disembodied, artworks can uniquely and thought-provokingly realize a synthesis of the visualization of pain and suffering *and* acknowledgment of the impracticality of considering such documentation as anything other than an imperfect description or as

⁶⁹Jaar speaking in: Art21, 'Alfredo Jaar – The Silence of Nduwayezu', video clip, exhibition review of The Rwanda Project, <http://www.art21.org/texts/alfredo-jaar/interview-alfredo-jaar-the-rwanda-project>, accessed June 4th 2011

more than a pointing to pain and its causes. As the discussion of a range of artworks in the following chapters will show, this can be accomplished irrespective of the artist's proximity to the violence of warfare, i.e. regardless of whether or not the artist has personally been an eye witness to war and violence.

Utilizing a variety of artistic media that make it possible for audiences to engage with the artworks in diverse ways, and commenting on the effects of war and violence on the human body by means of innovative strategies, such art can 'put image, or voice, or context to a way of rethinking, re-seeing, re-experiencing'.⁷⁰ Due to the timeliness with which artists respond to socio-political issues – which, as the record of Western art on war demonstrates, has been the case throughout history – they can endeavour to contribute to changes in perception through their reflections on and scrutinizations of the violence of the time. Where their art is critical of war and violence it can be considered to constitute a creative intervention in public debates on war and violence through innovative commentary that, in its rendering of war's human cost, offers critical examinations of the experience of bodies in war.

It is against the background of the themes discussed in this chapter that the following chapters explore the specific ways in which contemporary artists have responded to the 'war on terror' by means of innovative artistic strategies that form the basis of their critical interventions in perceptions of the 'war on terror'. Offering a vision of the 'war on terror' that is firmly centered on the body, the artists and artworks that are considered throughout the pages that follow can be seen to strive to rematerialize vision in a time in which the waging of war is increasingly characterized by distance and remoteness, both physically and perceptively.

⁷⁰ Fischl cited in: Rakoff, David, 'Questions for Eric Fischl: Post-9/11 Modernism', *New York Times*, October 27th 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/27/magazine/27QUESTIONS.html>, accessed December 2nd 2009

Chapter 3.1 The Life and Death of the Soldier

"Soldiers are made to be killed", as Napoleon once said; that is why war is hell.¹

Against the themes discussed in the previous chapter, and with the role of images and bodies in international relations as discussed in the introduction chapter in mind, this chapter discusses two recent artworks on the 'war on terror' that specifically concern themselves with the figure of the soldier. The first of four chapters that examine contemporary artists' diverse responses to the 'war on terror' with a view to the ways in which artists attempt to rematerialize our vision of the 'war on terror', this chapter focuses on how artists aim to shed light on the corporeal experience of the Western soldier at war. The chapter explores how the works' distinctive conceptualizations can be seen to aid audiences' understandings of the contemporary soldiers' circumstances, and the ways in which viewers are challenged to interrogate their perceptions of the soldiers' service and sacrifice. To this end, the chapter examines the artistic strategies utilized by, on the one hand, Steve McQueen and, on the other hand, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin in their respective endeavours to illustrate the life and death of the soldier in the 'war on terror'.

In their commentary on the figure of the soldier, these works can be seen to follow in the long tradition of works of art on the experiences of soldiers, a tradition that – as evident in view of the history of art on war as traced in the previous chapter – dates as far back as human conflict itself. As the discussion will illustrate, in both McQueen's *Queen and Country* (2007-2009) and Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's *The Day Nobody Died* (2008) the experiences of soldiers sent to the principal post-9/11 theatres of war in Iraq and Afghanistan are addressed in ways that can be seen to connect viewers to the experience of the contemporary soldier in innovative ways.

The chapter begins by briefly outlining the parallels between the artworks that will become apparent throughout the discussion. It then considers, firstly, McQueen's work by situating it in the context of the artist's practice as well as in relation to other

¹ Walzer, Michael, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Fourth Edition, (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 136

similar works of art that share the work's thematic focus and by exploring the work's genesis before turning to a discussion of the ways in which viewers are enabled to engage with the work in the exhibition space and the artist's vision of a version of the artwork that is not confined to the museum setting.

The chapter subsequently continues this line of inquiry in the discussion of Broomberg and Chanarin's work, beginning by outlining the background that informed the conceptualization of the work. This is followed by an inspection of, on the one hand, the ways in which the two components of their work shed light on the soldiers' experience in the war zone and, on the other hand, the manners in which viewers interact with the work. The final pages of the chapter turn to contrasting the two artworks on the corporeal experience of the soldier and consider the ways in which both works can be seen to defy the conventions of traditional representations of the soldier at war.

The parallels between both works of art are manifold, whilst within these parallels the specific artistic approaches and executions vary. Both works reflect a British perspective in the sense that the artists are based in Britain and also in the sense that the artworks specifically address the experience of British servicemen and women. Yet, as the experience of the British military is arguably to a large extent shared by soldiers of other Western nations send 'on tour' in the context of contemporary warfare both artworks can be seen to speak to a more universal experience of soldiers fighting in the 'war on terror'. Both works have at their core the photographic medium and it is this art form that can be seen to primarily carry the content of the artworks although both works encompass other artistic forms in addition to the photograph.

Apart from commenting on the experience of the soldier in the combat zone, both artworks raise thought provoking questions about the public's engagement – or lack thereof – with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan respectively. In raising these questions they can not only be seen to raise awareness but also to provide opportunities for conversations. Moreover, since both McQueen and artist duo Broomberg and Chanarin acquired official permissions to accompany troops, a further parallel is found

in the unique access to the zones of war that the artists were granted. Bearing this in mind, this chapter investigates what the artists did with this access.

The artists' commentaries on the experience of the Western soldier at the dawn of the twenty-first century are timely and constitute critical socio-political observations as they shed light on the particular circumstances of soldiers deployed in the 'war on terror'. Moreover, they coincide with and reflect on changes in the perception of the soldier that have been underway in recent years.² It is in the context of contemporary warfare that the 'lives and deaths of soldiers have become an increasingly important part of debates about Britain's wars'³ as prolonged deployment has given rise to deliberations regarding such topics as the military's organisational and management structures, personnel recruitment, remuneration, working conditions, equipment efficiency and social welfare provisions for military families.

As skilled professionals who voluntarily join the armed forces soldiers accept the risks associated with their profession and have emerged as a 'particular kind of worker-citizen'⁴ who can expect to receive adequate training and for their lives not needlessly to be put at risk. Since this means that 'they can no longer be treated as "cannon fodder"'⁵ the figure of the soldier takes on significance not only in light of matters concerning life and death but also with regard to the public's relationship with the armed forces and the home front's comprehension of the soldiers' service and sacrifice. It is these themes and the debates surrounding them that both McQueen and Broomberg and Chanarin intervene in and comment on in and through their artworks.

² See for example: Ware, Vron, 'Lives on the line', *Soundings*, (45: Summer 2010), 147-158; Imber, Mark and Fraser, Trudy, 'From Flanders to Fallujah – Rethinking Remembrance', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, (4: 3: December 2011), 383-397 and Gibson, Stephen and Jackie Abell, 'For Queen and Country? National frames of reference in the talk of soldiers in England', *Human Relations*, (57: 7: 2004), 871-891

³ Ware, Vron, 'Lives on the line', *Soundings*, (45: Summer 2010), 147

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147

⁵ Shaw, *op.cit.*, 79

3.2.1 Queen and Country

‘Once you put a human face on a situation, it makes it more real.’⁶

– Steve McQueen

Steve McQueen’s installation *Queen and Country* constitutes a tribute to the British soldiers who died during their service in Iraq between 2003 and 2009. The artwork consists of a rectangular oak cabinet designed to display facsimile sheets of postage stamps bearing portraits of individual soldiers. Sourced from the next of kin, the photographs portraying each serviceman and woman belonged to and were chosen by the relatives of the deceased. Thus, due to the collaborative nature of the project, the commemorative archive that McQueen assembled originates in private and personal material. A response to his commission by the Art Commissions Committee of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) as an official war artist in 2003, McQueen’s proposal to create a commemorative piece was co-commissioned by the Manchester International Festival and the IWM in 2005.⁷ Two years later *Queen and Country* went on display for the first time as part of the Manchester International Festival at Manchester Central Library whilst the ArtFund, the UK’s leading independent art charity, launched an online petition and began campaigning on behalf of McQueen and the deceased soldiers’ families for the stamps to be issued by Royal Mail, furthermore acquiring the work and presenting it to the IWM for its permanent collection.⁸

When first on display at Manchester Central Library in February of 2007, *Queen and Country* featured portrait stamps of ninety-eight British soldiers whilst by September of the same year, then on view at the IWM in London, the number of represented soldiers had grown to one hundred and thirty-six. Following further exhibitions at the Southbank Centre and the Barbican Centre in London, St George’s Hall in Liverpool as part of the Liverpool Biennial, and the Scottish National Gallery of

⁶ McQueen cited in: Nikkah, Roya, ‘The Stamp of Remembrance’, *The Telegraph*, October 11th 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/6291926/The-stamp-of-remembrance.html>, accessed November 12th 2009

⁷ McQueen, Steve, *Queen and Country – A project by Steve McQueen*, (London: The British Council, 2010), Chronology

⁸ ArtFund, ‘News Release Tour of Queen and Country’, March 18th 2010, http://www.artfund.org/pdf/NPG_SMQ.pdf, accessed April 3rd 2010

Modern Art in Edinburgh during 2008, the work grew to one hundred and fifty-four soldier portraits in an exhibition at the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art in 2009 before eventually comprising one hundred and sixty individual postage stamp sheets in the artwork's display in the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2010.⁹

McQueen – an artist of international renown and a Turner Prize winner best known for his films – developed the idea for the installation after he returned from a trip to Basra where he spent six days with British troops. Whilst in Iraq and despite the 'open brief' given to him by the IWM he found himself unable to gather any film material as he was 'closely shepherded by Ministry of Defence officials'.¹⁰ In fact, McQueen notes that he felt that he 'couldn't get a good perspective on events' as he experienced the embedment as a 'very restricting' and 'frustrating situation'.¹¹

Not only was the environment dangerous as combat had intensified prior to his arrival which put constraints on his movement, but he also felt that he represented a burden on the military, stating that 'for the military you are just a token artist. You're in the way'.¹² Nevertheless, on his return McQueen found that despite the lack of material and with no clear vision for an artwork to realize his commission, he had experienced something that had left a lasting impression on him. 'What I came away with', he notes, 'was the camaraderie of the guys, the troops, and when I got back that was what remained with me'.¹³ Eventually McQueen developed the concept of the facsimile stamps to commemorate the soldiers who had died in Iraq as he felt that acknowledgment of their service and sacrifice was lacking on the home front.

In its social reference and focus on corporeal experience *Queen and Country* can be seen to be in line with McQueen's overall artistic practice that has long revolved around investigations of the body, its social construction, and questions of race, sexuality and violence. Above all, McQueen's work is known for being rich in

⁹ McQueen, op.cit., Chronology

¹⁰ Herbert, Martin, 'Post War', *Artforum*, (45: 9: May 2007), 57

¹¹ McQueen cited in: Higgins, Charlotte, 'Petition to honour Britain's soldiers on stamps launched', *The Guardian*, November 8th 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2007/nov/08/art2?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>, accessed March 2nd 2010

¹² McQueen cited in: Searle, Andrew, 'Last Post', *The Guardian*, March 12th 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2007/mar/12/iraq.art>, accessed March 2nd 2010

¹³ McQueen cited in: James, Nicholas, 'Interview with Steve McQueen', *ArtSlant New York*, March 2010, <http://www.artslant.com/ny/artists/rackroom/22043>, accessed May 3rd 2010

imagery, is characterized by complexity and underwritten by an intense physicality in the majority of his works. Earlier and subsequent works include *inter alia* the short films *Bear* (1993), *Five Easy Pieces* (1995) and *Charlotte* (2004), as well as his feature films *Hunger* (2008) and *Shame* (2011).¹⁴

As it is not film-based *Queen and Country* differs from the artist's other works, yet the installation is consistent with McQueen's method of narrating the social issues that occupy him through the body. What becomes clear in consideration of McQueen's work is that the artist does not shy away from political subject matter and *Queen in Country* can in fact be seen as a prime example of this tendency.

3.2.2 Archive of Death

Although densely enclosed in the plain oak cabinet the vertical wooden drawers that contain the individual sheets of stamps readily slide out and therein render the soldier portraits viewable. The cabinet is 'ten feet long, five feet across and two to three feet deep' and as it is 'raised to eye level on a black metal frame' it allows for the drawers to be pulled out effortlessly so that 'when fully extended the vertical drawers become picture frames to be viewed sequentially'.¹⁵ Due to the cabinet's low height on the lower side of the drawers each of the drawers can arguably quite easily be accessed, including it would appear wheelchair-bound persons.¹⁶ Whilst this might not have been a deliberate design choice by the artist, it can be seen to enable an access to and afford an opportunity for interaction with the artwork that, in view of the fact that soldiers have been suffering the loss of limbs due *inter alia* to improvised explosive devices, appears pertinent.

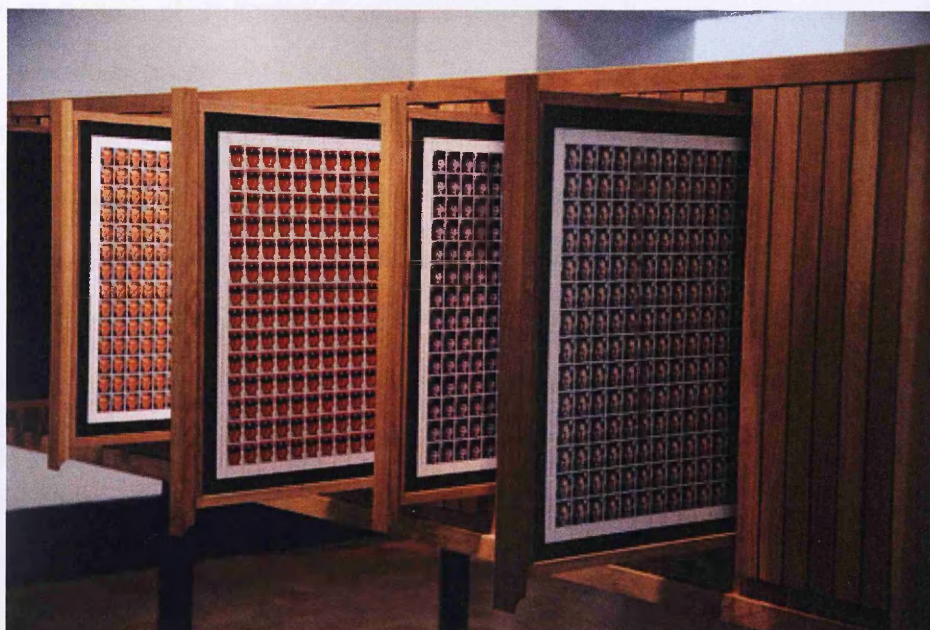
Arranged chronologically according to the order in which the soldiers died, each drawer contains a sheet of stamps depicting the same portrait photograph of each featured person, one hundred and sixty-eight duplicates of the photograph to be exact,

¹⁴ For information about some of McQueen's other works see for example: Searle, Adrian, 'Steve McQueen's city of cinemas makes voyeurs of us all', *The Guardian*, March 21st 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2013/mar/21/artist-steve-mcqueen-schaulager>, accessed March 22nd 2013

¹⁵ Mackinlay, John, 'A British Way of Remembering', *RUSI Journal*, (155: 5: October/November 2010), 65-66

¹⁶ This reflection is based on my own observation of a wheelchair-user interacting with McQueen's work when exhibited at the IWM North in the autumn of 2013.

whilst an inscription on the edges of the stamp sheets chronicles the name, regiment, date of death and age at the time of death of the soldier. Additionally, as on all Royal Mail stamps, the head of Her Majesty the Queen is depicted in silhouette form in an upper corner on every stamp, in stark juxtaposition to the image of the deceased soldier. Due to this conceptualization of concurrent commemoration of, on the one hand, the *one* and, on the other hand, the *many* the installation commemorates the soldiers on a micro and a macro level. As each postage stamp sheet commemorates an individual soldier, McQueen's work draws attention to the fate of the individual at the same time as the visual accumulation of the nation's war dead in its entirety amounts to a timely memorial to contemporary military service and sacrifice of the troops as a whole.



[Figure 1: Installation view of *Queen and Country*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2010]¹⁷

It is worth noting that McQueen's work is reminiscent of other instances in which portraits have been collected to chronicle the death toll of *inter alia* epidemics, accidents, and incidents of gun violence.¹⁸ The installation furthermore bears

¹⁷ Image source: James, Nicholas, 'Interview with Steve McQueen', *ArtSlant New York*, March 2010, <http://www.artslant.com/nv/artists/rackroom/22043>, accessed May 3rd 2010

¹⁸ For instance, portrait photography compilations have been utilized in the media in the context of the coverage of AIDS victims in San Francisco in the early 1980s when newspapers ran multiple pages of the faces of individuals who had died from the virus; in the aftermath of school shootings in e.g. the

resemblance to commemorative practices surrounding the casualties of 9/11. Prominently, in the aftermath of 9/11 a variety of American newspapers ran pages of portraits of the victims of the terror attacks, archives of which continue to remain accessible, for instance via CNN's online 9/11 memorial and tribute list.¹⁹ Moreover, in the soldier context, McQueen's installation brings to mind a scheme to collect portraits of serving and fallen soldiers from their families that was initiated by the IWM in 1917. Yet, despite eliciting a vast collection of photographs submitted in response to the museum's call for photographs the assembled material was not exhibited following the First World War.²⁰

However, the IWM recently initiated a project entitled *Faces of the First World War* which as part of the museum's First World War Centenary Programme utilizes an archive of portrait photographs of soldiers who served during the First World War that were collected between 1917 and 1920. The project thus draws heavily on the material submitted by the British public more than ninety years ago which had for years been stored in the museum's storage facilities at Duxford barracks.²¹ Launched on Armistice Day in 2011, the project ran until August 2014 to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and entailed the regular upload of soldier portraits on the photo-sharing site Flickr where they are accessible to be viewed by the public.

In striking similarity to McQueen's collaboration with the soldier families the IWM is calling for public assistance in its endeavour to 'uncover millions of life stories' in that it is relying heavily on public participation in order to collect information about the individual servicemen depicted in the photographs, which can be

United States and Germany; and in the aftermath of plane crashes. A prominent case of an archive of death is constituted in the vast collection of portrait photographs depicting individuals who were imprisoned, tortured and executed by the Khmer Rouge regime in the notorious Tuol Sleng prison. Originally taken to record prisoners, the photographs were transformed into iconic depictions of genocide in their re-appropriation as images of commemoration when they were put on display in 1980 in the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where they are exhibited to this day.

¹⁹ CNN's 'September 11 – A Memorial' can be accessed at: <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/memorial/index.html>, accessed October 12th 2012

²⁰ Moriarty, Catherine, "'Though in a Picture Only': Portrait Photography and the Commemoration of the First World War" in: Braybon, Gail (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the impact of 1914-1918*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 38

²¹ *Ibid.*, 38

tagged and commented on online.²² The IWM's project can be seen to exemplify the ongoing and evolving commemoration of wars of the past, in re-visitation adapted to new memorial practices as well as supplemented when previously unused or undisclosed material is utilized. It thus becomes apparent that remembrance of war is never constant but rather remaining in continuous flux.

It is also worth noting that McQueen's work is paralleled by equivalent attempts at artistically capturing the scale of military casualties in the 'war on terror' that have been undertaken by a variety of American artists in recent years. Artistic commemoration of the fallen American soldiers is for instance evident in paper artist Jane Hammond's project *Fallen*, ongoing since 2004 and appropriating the metaphor of a fallen leaf as a symbol of a life lost; multi-media artist Peter Buotte's *Intravenous Infusion Paintings* which show the process of imprinting on military medical stretchers the names of deceased military personnel; media artist Joseph DeLappe's online performance *dead-in-iraq* in which the artist manually typed information about American casualties into the American Department of Defense's recruitment video game 'America's Army'; and portraitist Emily Prince's *American Servicemen and Women Who Have Died in Iraq and Afghanistan (But Not Including the Wounded, Nor the Iraqis nor the Afghans)* project which consists of palm-sized pencil portrait drawings of deceased soldiers.²³ As Prince draws on photographs of the soldiers for her portraits her work most closely resembles McQueen's *Queen and Country*.

In view of these creative initiatives to chronicle contemporary military casualties across a diversity of art forms what appears particularly striking is that these artworks almost exclusively address the military casualties of the war in Iraq whilst the casualties suffered in Afghanistan are only taken into account in Prince's artwork. This clearly suggests that the war in Iraq has captured and preoccupied the imagination of these artists to a significantly larger degree than the war in Afghanistan. This could be

²² Imperial War Museum, 'Faces of the First World War – IWM Centenary project launched on Flickr', http://www.1914.org/faces/?utm_source=PatronMail&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Armistice2011eNewstext, accessed November 15th 2011

²³ For further information about these artworks see the artists' webpages at: <http://www.janehammondartist.com/fallen.html>, accessed April 3rd 2010; <http://www.peterbuotte.com/pbtest.html>, accessed December 5th 2010; <http://delappe.net/index.php?/project/dead-in-iraq/>, accessed December 20th 2011; and <http://www.theamerican.servicemenandwomen.com/asmw/about.php>, accessed February 15th 2012

seen as related to and reflecting the fact that the invasion of Iraq has been much more contested both in the United States and across Europe than the war in Afghanistan. As a 'war of choice' the engagement in Iraq engendered significantly more debates on both sides of the Atlantic regarding the rationale for war and the reasons for which soldiers were dying, which were heavily contested and appeared blurred and difficult to identify, the more so once it became apparent that the belief in an Iraqi arsenal of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) had been unfounded.

In another parallel, these artworks and the concern with military casualties that they exhibit can not only be seen to function as acknowledgments of the soldier sacrifice but can also be seen to serve as poignant reminders of the centrality of the soldiers' service for foreign policy endeavours pursued by means of military force even as notions of remote-controlled warfare enabled by advancements in software and technology that increasingly keep soldiers out of harm's way have become prevalent.

In visualizing the scope of military casualties across a wide and diverse range of artistic memorial conceptions each of these artworks appears not only to endeavour to function as a means of facilitating public engagement with national loss, but also as a means of facilitating dialogue about national sacrifice in times of war. An objective such as this appears all the more vital considering that audiences for the war in Iraq have been 'remarkably scant' which indicates that a 'collective aversion to inspecting the war and its consequences' has long been prevailing.²⁴ In this light the works can be seen to forcefully confront disengaged home fronts that, as Carruthers puts it, within years of its beginning had 'totally checked out to the war'.²⁵

The works certainly represent a mode of taking stock of the soldiers' deaths that – whilst not necessarily more accessible – appears more embodied and tangible than the respective documentation in statistical data as spearheaded by the American Department of Defense and the British Ministry of Defence.²⁶ Moreover, McQueen's

²⁴ Carruthers, 'No one's looking: the disappearing audience for war', op.cit., 70

²⁵ Ibid., 70

²⁶ See the Department of Defense Directorate of Information, Operations, and Reports (DIOR) data for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) at: http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oif_list_of_names.pdf and for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) at: http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oef_list_of_names.pdf, accessed May 30th 2012; see the Ministry of Defence's

memorial to the Iraq war, like those presented by his American counterparts, bears witness to the fact that creative practitioners began to react to news of soldier deaths by embarking upon endeavours to address and chronicle contemporary national loss almost as soon as the fatalities began occurring. Accordingly, in embarking on a memorialization of soldiers long before the war has ended, works of art such as McQueen's arguably can be seen to refer to national loss in a more instantaneous and direct manner than official and state-sanctioned commemorative initiatives, as the emergence of the latter appears protracted and delayed in comparison to the quickness of the former.

3.2.3 Lest We Forget

The emotional impact stemming from McQueen's installation can be seen to resemble the sentiment emerging from the encounter with the physical presence of burial grounds as looking through the cabinet 'drawer after drawer, begins to have the same emotional effect as walking through a cemetery'.²⁷ However, *Queen and Country* in its entombment resembling form clearly does not embody the scale of war cemeteries such as those that were designed after the First World War under the leadership of the newly established Imperial War Graves Commission for Commonwealth casualties, for instance the Arras Memorial in the Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery in Arras, France or Tyne Cot Cemetery in Zonnebeke, Belgium.

Generally built to endure and 'mainly wrought in stone and bronze, with fixed meanings', state-sanctioned memorials commemorating casualties of war are commonly characterized by framework requirements – such as uniformity of headstones and inscriptions – that aim to 'ensure equality in death'.²⁸ Permanent memorials such as British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens' Cenotaph in Whitehall in London; British architect Sir Reginald Blomfield's Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing at Ypres in Belgium; the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in

data on British fatalities in Iraq at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/iraq#fatalities> and for British fatalities in Afghanistan at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan#fatalities>, accessed May 3rd 2013

²⁷ Mackinlay, 'A British Way of Remembering', op.cit., 66

²⁸ Moriarty, op.cit., 37-39

Colleville-sur-Mer, France; the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial in Margraten, Netherlands and American architect Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. come to mind here.

Memorials and cemeteries such as these speak not only to the vast numbers of military casualties in the wars of the 20th century but, in the case of overseas cemeteries, also of a time in which repatriation of deceased soldiers was less feasible, a time prior to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware and RAF Lyneham near Wootton Bassett becoming the sites of the arrival of flag-draped coffins. Like these memorials and burial grounds, and indeed like any spaces of war commemoration, McQueen's installation not only functions as a 'site of memory'²⁹ but also as a poignant reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by soldiers and the multitude of lives cut short in war. Through their untimely deaths deprived of their future the soldiers that McQueen presents have given their lives for their nation, a notion encapsulated in the well-known epitaph by John Maxwell Edmonds that is found on numerous war memorials throughout the world, most prominently on the Kohima memorial for the men of the British 2nd Division who were killed in the Battle of Kohima in the northeast of India in 1944: *For your tomorrow, we gave our today.*³⁰

Speaking to notions of patriotism and the preservation of the nation as well as of the defense of values and liberties that are threatened by the adversary who is being fought, the soldier's sacrifice is therein situated in direct relation to the population on the home front in whose name warfare is exercised. As Michael Billig observes, whilst further back in history wars were often fought 'in the name of defending religious ritual or chivalric honour' in more recent times the 'great causes for which modern blood is to be spilled are different' as modern warfare is usually 'performed in the name of the nation, whether to achieve national independence, or to defend the national territory

²⁹ For a detailed study of practices of collective remembrance see: Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); as well as Winter, Jay, 'Notes on the Memory Boom. War, Remembrance and the Uses of the Past' in: Bell, Duncan (ed.), *Memory, Trauma, and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 54-73 and Nora, Pierre, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, (26: Spring 1989), 7-24

³⁰ Farquharson, Robert, H., *For Your Tomorrow: Canadians and the Burma Campaign, 1941-1945*, (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004), 313

from encroachment, or to protect the very principle of nationhood'.³¹ Consequentially, as Vron Ware highlights, 'being prepared to die for one's country has long been the touchstone of nationalism'.³²

Undoubtedly, within the construction of the rationale for war as rooted in the defence of the nation it is the figure of the soldier that constitutes the 'exemplar *par excellence* of the lengths to which people may go in the name of the nation'.³³ Thus, McQueen's artwork with its focus on the fallen soldier, arising from the sense of duty and dedication that he observed when he accompanied the troops in Iraq, can be seen to also touch on the patriotic rationales that underpin and inspire military service. Indeed, the artist further manifests his intention to situate the artwork in the realm of commemorative endeavours and in the context of national service in the title that McQueen has chosen for the work. Strikingly, the designation of the work calls to mind British sculptor Bill Woodrow's 1989 sculpture *For Queen and Country*³⁴ which, depicting a wounded figure on crutches whilst a sceptre and crown lie at its feet, similarly speaks to military service, sense of duty and sacrifice for the nation, yet, in contrast to McQueen, Woodrow focuses on those who lived to return rather than those who perished.

At the same time as the artwork's title signals that McQueen endeavours to commemorate the ultimate corporeal price that soldiers continue to pay, it also clearly gestures to the direct relationship between the soldier and service to the country and monarch, which is further underscored in the presence of the Queen's profile right above the soldier portraits on the stamps themselves. In so directly juxtaposing the depiction of the soldier with that of the monarch in the small space of a stamp

³¹ Billig, Michael, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage, 1995), 1

³² Ware, op.cit., 147

³³ Gibson and Abell, op.cit., 872 [emphasis in the original]

³⁴ The sculpture, exhibited as part of Woodrow's *Point of Entry* exhibition at the IWM in 1989, consists of a one-legged figure whose body is marked by further wounds leaning on a pair of golden crutches that are shaped as the letters 'L' and 'A' respectively, the former letter missing from the word 'Royal' inscribed on a crown on the floor in front of the limping figure, the latter letter pushing into the lettering 'Reminder' inscribed on a sceptre lying next to the crown to convert it to 'Remainder'; see the artwork on the artist's webpage at: http://www.billwoodrow.com/dev/sculpture_by_letter.php?page=2&i=15&sel_letter=f, accessed February 12th 2012

McQueen can be seen to visually correlate the interdependence between the two in one of the most proximate manners possible.



[Figure 2: close-ups of the sheets commemorating, clockwise from top left, Corporal Ben Nowak, Major Matthew James Bacon, Private Jonathon Dany Wysoczan and Staff Sergeant Sharron Elliott]³⁵

In doing so the artist not only crystallizes the mutual dependency between military service and the execution of state politics in the international sphere but also calls attention to the home front's responsibility to acknowledge the death of the soldier precisely because it constitutes a direct consequence of this correlation. Whilst McQueen's work can thus be seen to function as an apt reminder of public indebtedness to the soldiers and hence also as a reminder of the appropriateness of public recognition of the soldier sacrifice, it is the attempt of conferring individual acknowledgment upon the soldiers that McQueen is principally concerned with.

Above all, McQueen's tribute to the fallen soldiers is clearly motivated by a desire to afford recognition of each of the soldiers individually and informed by the attempt to enable viewers to familiarize themselves more intimately with the individual

³⁵ Image source: ArtFund, 'Celebrating Contemporary: Steve McQueen's Queen and Country', September 23rd 2011, <http://www.artfund.org/news/1226/celebrating-contemporary-steve-mcqueens-queen-and-country>, accessed October 2nd 2011

people behind the casualty numbers. Although constituting enduring markers of national loss, in memorials the individuality of the soldiers, their lives and the specific circumstances of their deaths remain inaccessible when memorial structures are devoid of information that enables this kind of insight. In contrast, whilst a portrait photograph of a deceased soldier likewise fails to offer a wealth of precise information, it does have an individualizing function and allows for a more intimate encounter with the particular life that was lost.

Consequentially, although 'the names on memorials have an indexical relationship to one particular war death'³⁶ which renders them discernible and acknowledged, a better impression of the lives that ended during war is derived from photographs depicting them. As Catherine Moriarty notes, whilst 'we may imagine the physical counterpart of a particular name' doing so simply 'cannot compete with the impact of looking at the face of the one who died'.³⁷ Indeed, the face constitutes 'the most salient expression of our vitality' since when we look at it 'we see it animated by a vivacious economy of anguish and pleasure' and detect in facial expressions the 'revelation of intimate sensibility, of interiority, of thought, of spirituality, of soul'.³⁸

This observation is arguably also applicable to McQueen's assemblage of soldier portraits since in the faces of the soldiers that the artists commemorates in *Queen and Country* the observer can amongst other things perceive liveliness, confidence and professional pride. Markedly, almost all of the soldiers are directly gazing into the camera's lens and in the smiles on their faces a mixture of happiness, positive outlook and contentment is readily detectable. Since McQueen approached the bereaved families in order to obtain photographs of the deceased soldiers the portraits greatly vary in style, yet as material that belongs to the affected families the photographs have in common their origin in the private sphere which through the artwork is brought into public view.

³⁶ Moriarty, op.cit., 39

³⁷ Ibid., 39

³⁸ Smith, Anna, "'Off with their Heads": Decapitation and the Experience of Limits' in: Berendse, Gerrit-Jan and Mark Williams (eds.), *Terror and Text – Representing Political Violence in Literature and the Visual Arts*, (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2002), 216

In the creation of a commemoration that is simultaneously private and public and in constituting a contemporary marker of national loss, McQueen's work arguably falls into the realm of what Erika Doss calls 'memorial mania' which refers to 'an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts' as discernible specifically in the United States but also in other Western nations and encompasses not only permanent structures but also temporary memorials such as 'spontaneous offerings of flowers, candles, balloons, and teddy bears that precipitate at sites of tragic and traumatic death'.³⁹ Indeed, commemorative practices are as diverse as the events and people that are remembered through them.

Commemoration can take the form of the creation of durable structures such as monuments, statues and cemeteries, yet it can also materialize in the decision not to rebuild buildings that were damaged, as in the case of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin and the St Michael's Cathedral in Coventry, both of which were largely destroyed by bombing raids during the Second World War and have been left in ruins to serve as reminders of the destruction.⁴⁰ Beyond more permanent arrangements, commemoration also takes the shape of, for instance, commemorative days, wreath ceremonies, military parades, naming of streets, moments of silence and remembrance poppies worn on clothing. Inextricably linked with memory, practices of commemoration at their core signify an attempt to address, confront and preclude the potential loss or deterioration of memory.

It is therefore that in the context of commemorative initiatives public debate often ensues as memorialization goes hand in hand with contests over what kinds of spaces, forms and costs are deemed acceptable and with deliberations over which events and individuals or groups of individuals are entitled to commemoration in the public sphere. There are also underlying questions regarding the interpretation of

³⁹ Doss, Erika, *Memorial Mania – Public Feeling in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2; see also Winter, 'Notes on the Memory Boom. War, Remembrance and the Uses of the Past', op.cit.; and Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', op.cit.

⁴⁰ See: Gedächtniskirche Berlin, 'Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche – Kirchengebäude', <http://www.gedaechtniskirche-berlin.de/KWG/dateien/gebaeude/index.php>, accessed December 12th 2011 and Coventry Cathedral, 'Coventry Cathedral – Our History', <http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/about-us/our-history.php>, accessed December 12th 2011

history and its visualization at stake here which further underscores the political nature of memorials. McQueen's artwork draws attention to the matter of visibility vis-à-vis invisibility of national loss as the soldier portraits in the oak cabinet literally have to be brought to light in the act of pulling out the drawers whilst when concealed within the cabinet they remain entombed in coffin-like form.

Commenting on the unusual design of the memorial John Mackinlay notes that McQueen's work 'does not fit the conservative image of what a war memorial should be like' yet attests that 'its scale and ambition are of its time' since the soldiers engaged in the 'war on terror' are 'young men and women of the Facebook generation'.⁴¹ Therein, McQueen's piece – akin to 'strictly twenty-first century forms of remembrance' as evident in, for example, social networking sites dedicated to military casualties such as 'RIP Marc Ferns', a webpage for Private Marc Ferns created and maintained by his family and friends⁴² – joins the ranks of contemporary forms of commemoration that in an age in which everything is catalogued and archived can be seen to represent a corresponding and foreseeable extension of more traditional commemorative practices.

3.2.4 Choosing to look vs. haphazard encounters

McQueen notes that his rationale for the installation was that viewers could 'engage with the images in a real manner' in their encounter with the cabinet, further suggesting that 'when you pull out a drawer it's your time, you have the time to engage with that image'.⁴³ Arguably, whether encountering these soldiers' faces as a visitor to one of the museum exhibitions of the work, when turning the pages of the *Queen and Country* book depicting them or when looking at the portrait stamps online on the ArtFund's webpage of the project,⁴⁴ the archive appears to demand the viewers' commitment to acknowledge each and every depicted soldier as in order to take in the work in its

⁴¹ Mackinlay, 'A British Way of Remembering', op.cit., 66

⁴² Imber and Fraser, op.cit., 386; RIP Marc Ferns, <http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=5009744713>, accessed December 27th 2011

⁴³ McQueen cited in: James, op.cit.

⁴⁴ See: McQueen, op.cit. and ArtFund, 'Queen and Country – British Service Personnel', http://www.artfund.org/queenandcountry/British_Service_Personnel.html, accessed March 20th 2010

entirety it has to literally be worked through, which necessitates a certain level of engagement, discipline and dedication on the part of viewers.

Thus, *Queen and Country* can be seen to ask viewers to dare to see and to bear witness to the corporeal cost of war as exemplified in the death of the soldier, and the work does so most evidently in the context of working through the artwork physically when pulling out drawer after drawer of the cabinet at an exhibition site. Therein, the encounter with the artwork might take on the form of an endurance test that might, depending on the individual viewer's sentiments, result in impressions ranging from a marginal physical and emotional strain to an overwhelming sense of sadness, emotional exhaustion and physical fatigue or a mixture of varying reactions along this spectrum.

Whilst the work can thus be experienced in a solemn and commemorative manner, the desire to look at the portraits can also derive from a sense of curiosity devoid of commemorative inclinations, since the motivations, attitudes and emotions brought to an encounter are potentially as manifold and diverse as the number of people involved in the experience. In this light, the work can also be perceived as a more sinister collection of portraits of death that are compiled in a manner akin to the ways in which collectors accumulate stamps or other collector items. Indeed, the oak cabinet does closely resemble systems with pull-out drawers used to house stamp collections.⁴⁵ Taking stock of the nation's military casualties in Iraq in this manner can thus also be seen as a rather gruesome catalogue of death amassed in an archive that is openly displayed and made available for public perusal and consultation.

Compiling the nation's war dead in this context might suggest a blasé attitude as the soldiers' deaths could here be conceived as mere fact rather than understood as worthy of commemoration and as a sacrifice that demands acknowledgment as such. Likewise, it is worth considering that the accumulation of soldier portraits in this form and in this space can potentially be seen to draw attention away from their individuality, as each individual's uniqueness could be seen to get lost as they are absorbed into a mass of images.

⁴⁵ Moriarty, Catherine and Angela Weight, 'The Legacy of Interaction: Artists at the Imperial War Museum 1981-2007', *Tate Papers*, Spring 2008, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/08spring/moriarty-weight.shtm>, accessed November 5th 2011

Regardless of the likely diverse range of sentiments toward the work, however, in the encounter with the installation viewers are arguably bound to recognize that they are presented with a visualization of loss of life that continues to constitute an irrefutable consequence of warfare. Aware of the fact that the individuals depicted in the prototype stamps have perished, the artwork's viewers find themselves looking at moments in time that have been captured in the photographs that represent times prior to the soldiers' deaths and times in which the depicted individuals were unaware of what the future held for them. As British troops in Iraq have died at a young age with two thirds under the age of thirty at the time of their deaths⁴⁶ the faces on the stamps in particular speak of youth, vitality and lifetime yet to spend. Indeed, as one critic remarks, many of the portraits 'look as if they belong in a school photo, not a cabinet of war dead'.⁴⁷

As viewers of the artwork, however, the gaze is directed backwards in the observation of the portraits and the unfulfilled lives they depict. As viewers we thus can be seen to obtain knowledge of these soldiers that they cannot have of themselves. Arguably, the multiple repetitions of the soldier's portrait photograph on each sheet of stamps not only augment the intensity of the encounter with the depicted individual life but can also be seen to poignantly suggest casualties beyond those chronicled in the installation. Indeed, the multiplication of the portraits not only appears to indicate that the deaths that are visualized in McQueen's *Queen and Country* represent but a small fragment of the many lives sacrificed in the history of warfare. Moreover, McQueen's multiple repetitions of the soldiers' portrait photographs can be seen to rather uncannily foreshadow and speak to the military deaths yet to come.

As McQueen's memorial to the fallen soldiers has not been designed to be looked at from a distance but rather been devised in such a manner that invites viewers to establish a closer engagement with the individual soldiers, the encounter with the work is characterized by a unique immediacy and authenticity. By asking viewers to unearth the stamp sheets from the cabinet and by enabling close inspection of the

⁴⁶ See: *BBC News*, 'British military deaths in Iraq', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10637526>, accessed February 15th 2012

⁴⁷ Morrison, Richard, 'Why is the Royal Mail blocking McQueen's *Queen and Country*?', *The Times Online*, November 11th 2009, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/richard_morrison/article6911038.ece, accessed March 2nd 2010

soldiers' faces the installation allows for the soldiers to be encountered and considered individually whilst the accumulation of the stamp sheets in their entirety also prompts contemplation of the soldiers collectively. The opportunity to inspect the entirety of the soldier portraits in one locale, however, is inextricably tied to their stationary placement in the oak cabinet, and thus unique to the encounter with the artwork at an exhibition site, whilst McQueen's ambition to transform the prototype stamps into official stamps would unfasten their fixed localization and dissolve their collectivity.

From its inception *Queen and Country* was conceptualized to allow for the possibility of the facsimile stamps to be turned into actual stamps that would be issued by Royal Mail. In fact, McQueen has noted that he considers the project incomplete until his stamps are made available for circulation, stating in this context that 'the stamps would focus on individual experience without euphemism' and allow for an 'intimate reflection of national loss that would involve the families of the dead and permeate the everyday – every household and every office'.⁴⁸ Rather than merely creating 'an artwork in a museum, sitting there, catching dust, which some people know about and other people don't',⁴⁹ McQueen further envisions a memorial that would not only operate beyond the static nature of the installation in the museum exhibition space but also bestow both currency and mobility upon the soldier portraits, both of which a single stamp affords.

However, when McQueen approached the postal service he soon found that his idea met opposition and his proposal was rejected, *inter alia* on grounds of concerns over the feelings of the soldiers' families and due to the viewpoint that it was too soon to commence commemoration of a war that had not yet ended. Suggesting that the stamps would be 'distressing and disrespectful' due to the fact that they would be 'cancelled/defaced with ink as they pass through our sorting equipment'⁵⁰ constituted a further argument brought forward by Royal Mail.

⁴⁸ McQueen cited in: ArtFund, 'Queen and Country – A Project by Steve McQueen', http://www.artfund.org/queenandcountry/Queen_and_Country.html, accessed March 20th 2010

⁴⁹ McQueen cited in: Herbert, op.cit., 58

⁵⁰ Royal Mail spokesman cited in: Allen-Mills, Tony, 'Steve McQueen at war with Royal Mail over stamp memorial to UK soldiers', *The Sunday Times*, March 14th 2010, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article7060867.ece>, accessed April 3rd 2010

Whilst some of the arguments against the commemorative stamps that were brought forward by Royal Mail could be seen to represent reasonable concerns, it stands to argue that apprehension on behalf of the next of kin appears discredited in view of the support shown for the initiative by the bereaved families themselves. Not only the number of families who chose to participate in and to contribute to McQueen's project by selecting and supplying a photograph of the deceased soldier, but also their participation in full knowledge of McQueen's intention for the artwork appear to bring the notion that the next of kin could be offended or hurt into question.

However, it is also worth considering in this context that there generally are more people affected by an individual's death than solely their immediate family. Yet, whether or not all of those who are directly affected by a particular soldier's death were in favour of submitting a portrait picture to McQueen's project remains difficult to ascertain as the decision to supply the soldier's picture lay with the immediate family.⁵¹ Who was consulted within each particular family and among the soldier's wider circle of relatives and friends, and how a decision as to whether or not to participate was negotiated among those included in the decision making process likely varied widely and constitutes a process that essentially remains undisclosed.

Among the soldier's loved ones – and not merely among the public at large – there thus might be those who find the notion that a portrait picture of the deceased soldier is circulating in the public sphere in the form of a stamp that is touched, licked, and attached to postcards, letters and parcels uncomfortable and difficult. This possibility, however, has either not been considered in the sense that it was overlooked by McQueen, or not taken into account in the sense that it was possibly deemed irrelevant in view of the project's larger objectives. If the latter was the case then the artist, given that he had the endeavour to create a tangible memorial at the forefront of his mind, might have accepted the fact that his project might not be universally supported and concentrated on the endorsements that the project did receive.

⁵¹ McQueen hired a research assistant who contacted the soldier's families to ask them whether they wanted to participate in the project; see: Herbert, *op.cit.*, 57

In stark contrast to the postal service's open resistance, McQueen's objective gained public support and a total of 26,273 people signed a petition on the ArtFund's webpage calling for the realization of the stamps.⁵² Nonetheless, despite hopes that Royal Mail would be swayed in light of public support, the culmination of the artwork in actual stamps has to date not materialized. The postal service's rejection appears to have been unanticipated by the artist considering that Royal Mail maintains that the 'role and sacrifice of the UK's servicemen and women have always been essential elements of the stamps we issue' and in light of the fact that McQueen's soldier portrait stamps would not constitute the first of their kind as in 2004 a 'set of stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Crimean War, featuring photographic portraits of veterans from that conflict' was issued by Royal Mail.⁵³

Outside of the United Kingdom commemorative stamps with reference to military casualties in the context of the 'war on terror' have already been issued: the United States Postal Service's 'Purple Heart' stamp was first issued in 2003, the Deutsche Post DHL in Germany issued the 'Solidarität' stamp in 2011, and La Poste in France issued a stamp in 2009 that features the image of a British soldier who was buried in France after being killed in Iraq.⁵⁴

Due to the nature of their mobility, if McQueen's facsimile stamps were to be produced as actual stamps they 'would go out into the world, multiplied many times over, and circulate in everyday and domestic space once again' which would broaden their sphere of influence as the 'commemorative function moves on, beyond the museum'.⁵⁵ In facilitating an immediate encounter with the portrait of a deceased soldier, officially issued stamps would not only allow for soldier sacrifice to register with the public at large in a very direct way but also produce an encounter that was not sought out but rather materializes haphazardly. As the private photographic material

⁵² ArtFund, 'Queen and Country – Support for the Project', http://www.artfund.org/queenandcountry/Support_for_the_Project.html, accessed March 20th 2010

⁵³ Nikkah, op.cit.

⁵⁴ See: United States Postal Service, 'Stamp Announcement 11-26: Purple Heart with Ribbon', http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2011/pb22308/html/info_007.htm, accessed June 2nd 2011; Solidarität mit Soldaten, 'Die erste deutsche Briefmarke für unsere Soldaten', August 19th 2011, <http://solidaritaet-mit-soldaten.de/solidaritaet-aktuell/items/briefmarke.html>, accessed September 2nd 2011 and Nikkah, op.cit. respectively

⁵⁵ Moriarty and Weight, op.cit.

that constitutes the core of the artwork is absorbed into the public realm the haphazard encounter with the stamps has the potential to at least momentarily interrupt daily life when the consequences of the political decision for war are, literally, being faced.

Moreover, issued stamps would enable the public to actively participate in the dissemination of McQueen's memorial – and indeed necessitate public participation – and therein firmly incorporate public involvement in the mobile memorial's conceptualization. Consequently, public contribution in the context of the issued stamps would markedly differ from the public's participation in the encounter with the installation in which viewer agency is predominantly centered around the act of extracting the stamp sheets from the cabinet and bringing the soldier portraits to light.

In both its stationary and its envisioned mobile form McQueen's work speaks to national acknowledgment of the loss experienced by the nation at large as well as more immediately by the soldiers' families and therein represents a reminder of the value of each soldier's life and a form of honouring of the many lives lost in Iraq. It further signals to those still serving and to Veterans that their service and the risks experienced in the context of their profession are not forgotten. As a symbol of communication, in the form of officially issued stamps *Queen and Country* would reach as far as the letters and packages onto which the stamps would be attached would travel, i.e. they would circulate both within the country and further afield. Therein, the stamps would also signal to people abroad that the United Kingdom is honouring its soldiers and acknowledges the duties they perform on behalf of the nation.

It is for these reasons that McQueen's conceptualization of *Queen and Country* is not only unique but also captivating. The work does not only possess affective qualities as it is so starkly embodied, it also constitutes a prompt and individualized commemoration of military personnel. In addition, it moreover raises potent questions regarding the ways in which the public conceives of and engages with military service and sacrifice, therein offering a space of contemplation whilst also providing a foundation for conversation about soldier service and sacrifice at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It is the latter themes that also arise as the focal point in the work

of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin although their attention, in marked contrast to McQueen, is decidedly directed more towards the living.

3.3.1 *The Day Nobody Died*

‘How do you capture the kind of pain and trauma that you have
in a war? How do you show the reality of soldiers just waiting to die?’⁵⁶

– Oliver Chanarin

Photographer duo Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, akin to McQueen, inspect the experience of the contemporary soldier in the theatre of war. In contrast to McQueen, however, their focus lies on the diverse experiences of soldiers during their deployment rather than on the commemoration of their deaths. Significantly, whilst the soldier in McQueen’s installation emerges as a figure worthy of commemoration, in Broomberg and Chanarin’s work the soldier is first and foremost cast as a professional combatant who must exercise his profession in dangerous circumstances. Consisting of a series of large-scale photographs and an accompanying video their *The Day Nobody Died* project can concurrently be seen to operate as a critique of photojournalism due to its commentary on the production mechanisms of war coverage. The work was *inter alia* exhibited as part of the 2008 Brighton Photo Biennial, and internationally in the 2009 *Manipulating Reality* exhibition in Florence, Italy and *Serious Games* exhibition in Darmstadt, Germany in 2011.

For over a decade the two London-based photographers have been collaborating in documenting violence in Rwanda, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Darfur whilst simultaneously writing ‘extensively about the contemporary limitations of photojournalism due to restrictions of being embedded and censorship by photo editors’.⁵⁷ In contrast to the common perception of the ‘documentary photographer as a lone predator’, Broomberg and Chanarin’s working relationship highlights that creative collaborative practice is viable, particularly when collaborators – as has been noted of

⁵⁶ Chanarin cited in: Pitman, Joanna, ‘War’s absurdity in The Day Nobody Died at Paradise Row’, *The Times*, September 23rd 2008, http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/visual_arts/article4803938.ece, accessed February 15th 2010

⁵⁷ Lange, Christy, ‘Shooting Gallery’, *Frieze*, (132: June-August 2010)

the photographers in question – appear to be ‘thinking with one brain` and to be ‘seeing with one vision`.⁵⁸

The photographers’ trip to Helmand Province in June 2008 represented an undertaking different in nature to their previous expeditions since the work they created in Afghanistan is distinctively characterized by performative qualities. As the discussion will show, by means of utilizing a performative approach the duo developed a strategy to navigate and negotiate the gap between reality and its representation. The inspiration to approach the war in Afghanistan and specifically the soldier’s role within it in an entirely conceptual manner originated in two distinct experiences.

In March 2008 the duo had been invited to serve as judges for the World Press Photo awards which as the world’s most prestigious annual photography competition constitute a benchmark for professional photojournalism. In their capacity as judges Broomberg and Chanarin were asked to look at and evaluate a total of 81,000 photographs and noticed in the process that ‘images from contemporary conflict zones showing the real effects of conflict on the human body were conspicuously absent and the few that were there had never been published in the media`.⁵⁹ They furthermore realized that most of the photographs depicting contemporary warfare had been produced by embedded photographers which made them not only curious about ‘this new ambiguous role of the professional witness` but also suspicious about the ‘veracity of the evidence` that was produced in this way.⁶⁰

In the previous year, the photographers had visited the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court, a military rehabilitation centre in Surrey where injured British Armed Forces personnel receive medical treatment. At the facility they spoke with soldiers who had been injured by roadside bombs during their deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and who were fitted with prosthetic limbs at Headley Court. As Broomberg and Chanarin were photographing and interviewing these amputees – some

⁵⁸ MacDonald, Gordon, ‘Who are Broomberg and Chanarin and why have they done this?’, July 2007, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/who-are-text-by-gordon-macdonald/>, accessed May 4th 2010

⁵⁹ Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, ‘The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation`, December 4th 2008, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/barbican-gallery-presentation/>, accessed May 4th 2010

⁶⁰ Ibid.

of whom were 'as young as 19' and some of whom 'had lost an arm, some both legs' – they recognized that the soldiers had not only suffered severe physical injuries but also psychological trauma of a magnitude that escaped the possibility of illustration and thus concluded that the photographs were completely inadequate as they 'failed and would always fail to represent any of the trauma. They were hopeless as representatives of that experience'.⁶¹ Having observed the trauma resulting from the loss of bodily integrity in the rehabilitation centre, Broomberg and Chanarin would subsequently acquire an even more immediate impression of the perils faced by soldiers.

3.3.2 Performing Photography

Arriving in Afghanistan during a period of particularly heavy casualties the photographers witnessed several fatalities as they were accompanying the British troops. On their first day on the frontline a BBC fixer and nine Afghan soldiers were killed whilst on the second day of their visit three British soldiers were killed, bringing the number of British combat fatalities to one hundred.⁶² Fatalities continued to occur throughout their one week stay, apart from the fifth day on which no one in their observable environment died. It is this fifth day – contrastingly marked by the absence of death – from which their artwork derives its title. As a day devoid of casualties it would ordinarily represent a non-accentuated day. It would appear that in Broomberg and Chanarin's view, however, it is precisely the rarity of a day free from loss of life that deserves accentuation. Therein, the artwork's title in itself offers a first indication of Broomberg and Chanarin's critique of photojournalistic practices which they see as characterized by 'professionals hovering around waiting for an event to happen'.⁶³

This synopsis instantly brings to mind French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of the 'decisive moment'⁶⁴ that emphasizes the necessity for

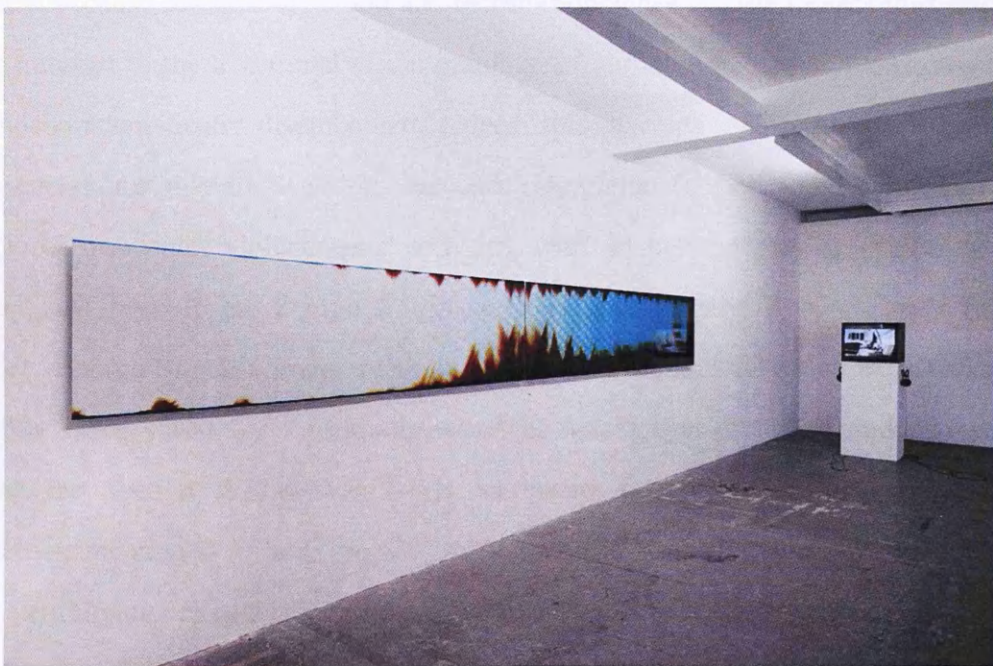
⁶¹ Chanarin cited in: Stallabrass, Julian, 'War, Photojournalism and Art Photography: An Interview with Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin', *The Myth of Europa*, (May 2009), 14

⁶² Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died', <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died/>, accessed May 4th 2010

⁶³ Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, 'Frieze talks: Photojournalism and the war of images', *The Guardian*, October 13th 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/oct/13/photojournalism-broomberg-chanarin-conflict>, accessed October 16th 2011

⁶⁴ Lewis, Greg, *Photojournalism – Content & Technique*, (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995), 139

photographers to be in the right place at the right time and continuously alert for the moment that best describes the situation that is to be documented. At the same time one is reminded of war photographer Robert Capa whose Spanish Civil War photograph of a soldier at the moment of death and photographs of the D-Day invasion on Omaha Beach are amongst the most iconic images of the visual war archive and his famous assertion: 'If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough'.⁶⁵ However, in defiance of these staples of photojournalism and in a bid to undermine the 'usual means to determine the value of the photojournalistic image – its composition, its proximity to danger, its value as evidence',⁶⁶ Broomberg and Chanarin endeavour to invert traditional photojournalistic depictions of warfare in their production of what can be described as anti-documentation.



[Figure 3: Installation view, KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2011]⁶⁷

In response to all the events that other embedded photographers were photographing, the duo – who had intentionally left their cameras at home – in a

⁶⁵ Capa cited in: Kozloff, Max, *The Privileged Eye – Essays on Photography*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 211

⁶⁶ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation', op.cit.

⁶⁷ Image source: Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/installations/the-day-that-nobody-died-installation-shots/>, accessed January 12th 2012

performative manner unrolled a seven-metre section from a fifty metre long, 72.6 cm wide roll of photographic paper and exposed it for twenty seconds to the sunlight. The results obtained are large scale photographs that depict irregular patterns of fluctuating hues of various colours generated by the chemical reaction on the paper that are flowing over the photo paper canvas. As entirely abstract images characterized by a 'deliberate evacuation of content' Broomberg and Chanarin's work thus amounts to a series of 'radically non-figurative, unique, action-photographs'.⁶⁸

The photographers acknowledge that their photographs are 'playing on the pictorialist and sublime notion of beauty' since the configurations that they display can be perceived as beautiful in their evocation of, for instance, the blue sky or purely due to the vibrancy of the colours and patterns, whilst they can likewise be perceived as 'violent because red denotes blood and therefore violence'.⁶⁹ The images thus stand in stark contrast to the traditional visual grammar of photojournalism as the photographs are uncharacteristically disembodied. Indeed, this discrepancy becomes all the more apparent in consideration of the fact that photographic portrayal of warfare has developed to depict violence and suffering with an ever increasing proximity and immediacy: from Roger Fenton's Crimean War photography; Robert Capa's falling soldier; George Strock's image of three American casualties in Papua New Guinea – labelled 'taboo-shattering'⁷⁰ as it was one of the first images of dead American soldiers during the Second World War – via increasing quantities of close-up views of casualties uncommon prior to the war in Vietnam and Nick Ut's watershed photograph of a girl running naked from a Napalm attack that would not have been published had the Associated Press bureau in New York not decided to go against their policy that forbade frontal nudity;⁷¹ to the plethora of contemporary imagery that permeates to the public via a multitude of channels depicting the effects of violence on the human body on a hitherto unseen scale.

⁶⁸ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died', op.cit.

⁶⁹ Broomberg cited in: Stallabrass, op.cit., 15

⁷⁰ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, op.cit., 63

⁷¹ Chong, Denise, *The Girl in the Picture – The remarkable story of Vietnam's most famous casualty*, (London: Simpson & Schuster, 2000), 73

In clear opposition to this legacy, Broomberg and Chanarin's photographs reach into a level of abstraction not commonly found in the dominant modes of violent conflict depiction. However, to a certain extent their representation is evocative of what David Company labels 'Late Photography' in which 'quick reactions give way to slow deliberation. The jittery snapshot is replaced by a cool and sober stare. Lateness replaces timeliness'.⁷² In turning the camera away from immediate crisis this form of photographic assessment focuses on the aftermath and remnants of conflict rather than on explicit depiction, essentially foregoing the heat of the moment for a time when the dust has settled. Moreover, as an 'overtly allegorical mode of photography' it is characterized by a forensic look that 'openly accepts that it will be an insufficient and partial account of things' as the photographs produced in this manner 'present themselves as fragments not wholes, to be read through and against a backdrop of other media representations of warfare'.⁷³

As a response to traditional photojournalism this approach recognizes that the photographic medium has to some extent been eclipsed by other media, particularly by television's moving images that are better able to convey the sound and texture of war and have thus rivaled photographic portrayal ever since the war in Vietnam that, as the first 'living room war', is 'so often thought of as the last "photographer's war"'.⁷⁴ Accordingly, whilst the genre functions as a means of portraying aspects of war it also refers photography back onto itself in its acknowledgment of the medium's descent from an unsurpassed means of documentation to one that has been overshadowed by other media.

Whilst due to their refusal to document war by means of conventional photographic tools the 'Late Photography' label does not appear suitable for Broomberg and Chanarin's photo series – not least of all since their images are 'useless as evidence'⁷⁵ due to the extent of the abstraction – their reflective approach to the depiction of war and the reference to photography's limitations that is conveyed in their

⁷² Company, David, 'The Red House', *Aperture*, (185: November 2006), 30

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 30

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 28

⁷⁵ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation', *op.cit.*

work denote certain congruencies with the genre. The specific singularity of their photographs, however, lies in the lack of discernible subject matter and the fact that the series produced by Broomberg and Chanarin's 'unrolling and rerolling ritual' constitutes not only 'anything but a literal record' but also 'the antithesis of what other photographers were doing'.⁷⁶

Paradoxically, although their role as authors is very limited as the composition of their photographs is entirely accidental – 'created by the temperature of light on that day, at that moment, in that place'⁷⁷ – the duo draw attention to their presence in the theatre of war as they perform their unusual routine of exposing the photo paper. The very ability to undertake this exercise speaks to the fact that the photographers, due to their embed status, were operating under the protection of the military in spaces of relative safety. This in itself, akin to McQueen's experience in Iraq, also sheds light on the restricted perimeters of their field of vision.

3.3.3 Failing to see

In the context of the fact that the 'majority of images we see from Afghanistan and Iraq are produced by embedded journalists, whose rules of engagement are imposed by the military' Broomberg and Chanarin disclose that there is a 'long list of what an embedded photojournalist cannot photograph' which *inter alia* includes 'car bombings, suicide bombings, wounded soldiers, dead soldiers, the coffins of dead soldiers, battle-damaged vehicles, hospitals, morgues'.⁷⁸ Consequentially, the effects of warfare on the body are largely shielded from the public's view whilst defiance of the regulations can lead to concrete repercussions: for instance, embedded photographer Stefan Zaklin was banned from further accompanying American Army units after taking a photograph of a soldier who had been killed in Fallujah in November 2004; two New York Times journalists were disembedded in January 2007 after photographing a fatally wounded soldier and freelance photographer Zorah Miller's images of marines killed in a suicide attack in Iraq in June 2008 that he had published on his webpage likewise

⁷⁶ Pitman, op.cit.

⁷⁷ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation', op.cit.

⁷⁸ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'Frieze talks: Photojournalism and the war of images', op.cit.

resulted in the termination of his embed status.⁷⁹ Miller pointedly states: 'It's as if it's okay to take pictures of them handing lollipops to kids on the street and providing medical care, but photographing the actual war is unacceptable.'⁸⁰

It is this state of affairs that informs Broomberg and Chanarin's approach to their own embedment as they are conscious of the agreement that they are entering into with the military, recognizing that in exchange for their access to war the military would exercise control over them. During their stay in Camp Bastion the photographers observed how representation itself becomes 'implicit in the instigation and perpetuation' of warfare as events were transformed into headlines and images that obscure the trauma of war: 'To watch mutilated bodies being carried out of helicopters on stretchers, followed by the inevitable polite announcements', the duo assert, 'made explicit a process in which stock phrases, and stock images, are exploited in order to neutralize the horror of these events.'⁸¹ Thus, as journalistic notions of impartiality and objectivity are compromised in the context of embedded journalism, Broomberg and Chanarin suggest that 'the word collusion rather than journalism may better describe this kind of reporting'.⁸² Against this background their own approach of utilizing abstraction in their artwork forcefully underscores their unwillingness to participate in the production of sanitized depiction of warfare that is characterized by a profound disjuncture between the actual circumstances of war and their representation.

Thus, the task of making sense of the photographs appears to fall on the viewers who, in order to derive knowledge from the photo series, have to engage in more than fleeting consideration of the photographs. In order to be rendered comprehensible the photographs, however, not only require sincere examination on the part of viewers but also benefit from instructive contextualization on the part of the authors. Considering that the latter significantly enables the former it becomes evident that without an

⁷⁹ Kamber, Michael and Arango, Tim, '4,000 U.S. Deaths, and a Handful of Images', *The New York Times*, July 26th 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/26/world/middleeast/26censor.html>, accessed August 2nd 2010

⁸⁰ Miller cited in: Lang, Daryl, 'Disembedded: Marines Send a War Photographer Packing', *Photo District News*, July 17th 2008, http://www.pdnonline.com/pdn/newswire/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003828935, accessed July 28th 2010

⁸¹ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation', op.cit.

⁸² Ibid.

informative element the photo series would remain on a level of inaccessibility and thus arguably fail to function as a critical commentary on the violence and trauma experienced by contemporary soldiers. As Christy Lange notes in the context of artistic abstraction and conceptual strategies, 'when artists apply an all-too constructed or allegorical framework to the first-hand accounts of suffering or violence in war, they also risk undermining the possibility of any truth at all'.⁸³

This criticism appears valid with regard to Broomberg and Chanarin's photographs since the series at first glance appears 'so subtle that it is virtually unintelligible' which suggests that it 'risks being considered absurd' if the photographs remain unaccompanied by 'more explanation in the presentation'.⁸⁴ However, whilst the abstract nature of the photographs renders them unintelligible since there clearly is little for viewers to decipher, in conjunction with a caption that provides reference points the photographs are transformed into something more accessible as the accompanying information opens avenues for insight.

Considering the polysemy of visual texts such as photographs that signifies their openness to multiple interpretations, the use of 'Anchorage', i.e. the combination of text and image, presents itself as a means to suggest a visual's preferred reading, i.e. the reading intended by the text's author. As Barbie Zelizer explains, 'functioning as carriers of meaning that direct interpretations of the image at their side words offer a way to connect what is depicted with the intention by which it is shown'.⁸⁵ Since words have a smaller ambiguity than images, polysemy is controlled by an image's juxtaposition with words that anchor the image's meaning whilst the image serves to emphasize and visualize the message of the written text. Therein, text and image complement each other as the caption explains and expands on the content of the image whilst the image functions as evidence of the text's reliability.

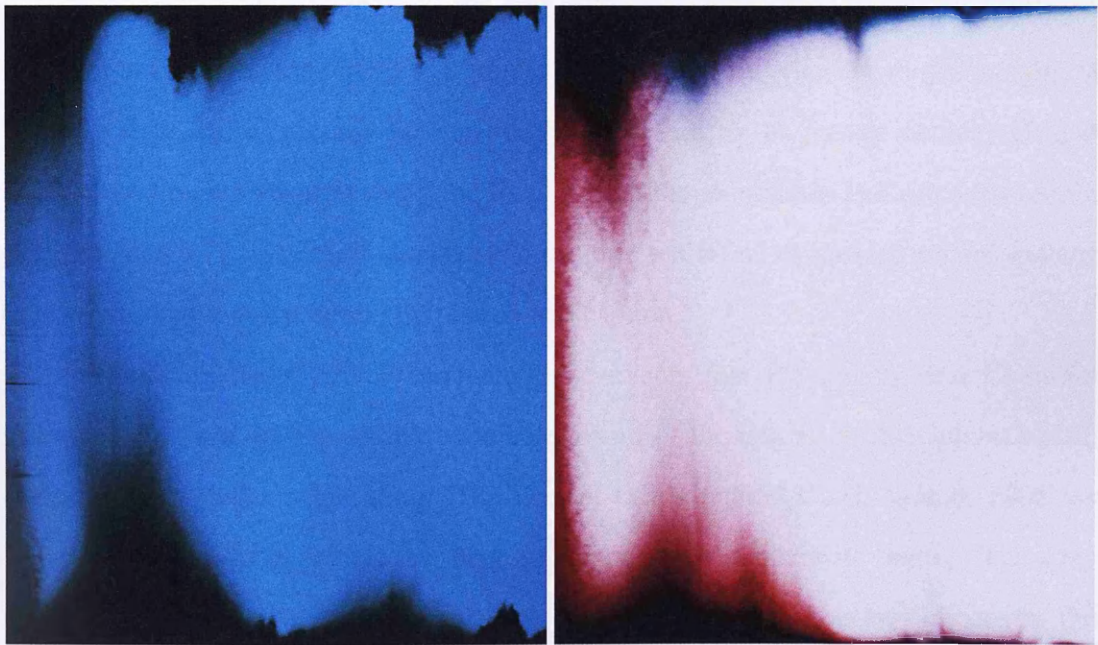
Whilst this interaction is at work in the combination of words and images that depict discernible content, in the case of Broomberg and Chanarin's photographs the

⁸³ Lange, *op.cit.*

⁸⁴ Pitman, *op.cit.*

⁸⁵ Zelizer, Barbie, 'When war is reduced to a photograph' in: Allen, Stuart and Barbie Zelizer (eds.), *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 125

captions accompanying the images take on an even greater significance as it is only upon taking note of the image captions that it becomes apparent that the series constitutes an oblique commentary on the experiences of the soldier in the zone of war. Indeed, due to the depth of their abstraction the photographs' success hinges on the captions as thematic analysis appears unfeasible without such taglines since viewers are left uncertain as to what they are supposed to be seeing in the images. Thus, in order to perceive in the abstract photographs more than an aesthetic fix from the sways of vibrant colours and to guide their interpretation, viewers rely heavily on the captions accompanying the photographs as the images themselves disclose nothing but the marks of their making.



[Figure 4: Details from 'The Repatriation, June 16, 2008' and 'The Day of One Hundred Dead, June 8, 2008']⁸⁶

It is in this context that in order to facilitate their reading of the photo series viewers will draw on their capabilities in visual literacy. As a prerequisite essential to human thinking, visual literacy was first defined by John Debes who suggested that it 'refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences' and subsequently further developed by J.C. Baca to denote 'the use of visuals for the purposes of

⁸⁶ Image source: Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/the-day-nobody-died/#>, accessed May 4th 2010

communication, thinking, learning, constructing meaning, creative expressions, aesthetic enjoyment` in the context of visuals both `seen with the eyes (visible) and in the mind (mental)`.⁸⁷ Thus, in drawing on the captions and depending on the sophistication of their visual literacy and imagination, viewers are enabled to project content and meaning into the photo series.

For instance, in image titles that speak to the violence of war, as evident in the captions `The Fixers Execution, June 7, 2008` and `The Repatriation, June 16, 2008`, viewers are given information that indicates what Broomberg and Chanarin were witnessing but refused to document. The information conveyed in these captions arguably suffices for the construction of a substitute image in the viewers' minds as – even though particular details regarding the circumstances of the deaths are omitted – the reference to deceased bodies is unmistakable, and thus viewers might imagine a mortally wounded or already lifeless body with regard to the former photograph and caption, and a visualization along the lines of flag-draped coffins being loaded onto a plane or soldiers paying their respects and saluting to coffins embarking on the journey home with regard to the latter photograph and caption.

However, imaginatively recreating the events that Broomberg and Chanarin reference does not appear readily attainable for all of the images in their photo series. Captions such as the one reading `The Day of One Hundred Dead, June 8, 2008` as well as the one from which the photographers' project takes its name, `The Day Nobody Died, June 10, 2008` are undoubtedly harder to translate into images in the mind as neither the photograph nor the caption provide ample information – one learns that the death toll of the British forces has risen to one hundred on that day but is not given any indication as to how many soldiers were killed, nor how they died. The `look` of a day on which no one lost their life is particularly difficult to imagine as information about what did not occur gives little indication of what events did occur, however ordinary, during a day that was not ruptured by news of a fatality.

⁸⁷ Debes and Baca cited in: Avgerinou, Maria and John Ericson, `A review of the concept of Visual Literacy`, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, (28: 4: 1997), 281, 284

It thus becomes evident that the images that viewers project onto the photo paper canvas will vary from the actual events that were captured by Broomberg and Chanarin and moreover differ from one viewer to another as the imaginative imagery is derived from individual projections. The imagined scenarios will likely be drawn from the archive of depictions of events commonplace in warfare that viewers have previously been exposed to and stored in their memory. Zelizer observes that the vast majority of 'journalism's images of war offer pictures that are consonant with already existing notions of what wartime is` as photojournalism of war often draws on the portrayal of previous wars and thus turning to visual representation for an understanding of war generally constitutes a turn to 'familiar images that couch war's representation in already resonant ways`.⁸⁸ Accordingly, as Broomberg and Chanarin assert, 'we have enough of an image archive within our heads to be able to conjure up a representation of any manner of pleasure or horror`.⁸⁹

It is in this context that their unconventional photographs appear to amount to a thought-provoking reminder of our familiarity with the look of war as guided by the captions viewers are prompted to recall images depicting similar events or develop assemblages of depictions from the pictorial archives in their minds. Considering the fact that the photographer duo knew that the images they were going to produce would not adhere to the usual grammar of depiction, their trip to Afghanistan became one characterized as much by the gathering of image titles as by their unique method of image production that would render the photographs non-representational. As Chanarin notes, 'in a way we went to Afghanistan to get some captions`.⁹⁰ The duo's refusal to render the violence of war and its corporeal effects on soldiers visible also informs the artistic strategy that the photographers utilized for the accompanying video, filmed alongside the creation of their photographs.

⁸⁸ Zelizer, 'When war is reduced to a photograph`, op.cit., 124

⁸⁹ Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, 'Unconcerned but not Indifferent`, *Foto8 Magazine*, March 2008, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/unconcerned-but-not-indifferent-text/>, accessed May 4th 2010

⁹⁰ Chanarin cited in: Pitman, op.cit.

3.3.4 Shooting Performance

In a quest to make sense of Broomberg and Chanarin's work viewers might turn to the second component of their project in hopes that the video footage might help fill the content gaps and reveal more than the photographs. Although exhibited side by side it is likely that the large-scale photographs capture viewers' attention first whilst the film is less prominently displayed as it is screened on a small monitor in the vicinity of the photographs. The duo underscore that the two components of their project, photographs and video film, are always exhibited together and that they would not consider showing one without the other.⁹¹ Speaking to the mechanisms of the military machinery and the ways in which its logistics function, the video film furthers the artwork's commentary on the working environment of soldiers in the zone of war.

As Broomberg and Chanarin's approach to documentation in film is similarly to the creation of their photographs marked by non-conformity to the stipulated guidelines for the depiction of war, viewers soon find that despite more discernible content they cannot obtain a clearer vision of the war in Afghanistan from the film either. The film chronicles the journey of a lightproof box – containing the photo paper used for the creation of the photographs – as it travels from the photographers' studio in London to Afghanistan and back. The two components of the artwork clearly complement and build on one another as the film serves as proof of the photographs having been created in the war zone. As it has become clear that the photo series itself contains no evidence of its production in Afghanistan it also becomes clear that it is the video footage of the photo paper being transported in and out of war that can be seen to bestow legitimacy on the photographs as artefacts that originated in the midst of war.

The sole invariable subject in the footage, the box is present in each scene of the video, filmed from a previously determined distance, yet due to its constant presence in the frame it frequently obstructs the audience's view throughout the film. Thus, in contrast to the photographs in which 'light becomes the protagonist',⁹² in the film the box constitutes the most visible protagonist although the objects and subjects depicted

⁹¹ Stallabrass, *op.cit.*, 15

⁹² Chanarin cited in: Oddy, Jason, 'An Outsider's Guide to Getting Inside Places Only Insiders Normally Get To Go', *Art on Paper*, (13: 5: May/June 2009), 70

in the box's ever changing background become characters in the documentation as well. Whilst the theme of restricted vision of the experience of soldiers in war is thus continued in the film, in this component of the artwork viewers can actually observe the soldiers as they carry out their duties in the war zone and as they manoeuvre the box within it.



[Figure 5: stills from video *The Day Nobody Died*, June 2008]⁹³

⁹³ The video, twenty-three minutes and six seconds in length, can be watched here: <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/films/the-day-nobody-died-film>, accessed May 4th 2010

Whilst their embedment enabled the creation of the photographs as it granted them access to the theatre of war in which they planned to expose their photo paper, with regard to the film Broomberg and Chanarin's entering of the embed system takes on an even greater significance as they utilize the mechanisms of the scheme to an even greater extent. In fact, here they directly rely on military personnel's services for the creation of their film. As they utilize soldiers in the transportation of their box they directly engage them in their performance and in this way co-opt the military into becoming an unsuspecting protagonist in the film. Throughout the film viewers can observe how soldiers carry and move the box as they help to transport it 'from one military base to another, on Hercules and Chinooks, on buses, tanks, and jeeps'.⁹⁴ Yet, viewers can not only observe the box as it is transferred within the theater of operations but also as it is undergoing security checks and as it is sitting around on the floor whilst soldiers are watching television during their off-duty time.

Therein the film provides insight not only into the routines of soldier life but also their mundaneness which stands in stark contrast to the dangers that are simultaneously present. What emerges here is that despite the ever-present threat of coming under attack life at war takes on a peculiar normality as the soldiers adapt to the environment. The ordinariness of certain aspects of life at war is further accentuated in the drawn out nature of the scenes which makes watching the film a somewhat underwhelming experience.

Considering that the film solely depicts non-eventful subject matter it becomes evident that akin to their approach to photography Broomberg and Chanarin's method of filming is similarly characterized by the pronounced deviation from conventional documentation of war. In the footage the box becomes 'an absurd, subversive object, its non-functionality sitting in quietly amused contrast to the functionality of the system that for a time served as its host' and it is in this that, 'like a barium test', the box and its journey become 'an analytical process, revealing the dynamics of the machine in its quotidian details'.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died', op.cit.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Interestingly, however, there are a variety of further associations that can be drawn from the box, not least of all its resemblance in material and shape to a coffin, in the context of which the box can be seen to allude to the repatriation journey of soldiers killed in combat. Handled by the military the box can moreover be seen as a proxy for Broomberg and Chanarin as well as embedded media practitioners more generally as they are being transported in and out of the war zone, as well as kept safe and chaperoned throughout the duration of their enclosure in the military system. However, the box can not only be perceived as a proxy for the artist duo but also as a stand-in for viewers as it can be conceived of as a substitute observer that is passively witnessing war as it unfolds in front of it.

With regard to the soldiers in the video footage, on the other hand, further noteworthy observations can be made. Significantly, as they were unaware of being filmed as Broomberg and Chanarin had their camera continually focused on the box, both high ranking military personnel and rank-and-file soldiers soon began to pay less attention to the duo, although initially their actions and behaviour had aroused both suspicion and curiosity.⁹⁶ It is worth considering that in engaging the soldiers in their performance the duo were potentially putting them at risk and disrupting their routines and duties in asking them to carry the box around whilst filming it. The photographers' interests and motivations here are clearly in opposition to those of the soldiers whose main concern was to fulfil their duties, to stay alert and to keep themselves as well as the embedded photographers as safe as possible. The curator of the 2008 Brighton Photo Biennial, Julian Stallabrass, notes in this context that at the exhibition some viewers articulated anger in response to Broomberg and Chanarin's artwork due to the fact that they had co-opted the military and endangered the soldiers.⁹⁷

This kind of reaction is noteworthy as it can be seen to indicate that some viewers of the artwork were not only led to contemplate the manner in which the artist duo brought the military into the creation of their work, but that they deemed the artists' method of doing so covertly problematic. Thus, feeling uneasy about the

⁹⁶ Stallabrass, *op.cit.*, 14

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15

manner in which Broomberg and Chanarin co-opted the military personnel in the production of their work, some viewers might have rejected the artwork on ethical grounds. Deeming the artists' conduct unethical due to their clandestine approach to the work's realization, such viewers, in their evaluation of the work, might have foregrounded the mode of production over the work's content. This does not mean, however, that the artists' objective of strengthening understanding and awareness of soldier service in the twenty-first century is necessarily diminished.

On the contrary, the fact that some viewers contemplated and judged the mode of production and consequently articulated criticism of the work can be seen to indicate recognition, appreciation and respect for the soldiers. Moreover, whilst disapproval of the work might not delight the artists, the fact that the artwork prompted anger and disapproval as a reaction can also be seen to signal sentiments of identification, sympathy and defensive attitudes on the part of viewers. Arguably, that these arise after watching the video is not surprising as the soldiers have been observed to cooperatively and obediently perform their tasks, obliging the photographers as they dutifully carry the box around for them, and therein exhibiting nothing but reliability. As these observations that viewers were able to make readily translate into a broader insight into the ways in which soldiers dependably fulfil their professional duties more generally, the photographers can be seen to present a broader commentary on soldier service in and through their work.

As Broomberg and Chanarin shed some light on the soldiers' working environment, in both its perilous and mundane aspects, their artwork can be seen to offer insights into the contemporary soldier's working conditions on the front lines. Yet, due to their unique approach to the documentation of the soldiers' experience at war viewers of the artwork are, on the one hand, tasked with forming their own imaginative imagery where the photographers are not providing any discernible content in their photographs and, on the other hand, asked to try to look beyond the box for indications of life at war in the video component of the work.

Both components of the artwork originate in the time, place and circumstances that they were produced to communicate, yet the photographs and the video film alike

refuse to clearly depict that which they could have captured within the limited and controlled field of vision in which the photographers found themselves. Thus, as the duo's artistic strategy of, on the one hand, abstraction in the photographs and, on the other hand, obstructed vision in the video renders their work largely disembodied viewers' preconceptions about conventional documentations of war are challenged. Likewise, the system of embedding and its implications for the nature and value of war reporting are questioned in and through the artwork, and reflection and dialogue about the possibility to adequately portray the experiences of soldiers at war is provoked.

3.4 Against Expectations

Whilst Broomberg and Chanarin acquired admission to the war front in Afghanistan through the Ministry of Defence on the grounds of their profession as photographers and due to having convinced them of their intention to 'make a sympathetic portrait'⁹⁸ of the British military, McQueen was granted access to Iraq through the IWM's Art Commissions Committee that 'has invited artists to make work responding to the activities of British and Commonwealth troops'⁹⁹ since 1972 when it replaced Britain's official war artists' programme that had been in existence since the First World War. Upon arrival on the respective front lines both the photographer duo and McQueen found that they were closely chaperoned which limited their ability to directly examine the diverse experiences of the soldiers in the war zones.

Yet whilst the photographers demonstrate a clear awareness of the restrictions inherent in the practice of embedding – as evident in their pre-embedment plan to co-opt the military, their utilization of abstraction and the fact that throughout their embedment they deliberately exercised what amounts to a 'Dadaesque stunt'¹⁰⁰ as they had no intentions other than to document their performance – it would appear that McQueen was less prepared for the experience. Feeling heavily restricted in his ability to observe and document the war front in Iraq he later noted: 'I knew I'd be embedded with the troops, but I didn't imagine that meant I'd virtually have to stay in bed. It was

⁹⁸ Broomberg cited in: Oddy, op.cit., 61

⁹⁹ Herbert, op.cit., 57

¹⁰⁰ Broomberg and Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Barbican Gallery Presentation', op.cit.

ridiculous.¹⁰¹ Consequently, in contrast to Broomberg and Chanarin, McQueen returned from the war zone empty handed yet would subsequently rely on the collaboration of the deceased soldiers' families akin to the photographers' reliance on the cooperation of the soldiers in Helmland Province.

Thus, what emerges as particularly apparent in view of the circumstances of production of both artworks is that proximity to warfare does not appear to equal better vision. Despite the privilege of direct access to the respective war fronts the artists found that they were not able to observe and evaluate the war effort and its consequences much more clearly than would have been possible from a greater and safer distance. It is against this background that Broomberg and Chanarin explicitly set out to highlight the limits of vision on the front line whilst McQueen responded by turning his attention to commemoration on the home front.

In contrast to the comparatively uncontroversial artwork of former artists commissioned by the IWM – such as Henry Moore's drawings of the London Underground during the Blitz, Jock McFadyen's portrayal of Berlin immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall or Linda Kitson's conté-crayon sketches depicting soldiers' training exercises during the Falklands War¹⁰² – McQueen's project clearly challenges traditional conceptions of British official war art. Such was his departure from more conventional visual documentation stemming from nearly a century of artist appointments that McQueen's project proposal was not only met by rejection from Royal Mail but also with pronounced unwillingness to assist the artist in the artwork's realization on the part of Ministry of Defence officials who suggested that he should 'do a landscape instead' and refused to provide the addresses of the families of the soldiers who had died in Iraq which led McQueen to resort to hiring a research assistant to locate and contact the soldiers' families.¹⁰³

Without the collaboration of the bereaved families McQueen's artwork could not have been realized as it only began taking shape when he began to receive letters with photographs of the soldiers. Through the individualized commemoration that he

¹⁰¹ McQueen cited in: Searle, 'Last Post', op.cit.

¹⁰² Brandon, op.cit., 63, 86, 88

¹⁰³ Herbert, op.cit., 57

conceptualized and the families' contributions to the artwork McQueen was enabled to emphasize that every soldier's life is valuable and that behind every casualty report there resides an individual's fate and a loss that is felt by that individual's loved ones. The artist notes in this context that there is nothing ambiguous about his artwork: 'The fact of the matter is, we sent people to war and they died in that war. I'm just visualising their memory. I can't see any reason not to, unless you're ashamed of them.'¹⁰⁴ As it enables the immediacy of a face-to-face encounter with the soldiers who have died in Iraq the artwork thus poses questions regarding the home front's responses to these embodied reminders of the blood price of war. Yet as contemporary wars are fought in ways that enable the majority of soldiers to return from their deployments, questions regarding public perceptions, support and acknowledgment of soldiers more generally also arise in the context of McQueen's work.

Broomberg and Chanarin's artwork on the other hand, although similarly distinctive in its mode of production, is particularly characterized by its unique method of image capture which contrasts sharply with the traditional photojournalistic practice of deliberately masking the processes of image production in eclipsing references to the modus operandi of choosing, framing and editing that informs all forms of journalism. Whilst McQueen was thus defying expectations *subsequently* to his embedment, Broomberg and Chanarin confronted expectations *during* their visit to the war zone. The duo acknowledge that they were 'actively resisting' the rules of the military as complying with the regulations, they believe, would have led them to create 'exactly the images that the British Army was expecting us to produce'.¹⁰⁵

In this light the strategies of abstraction and obstruction that they adopted came to represent 'the most subversive way to engage'.¹⁰⁶ Rather than contributing to the production of a sanitized war narrative in accordance with embedment rules they reverse the circumstances of control in that instead of them serving the military the

¹⁰⁴ McQueen cited in: Darwent, Charles, 'Your country needs you: The artist Steve McQueen on what Britishness means to him', *The Independent*, May 24th 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/your-country-needs-you-the-artist-steve-mcqueen-on-what-britishness-means-to-him-1689034.html>, accessed March 20th 2010

¹⁰⁵ Chanarin cited in: Oddy, op.cit., 67

¹⁰⁶ Chanarin cited in: Stallabrass, op.cit., 14

military is literally made to work for them. In neither violating the rules nor fulfilling the role expected of them their infiltration of the military structures not only sheds light on the system of embedment but also casts considerable doubt over the representations thus produced.

Although the photographers managed to deceive the British military long enough to create both components of their artwork, eventually, Chanarin notes, 'they made sure they got us to Kandahar which is basically like being nudged out of the war. As they realised what we were doing, they slowly manoeuvred us away from the frontline.'¹⁰⁷ The duo's conceptual work thus does not only offer a potent reflection on the limits of vision that complicate the mediation of the soldiers' experience but further presents a compelling charge against photojournalistic coverage of war. Markedly, due to the unconventional approach utilized by the photographers their artwork can be seen to reside at the art/documentary intersection which affects its applicability.

However, despite the crossover between art and documentary that is discernible in Broomberg and Chanarin's work their project is ultimately assigned to the realm of art rather than that of documentation as the work ultimately fails to constitute documentation suited to either represent news content in its own right or material utilized to accompany journalistic coverage of war. Indeed, the depth of the obscuration renders both their project's still and moving image components entirely antagonistic to the figurative depiction usually employed in the news media.

In addition to the parallels in the focus on the soldier figure, circumstances of production and defiance of expectations, both McQueen's *Queen and Country* and Broomberg and Chanarin's *The Day Nobody Died* are characterized by an analogy in imagery as in both works there exists a reference to the symbolism of the coffin – with regard to McQueen in the form of the enclosure of the portrait stamps in the oak cabinet in which, as each drawer represents an individual life, the soldiers 'remain in the cohesion in which they lived',¹⁰⁸ whilst with regard to Broomberg and Chanarin perceptible in the shape of the box containing their photo paper. The photographic film

¹⁰⁷ Chanarin cited in: Stallabrass, op.cit., 14

¹⁰⁸ Mackinlay, 'A British Way of Remembering', op.cit., 66

that constitutes the primary material utilized in both artworks, on the other hand, constitutes as fragile a substance as human tissue and can therein be seen to suggest the fragility of the soldiers' bodily integrity as they are made vulnerable in and through their exposure to various risks to life and limb.

Thus, both artworks shed light on the difficulties surrounding the visualization of the soldiers' experience at war as knowledge of the exceptionality of their working environment lies beyond the comprehension of those who have not directly experienced the violence of war themselves. Sontag poignantly underscores this in stating:

'We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine. That's what every soldier, and every journalist and aid worker and independent observer who has put in time under fire, and had the luck to elude the death that struck down others nearby, stubbornly feels.'¹⁰⁹

Whilst Broomberg and Chanarin not least due to their experience at Headley Court intentionally set out to disclose the impracticality to adequately portray the hazardous working environment of war McQueen appears to have become aware of this during his stay in Iraq. As he observed the soldiers at work, which would eventually inform his decision to commemorate those killed in the line of duty, he realized that the public on the home front has 'no concept of what they do out there. It's an extraordinarily hard, relentless job'.¹¹⁰

Although the focus on the soldier as a pivotal figure in the war enterprise is palpable in both works their specific emphasis differs noticeably with regard to the matter of life and death as Broomberg and Chanarin's work investigates the circumstances of soldiers performing their duties in the line of fire whilst McQueen's artwork considers those who were killed in the process of carrying them out. Both *Queen and Country* and *The Day Nobody Died* thus comment on the dangerous circumstances of soldiers who on the frontline become, as Siegfried Sassoon's sonnet *Dreamer* suggests, 'citizens of death's gray land'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, op.cit., 113

¹¹⁰ McQueen cited in: Nikkah, op.cit.

¹¹¹ First line of Siegfried Sassoon's sonnet *Dreamer* cited in: Kallich, Martin (ed.), *A Book of the Sonnet – Poems and Criticism*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 74

As both McQueen and the photographer duo eschew traditional illustrations of the soldiers' service that audiences are familiar with, their respective artworks not only challenge viewers to examine their personal relationships with depictions of warfare and their comprehension of the soldiers' service and sacrifice but also bestow upon them the task of engaging with the works by prompting viewers to actively participate in the meaning-making process. Indeed, the artists appear to have had precisely this referral of analysis in mind, ultimately leaving it up to viewers to determine what they see and perceive in the unique interpretations that the artists present in their imagery.

The artistic strategies of, on the one hand, a starkly embodied representation that allows viewers to directly encounter the individual lives that have been lost, and, on the other hand, a largely disembodied account of the soldiers' experience of warfare that forces viewers to imaginatively substitute the evacuated content arguably constitute approaches that not only innovatively address the risks that contemporary soldiers are exposed to but also draw attention to national loss and to the visibility vis-à-vis invisibility of the conditions of the soldier's life at war.

Therein the artists' respective commentaries on the figure of the soldier are both well-timed and relevant as they contribute to the soldiers' presence and visibility in the public sphere. In putting the experiences of the contemporary soldier center stage in these creative and thought-provoking ways that reveal McQueen as well as Broomberg and Chanarin as skilful socio-political commentators, both artworks can also be seen to contribute to debate and discussion about soldier service and sacrifice in the early twenty-first century. Whilst British military fatalities in Iraq have halted, fatalities continue to occur in Afghanistan where – since Broomberg and Chanarin's embedment which coincided with the milestone of one hundred military deaths – in the few years since 2008 the British forces have suffered almost three hundred and fifty additional fatalities.¹¹² In this light it becomes evident that the role and corporeal experience of the soldier in the 'war on terror' is of as much significance as it has ever been in war, which both the artworks discussed in this chapter constitute poignant reminders of.

¹¹² See the Ministry of Defence's data on British fatalities in Afghanistan at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan#fatalities>, accessed May 3rd 2013

Chapter 4.1 The Vulnerability of the Civilian

‘War necessarily places civilians in danger; that is another aspect of its hellishness.’¹

Following on from the artworks of, on the one hand, Steve McQueen and, on the other hand, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin who endeavour to rematerialize vision with regard to the soldier, this chapter considers the artistic strategies employed by British artist Jeremy Deller and Iraqi-American artist Wafaa Bilal in their respective commentaries on corporeal experiences in the ‘war on terror’. Contrary to McQueen’s and Broomberg and Chanarin’s focus on the experience of the soldier, Deller and Bilal inspect the life and death of civilians caught up in the midst of war, with particular emphasis on the war in Iraq in both of the artistic inquiries discussed in this chapter.

Examining the means and methods utilized by these two artists in their attempts to rematerialize vision with regard to the civilian, the following pages shed light on the ways in which the works’ conceptualizations aim to counteract the invisibility of the civilian in the Western consciousness. As they turn their attention to the figure of the civilian both artists can be seen to endeavour to speak on the civilians’ behalf and strive to convey to detached publics an impression of the daily experience in the conflict zone. In decisively calling attention to the reality of the pain and suffering of civilians, the works can be seen connect viewers to the experience of civilians and to emphasize the centrality of corporeal experience in the ‘war on terror’.

In stark contrast to the meticulous register of Allied forces’ deaths and injuries – particularly the detailed documentation by the respective Defense Departments of the nations engaged in the ‘war on terror’ – the casualties experienced by civilians are much less accurately recorded and estimations vary widely across different studies. Whilst data on civilian casualties is contested due to both concerns about accuracy and disagreements over categorizations there exists no uncertainty that ‘the civilian is indeed under extreme threat in war today’.²

¹ Walzer, op.cit., 156

² Roberts, Adam, ‘Lives and Statistics: Are 90% of War Victims Civilians?’, *Survival*, (53: 3: June/July 2010), 129; see also Judith Butler’s writing: *Precarious Life – The Power of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2006) and *Frames of War – When is Life Grievable?*, (London: Verso, 2009)

Since warfare has seen a profound metamorphosis in that it has developed from principal execution on remote battlefields and in trenches to implementation from the air and from greater distances yet increasingly amidst populations, the soldier-civilian casualty ratio has seen a significant reversal: 'Civilian casualties of war have increased from 10 percent in the nineteenth century, to 50 percent in the Second World War, to anywhere between 75 and 90 percent in contemporary conflicts.'³ This constitutes a reality of war since in contemporary warfare, as Shaw notes, 'blowing people up – for this is what war mostly means today – remains a legitimate, even if regrettable, way of achieving political goals'.⁴ It is against this background that Deller and Bilal set out to present irrefutable evidence of the violence that has been visited on civilian bodies in the first decade of the twenty-first century, therein rendering the civilian experience real and conceivable.

Unlike the traditional encounter with works of art in the museum environment in which audiences are invited to consider artworks on a contemplative and mainly individual basis – as is the case with McQueen's and Broomberg and Chanarin's artworks – Deller's and Bilal's projects represent instances in which the artists offer audiences a participatory experience rather than an art object as audiences are placed in situations that are ephemeral and given a participatory role in the art process. Moreover, as they engage audiences outside of conventional environments in which works of art are commonly exhibited the artists enter other spaces and contexts, therein opening up new and unusual spaces for art.

Fundamentally characterized by their collaborative nature, both artworks represent dialogue projects that – as audiences are granted a stake in the works – require more than audience spectatorship. Here, conversation is conceptualized as an artistic medium through which both Deller and Bilal aim to facilitate an engagement of audiences with the experience of warfare in remote locales. Conversation, notes Edward Rothstein, 'is one of those acts that require subtle forms of social imagination: an ability to listen and interpret and imagine' and further an act that necessitates 'an

³ Martin, Randolph, 'An Introduction to NGO Field Security' in: Cahill, Martin (ed.), *Emergency Relief Operations*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 227

⁴ Shaw, op.cit., 1

attentiveness to someone whose perspective is always essentially different, a responsiveness that both makes oneself known and allows the other to feel known`.⁵

Considered to constitute `one of the most fundamental political and social acts`, conversation is `indispensable to negotiating allegiances, establishing common ground [and] clearing tangled paths` and therefore `may reflect not just the state of our selves, but the state of society`.⁶ Thus, by drawing on conversation as a means to challenge audiences to think about the effects of violence on civilians the artists' can be seen to employ artistic strategies that, as the following discussion aims to show, speak to their strong belief in the importance of public political dialogue.

The chapter first considers Deller's project, beginning by situating the artist's commentary on the experience of the civilian in the `war on terror` in the context of his creative practice. After a discussion of the symbolisms of his exhibit the chapter turns to the artistic strategy that informs Deller's project. It then discusses the ways in which the artist endeavoured to facilitate conversations in both the museum setting and in public spaces when he turned his project into a mobile exhibition and took it on a trip across the United States, before turning to an exploration of the reactions and responses that the project engendered in diverse audiences.

The chapter then turns to Bilal's project and, after tracing the artist's previous work, examines the means through which the artist situates the project at the intersection of participatory and performance art. Prior to discussing the scope for audience participation that Bilal enables for his viewers and the variety of viewer responses, the chapter examines the ways in which the artist positions himself in his work by situating himself as a substitute for the bodies that he references in his work. The chapter concludes by considering the similarities and differences in the projects' commentaries on the figure of the civilian and the similarities and differences in the artistic strategies that underlie them.

⁵ Rothstein, Edward, `Are We Having a Conversation Yet? An Art Form Evolves`, *The New York Times*, March 20th 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/20/books/20conn.html>, accessed June 2nd 2012

⁶ Ibid.

4.2.1 *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*

‘A bombed car has no redeeming aesthetic features, which I liked; in fact, it’s an eyesore.’⁷

– Jeremy Deller

Jeremy Deller’s commentary on the effects of contemporary warfare on civilians centers around a car that was destroyed in a bombing in central Baghdad on March 5th 2007. Prior to being exhibited by Deller the car was retrieved from Iraq shortly after the bombing by Dutch curator Robert Kluijver who had organized the transportation of two vehicles that had been destroyed in the explosion to the Netherlands where they were exhibited on the central Leidse Plein square in Amsterdam, outside the Boymans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, as well as in Enschede, Utrecht and finally in The Hague. In the following year one of the cars was recycled in the port of Rotterdam whilst the other was shipped to the United States where Deller, in 2009, incorporated it into his *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* exhibition.⁸

The exhibition was commissioned by Creative Time and the Three M Project, a collaborative commission of contemporary artwork by the New Museum in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and featured the car as well as a series of conversations with invited guest experts.⁹ As the car as the central piece of the exhibition would have to be transported from one exhibition site to another, Deller decided to transport the car himself from New York to Los Angeles, therein taking the project onto the road. Subsequently to its exhibition in the United States the car was exhibited at the IWM in London in 2010 and at the IWM North in Salford in 2011.

Prior to the exhibition of the car in the context of the *It Is What It Is* project Deller had submitted an application to the Fourth Plinth Programme in 2007 proposing that the remains of a car from the war in Iraq would be placed on the Fourth Plinth in London’s Trafalgar square. The proposal was among six shortlisted proposals and the

⁷ Deller cited in: Kilston, Lyra, ‘Jeremy Deller on Conversations About Iraq’, *Art Info*, July 7th 2009, <http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/30359/jeremy-deller-on-conversations-about-iraq/>, accessed August 24th 2009

⁸ Kluijver, Robert, ‘The car wrecks from Al-Mutanabbi Street’ in: *Borders – Contemporary Middle Eastern Art and Discourse*, (Den Haag: Gemeentemuseum, 2010), 19-20

⁹ Deller, Jeremy, *It Is What It Is*, (New York: Creative Time, 2010), 1

shortlisted artists were commissioned to produce maquettes of their proposed works that were exhibited in the National Gallery in London in the spring of 2008. As indicated in the proposal, entitled *The Spoils of War (Memorial for an unknown civilian)*, Deller envisioned to present to the public a car wreck as a commemorative sign and a symbol of the spoils of war, therein encoding it simultaneously – but contrastingly – as both a marker of remembrance of civilian death and as a victor’s trophy. Deller states that ‘the presentation of the spoils of war to a curious public dates back at least to the Roman Empire’ and that his ‘idea for the fourth plinth performs a similar role’,¹⁰ therein clearly exhibiting awareness of historical practices of public display of tokens that signal one’s own victory vis-à-vis an opponent’s defeat.

In consideration of the rich historical connotations of Trafalgar Square, named after the British naval victory in the Napoleonic Wars; the proximity of the Fourth Plinth to Nelson’s Column, commemorating one of Britain’s most heroic military figures; and further the plinth’s proximity to the seat of the British government and other governmental buildings, Deller’s proposal appeared provocative. Arguably, his installation and its connotations would question the legitimacy of contemporary military engagements and confront governmental credibility since – if Deller’s proposal had been selected for the Fourth Plinth – a symbol of the devastation caused by contemporary warfare would in effect have been sanctioned and put on display by the very government that supports the military endeavour. This circumstance, however, did not materialize as another proposal was eventually commissioned.

Nevertheless, Deller’s proposal yields insight into his artistic practice. Taking into account that the Fourth Plinth Commission represents the ‘most high-profile public art programme in the UK’ and one that places great emphasis on ‘involving people in the debate about public art’,¹¹ Deller’s bid for this commission is in line with much of his previous and subsequent work with regard to both his objective to create art in the

¹⁰ Deller cited in: Mayor’s Press Release, ‘Six new proposals for Fourth Plinth unveiled at the National Gallery’, January 8th 2008, http://www.london.gov.uk/media/press_releases_mayoral/six-new-proposals-fourth-plinth-unveiled-national-gallery, accessed August 3rd 2009

¹¹ Mayor’s Press Release, ‘Shortlist announced for new fourth plinth commission’, November 28th 2007, www.london.gov.uk/media/press_releases_mayoral/shortlist-announced-new-fourth-plinth-commission, accessed August 3rd 2009

public realm – often involving individuals, groups of people or the public at large in his practice – and his concern with matters of a political nature. The Turner Prize winner is known for projects and exhibitions that examine social history, such as his *Battle of Orgreave* (2001) which re-created the 1984 miner strike in the North of England; his documentary *Memory Bucket* (2003) about President George W. Bush's hometown Crawford, Texas; and his *Procession* (2009), an orchestrated parade in Manchester for which he collaborated with diverse groups of people.¹²

Evidently, although Deller's proposal was not selected for the Fourth Plinth he evidently remained undeterred in his quest to realize an art project that would feature the remains of a car retrieved from the war in Iraq. Deller explains his interest in and desire to artistically explore the 'war on terror' in noting: 'I have been obsessed with events in the Middle East, principally Iraq. It has been on my mind constantly, either at the forefront, or as a nagging buzz at the back of it'.¹³ It is in this context that Deller developed the concept for the *It Is What It Is* project not least in order to enhance his own understanding of the violence experienced by civilians.

4.2.2 The Car as a Marker of Violence

The destruction of the car in Deller's work was caused by the detonation of a bomb amongst the stalls of the crowded book market of Al-Mutanabbi Street, Baghdad's main cultural, social and intellectual hub. The street, named after an Iraqi poet, saw such devastation that 'thousands of burning pages [were] drifting through the sky' as several buildings and a total of fourteen cars were destroyed in the explosion that killed thirty-eight people and injured hundreds.¹⁴ The bombing was never claimed yet widely interpreted as a 'stab in the heart of the intellectual life in Baghdad' as it was considered to constitute a targeted attack on contemporary Iraqi culture.¹⁵

¹² For these and other projects see the artist's webpage at: <http://www.jeremydeller.org/>, accessed December 12th 2009

¹³ Deller, Jeremy, 'Artist Statement by Jeremy Deller', January 2009, *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, <http://www.conversationsaboutiraq.org/interviews.php>, accessed December 5th 2010

¹⁴ Kluijver, op.cit., 20

¹⁵ Ibid., 20



[Figure 6: Installation view of the car at the New Museum, New York, 2009]¹⁶

The car that Deller put on display bears the signs of the explosion in its rusted and mangled appearance. Although assuming the look of an abstract sculpture of sorts, the hunk of metal can still be recognized as the remains of a vehicle even as the transformation from a functioning transportation device into an immobile non-operational machine is absolute. Brought before American audiences, Deller presents the wrecked car as an 'object of curiosity'¹⁷ that confronts common notions of the automobile's function in culture and its incorporation in art.

A prevalent motif in modern art, the car has long captured the imagination of creative practitioners, which in light of art's reflectivity of the physical world bears witness to the fascination with and status of the car in global culture. The automobile not only continues to constitute a popular subject of illustrative paintings and poster art but has also been incorporated in works of art either in parts or in its entirety. For instance, British artist Sarah Lucas' *This One's for the Pigeons*, her 2003 proposal for

¹⁶ Image source: Miller, Mike, 'Jeremy Deller Pursues a Moveable Conversation about Iraq', *ArtTattler*, April 2009, <http://arttattler.com/archiveconversationsaboutiraq.html>, accessed August 16th 2010

¹⁷ Jones, Jonathan, 'Jeremy Deller's blown-up car brings the realities of the Iraq war to life', *The Guardian*, September 10th 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2010/sep/10/jeremy-deller-car-iraq-war>, accessed September 12th 2010

the Fourth Plinth in which she proposed to place a car that was painted with pigeon droppings on the plinth; American artist John Chamberlain's abstract sculptures made of car parts that were welded together; German artist Dirk Skreber's sculptures of crashed cars; Australian artist James Corbett's sculptures of recycled car parts; and French-American artist Arman's assemblage of dozens of cars in his sculpture of stacked automobiles embedded in concrete, entitled *Long Term Parking*, constitute cases in point.¹⁸

However, whereas artists such as these employ automobiles whilst adding to or dismantling them for their artworks, Deller exhibits his car wreck as a found object without applying further artistic creativity to it. Arguably, Deller's car is therein reminiscent of a Duchampian readymade. It is likely due to the lack of modification on the part of the artist that Deller's car gave rise to some debate regarding the question of whether or not the car itself constituted a work of art – a question which Deller aimed to pre-empt by asserting that the car in and of itself 'is not art'.¹⁹

Rather, in the context of the *It Is What It Is* project the car constitutes an exhibit that as the centerpiece of the project both within the museum spaces and on the road is employed to operate as a metaphor for the civilian experience of war. In constituting a tangible object that once existed as an operational automobile in the war zone and an object whose deformation was caused by a violent act the car functions as a piece of evidence of violence that has occurred in spaces other than those in which it is subsequently presented. Akin to Broomberg and Chanarin's *The Day Nobody Died* the car wreck's origin in the conflict zone renders it an authentic artefact that in its

¹⁸ For further information on these artworks see, for Sarah Lucas' artwork: Kennedy, Maev, 'Ruffled feathers in battle of Trafalgar', *The Guardian*, December 12th 2003, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/dec/12/arts.arts_news2, accessed September 14th 2010; for John Chamberlain's artworks: Williamson, Marcus, 'John Chamberlain: Sculptor who gave new life to scrap-heap cars', *The Independent*, January 5th 2012, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/john-chamberlain-sculptor-who-gave-new-life-to-scrapheap-cars-6285127.html>, accessed January 5th 2012; for Dirk Skreber's artwork: Saatchi Gallery, 'Dirk Skreber', http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/dirk_skreber2.htm, accessed May 28th 2011; for James Corbett's work see artist's webpage at: <http://www.jamescorbettart.com/>, accessed July 12th 2010; and for Arman's artwork see artist's webpage at: http://www.armanstudio.com/fernandez-arman-long_term_parking-1094-3-74-eng.html, accessed September 14th 2010

¹⁹ Deller cited in: Picard, Charmaine, 'Jeremy Deller tackles troubled legacy of Iraq War', *The Art Newspaper*, (The Armory Show Edition: March 2009), 7

relocation has bridged the 'here' and 'there' divide of locales of relative safety vis-à-vis locales of insecurity and plight.

Additionally to its presentation as a piece of evidence the car wreck represents a metaphor for a body of flesh and blood. One commentator underscores this likeness by noting that the car 'suggests a human body in a deeply perturbing way' not only because it 'is so flattened, with viscera of pipes and tanks sticking out' but also since 'it is scorched by fire to a colour that evokes dried blood'.²⁰ There is also a more literal resemblance of the car wreck to the human remains found in Lindow Moss, Cheshire in the 1980s, known as *Lindow Man*, that are on permanent display in the British Museum – a likeness that is indeed striking.²¹ However, the car's resemblance to a human body indicated here operates solely in the analogy of car and corpse and not as a semblance of a wholesome living body.

As the car has been reduced to a mass of twisted metal its consequential non-functionality references the obliteration of physical integrity. That thought soon turns from the observation of the car carcass itself to what it signifies is illustrated in the statement of a passerby who upon encountering the car in Richmond, Virginia, told Deller: 'I see this car and all I can think about is how it got to be in this shape and how many people died nearby.'²² The imaginative leap from seeing the car wreck – and recognizing it for what it is – to conceiving the material effects of the bomb blast on any bodies in its vicinity is undoubtedly not farfetched as in recognizing that human tissue is much softer and much less resilient than the materials that make up a car the consideration of the tearing of flesh promptly arises.

Thus, as thought and imagination turn to human bodies a central question materializes: 'if the bomb did this to metal, what did it do to flesh?'²³ Contemplating the effects of the bomb's detonation, viewers might imagine the burst of energy and the heat, smoke, sound and suction of air as well as the shock waves that ripple outward

²⁰ Jones, 'Jeremy Deller's blown-up car brings the realities of the Iraq war to life', op.cit.

²¹ Ibid.; for further information and images of the remains see: The British Museum, 'Lindow Man', http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=126565&objectId=808672&partId=1, accessed September 14th 2010

²² Yaseen cited in: Deller, *It Is What It Is*, op.cit., 25

²³ Jones, 'Jeremy Deller's blown-up car brings the realities of the Iraq war to life', op.cit.

from the force of the blast's epicenter. That the heat, pressure and shrapnel resulting from the combustion not only cause the displacement and deformation of objects but also the death, dismemberment and other injuries such as internal bleeding of human bodies is easily envisioned.

Consequentially, the presentation of the car as a marker of devastation in war stands in stark contrast to the car's symbolism in global culture. An object geared toward aesthetic design alongside its principal functionality – therein representing an object at the intersection of artistry and engineering – the automobile has acquired significance beyond its concrete physicality. Representative not only of mobility, freedom and independence the car is moreover often conceived of as a signifier of masculinity, power and affluence. Such is the relevance of and enchantment with the automobile in modern global society that Barthes equates it with 'the great Gothic cathedrals' as cars are 'consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object'.²⁴

The automobile's status as an object of adoration emerges from the undeniable impact it has had on modern life ever since its invention in the late nineteenth century in the wake of significant technological advances. Accordingly, embraced as an 'optimistic symbol of change and progress' the car has come to represent the 'most inspirational of modern inventions'.²⁵ Hence, the car's role in modern consumer culture stands in stark contrast to its reconfiguration and presentation as a sign of death and destruction rather than one of life, freedom and advancement.

Whilst audiences have long been accustomed to the sight of the car wreck resulting from automobile accidents the destruction of the car in the context of warfare has also become an increasingly common sight in media coverage of war. Undoubtedly, there is horror associated with both these causes that effect the destruction of the automobile, the crucial difference, however, lies in the usually unintentional nature of the former and the generally intentional nature of the latter. Whilst the destruction of cars and other objects of the built environment and by

²⁴ Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, (London: Paladin Books, 1973), 88

²⁵ Gerald Silk cited in: Hillstrom, Kevin and Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *The Industrial Revolution in America: Automobiles, Mining and Petroleum, Textiles*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 256

extension human bodies might also be inadvertently caused in war – for instance in the context of missiles missing their designated targets – such destruction is generally produced deliberately, be it in the context of the transformation of vehicles into weapons as they are turned into improvised explosive devices or in the context of military attempts to destroy and eliminate what is perceived as constituting a threat.

It is thus that army veterans were particularly likely to identify Deller's car as a symbol of the violence of war. Deller highlights this in stating, 'I suspect that soldiers will understand. They'll recognize what this is.'²⁶ That this assumption was not unrealistic is demonstrated in Army veteran Mark Lachance's remarks during a group discussion in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: pointing at the car wreck Lachance pointed out that he himself 'created one' when he fired his machine gun at a car that was 'full of ammunition, which kept popping, and then it blew up'.²⁷ Responses such as this indicate the diversity of responses that the encounter with the wreckage produced both within the museum spaces and when the car was taken onto the road as audiences' familiarity with warfare span the spectrum from limited to firsthand knowledge. Similarly, opinions and attitudes toward the car wreck and its connotations varied widely.

4.2.3 Facilitating Conversation

The car wreck's heavy political connotations, specifically its suggestiveness of civilian death and injury in war encapsulated in its symbolisms – as a concrete piece of evidence, a metaphor for a body and a marker of death and destruction – denotes the car as an evocative artefact well suited to instigate conversation. Conceptualized to function as a visual aid that anchors dialogue between Deller's guest experts and viewers, it is in particular the car's tangible physical presence and the possibility of touch that opens up a space for an experience that exceeds the more common exposure to warfare, i.e. via vision, and therein allows for a different kind of encounter.

In fact, the artist makes clear that viewers were allowed to touch the car and that they did not need encouragement to do so either in the museum settings or in the

²⁶ Deller cited in: Kilston, op.cit.

²⁷ Lachance cited in: Deller, *It Is What It Is*, op.cit., 32

encounter on the road but rather did reach out their hands to touch the car often as their first reaction, in an almost automatic manner.²⁸ Real life encounters with artefacts that substantiate the violence of war in such a literal manner undoubtedly remain scarce for those who are situated at a geographical distance from the war zone. The same is true for direct contact with individuals who have first-hand experience of war and the corporeal effects it yields.



[Figure 7: set up of the conversation space at the New Museum, New York, 2009]²⁹

It is in this context that Deller's guest experts enter the equation. Deller provides some insight into his artistic strategy of incorporating the guest experts into the project in noting that 'however much you read about it and watch TV – short of actually going to Iraq, which few of us are ever going to do – the next best thing is to meet a soldier or a civilian who has lived there'.³⁰ Thus, in order to facilitate such encounters Deller invited a number of individuals with in-depth knowledge of the war in Iraq to participate in his project. Due to their intimate knowledge of warfare these

²⁸ E-mail exchange with Jeremy Deller, August 2012

²⁹ Image source: Miller, 'Jeremy Deller Pursues a Moveable Conversation about Iraq', op.cit.

³⁰ Deller cited in: Hromack, Sarah, 'What it Is: A Conversation with Jeremy Deller', *Art in America*, March 4th 2009, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-03-04/jeremy-deller-new-museum-interview-/>, accessed November 28th 2009

experts took on the role of witnesses who were asked to communicate their personal experiences in discussions with audiences in the museum spaces as well as in conversations with passersby encountered when the exhibition was taken on tour across the United States. Whilst in the museum settings a number of guest experts – including Iraqi nationals, war correspondents and army veterans – participated in the project, the travelling component of Deller’s project was accompanied by a U.S. Army Reservist who had served in Iraq and an Iraqi citizen.³¹

Although Deller makes it a point to emphasize that ‘the people participating in the project are those who have experience, rather than opinions’³², his guest experts inevitably brought their personal views on the war and motives for participation to the project. Retired Major General Chuck Tucker who participated in the conversations at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, for example, explained that he took part since he felt that members of the armed forces and the public on the home front were lacking ‘common space and common language’ whereas Esam Pasha, the Iraqi citizen who accompanied Deller on the road, hoped to convey the dire situation faced by the civilian population in his home country, reminding passersby that ‘the major thing in Iraqi life is uncertainty’.³³

In contrast to his experts Deller cast himself in the role of an initiator of dialogue rather than a conversationalist. In encouraging museum visitors and passersby encountered on the road to enter into conversations, he created opportunities for people to voice their opinions and to broaden their knowledge as they were enabled to ask individual questions and to obtain direct answers from the guest experts with personal knowledge of the situation in Iraq. In the face to face encounters that were thus initiated the information exchange between the participants of the conversations was unmediated and therein differed from the description of warfare in the media. Pasha

³¹ It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq, ‘Participant Bios’, <http://www.conversationsaboutiraq.org/bios.php>, accessed December 5th 2010

³² Deller cited in: It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq, ‘Laura Hoptman, Nato Thompson, and Amy Mackie, in conversation with Jeremy Deller’, <http://www.conversationsaboutiraq.org/interviews.php>, accessed December 5th 2010

³³ Tucker and Pasha cited in: Weinberg, Lauren, ‘Tea and sympathy’, *Time Out Chicago*, Issue 244, October 2009, <http://www.timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/art-design/70016/tea-and-sympathy>, accessed December 8th 2009

underscores the unique opportunity that the project offered in noting that the people he spoke to asked him 'about everything big and small' and that he, as a result, talked extensively 'about the things that people don't hear about in the news'.³⁴

As the conversations were unscripted and greatly dependent on people's willingness to enter into dialogue, the car wreck's vital role in drawing attention to the project and in sparking viewers' interest to engage in conversation cannot be overestimated for the success of the project. Deller realized his project in the United States rather than in his home country or elsewhere in the West since he felt that it not only 'made more sense' but also 'might be needed slightly more' on American soil due to the 'massive gap in information and sensible discussion about Iraq' that he sensed in the American mindset.³⁵ In taking the project across the nation that has been the most willing among those in the 'Coalition of the Willing', Deller attempts to bring home to the American public an understanding of the war in Iraq and of the experience of civilians that evades clear-cut perceptions of 'good versus evil' and therein highlights the complexity of the situation. Although the bombing that disfigured the car and killed and injured civilians in its proximity was not caused at the hands of the invading forces, the insurgent violence that caused the bloodshed is part of the wider context of the war in Iraq as the use of violence against both the invading forces and the Iraqi state and its citizens emerges from the power vacuum left in the aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and the lack of post-invasion planning.

For viewers recognition as an artefact whose destruction occurred in war is attained by means of contextual information that is provided alongside the car. Upon taking note of the exhibit's title, *Baghdad, 5 March 2007*, viewers are enabled to contextualize what they perceive before them with how it came to be in that condition as they are enabled to identify the wreckage as one resulting from violence in warfare rather than one deformed by an automobile accident. Whilst denoting the date and locale of the car's destruction the exhibit's title does, however, neither offer

³⁴ Pasha, Esam, 'Taking the war in Iraq to the American people', *The Art Newspaper*, (18: 203: June 2009), 37

³⁵ Deller cited in: Hromack, op.cit.

information indicating the effects on bodies nor specify exactly how the car's demolition was caused or who caused it.

Arguably, it is this minimalism of the exhibit's title that might compel viewers to enquire as to the circumstances of the car's destruction, therein serving as an entry point to the conversation and thought exchange that Deller envisioned. Additionally, in its provision of mere factual information the title points to an engagement with the subject of the Iraq war and the civilian experience that is characterized by a non-didactic approach. As the title indicates impartiality on the part of the artist space is opened up for the accommodation of a diversity of arguments and opinions that viewers bring to the conversations. The conceptualization of the car is thus characterized by an inclusive approach that circumvents the limitations that might have resulted from a decisively pro- or anti-war framing of the exhibit.

The same openness is evident in the title of the project as Deller's chosen title, *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, conveys a similar matter-of-fact quality. Based on a military idiom that refers to intractable circumstances, the project title represents a 'meaningless phrase'³⁶ that can accommodate a multitude of viewpoints. Pasha speaks to the advantages of this conceptual frame in observing that a decidedly anti-war stance would have meant that people who 'agreed with us wouldn't have had a reason to stop and talk to us. And those who disagreed, wouldn't want to waste their time either'.³⁷ Considering his project to constitute "post protest" art, Deller is adamant that the project is neither pro- nor anti-war but rather essentially 'about getting an idea of the complexity of the situation and the variety of opinions that exist'.³⁸

It is in this context that it becomes evident that Deller's conceptual approach could hardly be more dissimilar from another initiative that employed a similar conceptual idea of bringing a vehicle that was destroyed in the context of violent conflict before American audiences. Indeed, the rationale underlying Deller's project is not without precedent as a few years prior to Deller's project an Israeli bus – destroyed in central Jerusalem in 2004 when a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated a bomb on

³⁶ Deller cited in: Picard, op.cit., 7

³⁷ Pasha, op.cit., 37

³⁸ Deller cited in: Picard, op.cit., 7

the bus, killing eleven passengers and wounding dozens – was brought to the United States by Israeli non-governmental organisation ZAKA. In marked contrast to Deller's project, however, the Israeli bus was utilized to serve as a reminder of the continuous violence faced by the citizens of Israel and as a means 'to silence Israel's critics', particularly with regard to Israel's security fence.³⁹ Whilst the objective of the ZAKA project is arguably fulfilled in the articulation of its rationale for presenting the bus, Deller's more factual approach indicates that he does not strive to make a point beyond the presentation of evidence of civilian suffering in war. Rather, as he is 'setting up a series of opportunities for people to meet' and as 'their conversations are at the heart of the project',⁴⁰ Deller's project stands and falls with viewer participation and the facilitation thereof.

4.2.4 Staging Encounters

The project's exhibition both within the three respective museum spaces and on the road during the cross-country trip prompted a diversity of responses from museum visitors and passersby encountered on the road alike. In the museums the car was put on display in the vicinity of an area with sofas and chairs around tables that were set up with a view to creating a conversational space and an inviting atmosphere for museum visitors to enter into dialogues with Deller's guest experts. However, whilst the project conceptualization that was so significantly characterized by an unscripted and informal strategy presented the advantages of flexibility and openness, it had its downfalls, too.

Although the display of the car and presence of guest experts drew many museum visitors into conversations there were also viewers who were hesitant to participate as the unscripted nature of the project meant that there was some uncertainty about the procedures and thus some viewers felt that they were lacking instructions as to how to go about getting involved in the conversations. One exhibition reviewer comments in this context that there were barriers to participation in the absence of clear 'expectations for what will happen' which in turn 'makes people wary and also less

³⁹ Bus 19 Project, 'Bus 19 Tour', <http://bus19project.com/tour-to-the-hague-and-across-the-usa/>, accessed January 22nd 2011

⁴⁰ Deller cited in: Picard, op.cit., 7

interested, since they can't look forward to a "successful" outcome.⁴¹ The non-orchestration of the conversations, however, was deliberate as Deller had designed his project with an emphasis on informality and open-endedness in order to allow viewers to claim partial authorship of the project through their conversational involvement.

From Deller's point of view the success of the project did neither reside in the quantity of conversations nor in their quality as the unpredictability of viewer participation led him to set the modest goal of realizing the museum exhibitions and particularly the cross-country trip, asserting that his 'motivation was simply to see what reactions the car would provoke as it toured across the country'.⁴² On the three week road trip in March and April 2009 the car wreck was towed on a flatbed behind a motor home, stopping at various sites where Deller and his tour companions endeavoured to engage passersby in conversations by handing out flyers with an image of the car and an invitation to approach the guest experts with questions. In towing the car wreck behind a motor home, Deller reanimates the car as he symbolically reinstates the wreck's movability in taking it onto the road. The juxtaposition of the motor home and the destroyed car plays on the dichotomy of mobility and functionality vis-à-vis immobility and inoperativeness and by extension the dichotomy of life and death. Thus, as Deller takes his 'conversation piece from hell' onto the road the tour comes to represent 'a dark reimagining of that familiar subject: the American road trip'.⁴³

Akin to McQueen's soldier portraits in the form of officially issued stamps circulating in the public sphere the car wreck on the road was encountered haphazardly wherever it appeared which gave the travelling component of Deller's project a unique quality. The element of surprise that is entailed in the encounter on the road meant that viewers would potentially be less interested and responsive than their counterparts in the museums. Indeed, the different environments can be seen to have affected the reception of the car. Deller indicates his awareness of the differences in the exhibition

⁴¹ Simon, Nina, "It Is What It Is" and the Challenges of Dialogue-Focused Exhibits, August 13th 2009, Museum 2.0, [http://museومتtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/it-is-what-it-is-and-challenges-of.html](http://museومتwo.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/it-is-what-it-is-and-challenges-of.html), accessed December 7th 2010

⁴² Deller, *It Is What It Is*, op.cit., 1

⁴³ Jones, Jonathan, 'How artist Jeremy Deller is bringing the Iraq war home to Americans', *The Guardian*, April 14th 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/14/jeremy-deller-iraq-war-us>, accessed September 14th 2010

environments in proposing that ‘when the project is in museums – in a controlled, secure space – the audience will already be receptive’ whereas once the car ‘leaves the gallery it’s a totally random, unpredictable situation’.⁴⁴



[Figure 8: Jeremy Deller with his mobile exhibit at a stop in Summertown, Tennessee]⁴⁵

However, as the wreck attracted ‘shouts, gestures and honks from drivers’ it soon became clear that ‘in a land that worships the car’ people on the whole were curious and wanted ‘to know what happened to this smashed, scorched vehicle’.⁴⁶ Markedly, in its mobile form the exhibition did not merely accomplish the facilitation of dialogue and thought exchange with a diversity of viewers, it also sparked anger and some passersby criticized Deller for not committing the project expressively and unambiguously to an anti-war stance.

Deller observes in this context that ‘it was inevitable on some stops during our tour that we would be incorporated into the more general anti-war protest movement’ which is exemplified in the reaction of an activist in Kansas City who felt prompted to use chalk to write ‘The Bush/Cheney Legacy – This and Torture’ onto the pavement

⁴⁴ Deller cited in: Kilston, op.cit.

⁴⁵ Image source: Pasha, op.cit., 37

⁴⁶ Jones, ‘How artist Jeremy Deller is bringing the Iraq war home to Americans’, op.cit.

next to the car wreck.⁴⁷ Conversely, the car wreck was likewise interpreted by some passersby as an object that confirmed the righteousness of the war and the necessity to continue the occupation in order to restore order in Iraq.

Thus, the sight and physical presence of the car engendered a diversity of responses that clearly manifested themselves in the contrasting viewpoints that were articulated by passersby in the conversations. In addition to responses that passersby expressed verbally, however, there were also reactions of a different nature. In Washington, for instance, a young woman posed for a photograph in front of the car with an expression of mock horror on her face.⁴⁸ Arguably, a reaction such as this encapsulates the limits of comprehension as it indicates that the reality of what the car wreck signifies might fail to register. Yet, it does not only point to the limits of comprehension but also speaks to an uncertainty and a loss as to what would constitute an adequate reaction to the encounter with the car wreck.

The diversity of responses to the car demonstrates that Deller undoubtedly presented an object that could not easily be overlooked and whose presence was powerful. The project's components of, on the one hand, the car wreck that references the killing and injuring of civilians and, on the other hand, the guest experts who function as authorities on the subject, can not only be seen to build on one another but, in fact, be dependent on one another. Whilst the former draws attention to the project and serves as an initial conversation topic from which further dialogue can ensue the latter in the interaction with viewers support, develop and concretize the circumstances that the car alludes to. One without the other would arguably be much less effective as the display of the car on its own, even as it would serve as a reference to civilian suffering, could be seen to stagnate at the level of constituting a reminder that remains largely uncontextualized, whilst the presence of the guest experts on their own would likely significantly increase the barriers to viewers' participation in conversations as the absence of the artefact on which dialogue can be built would eliminate the project's

⁴⁷ Deller, *It Is What It Is*, op.cit., 48

⁴⁸ Zak, Dan, 'It Is What It Is: An Interactive U.S.-Iraq Exhibit on Wheels', *The Washington Post*, March 27th 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/26/AR2009032603952.html>, accessed November 28th 2009

central entry point and anchor and therein to a significant extent hinder the guest experts from sharing their knowledge and insights.

The way in which Deller conceptualized the combination and interplay of the project's components can be seen to give rise to various moments in the encounter with the project. In utilizing the car as an entry point the artist facilitated encounters in which viewers were enabled to engage in public dialogue, asked to acknowledge and contemplate the reality of civilian suffering, prompted to confront the limitations of their knowledge on the topic and challenged to take a stance in the articulation of opinions. As the car wreck evokes the killing and injuring of civilians without directly depicting the violence experienced by these bodies in the context of Deller's project viewers – in a striking parallel to Broomberg and Chanarin's entirely disembodied photo series – are likewise tasked with imagining the bodies that are clearly alluded to yet remain unvisualized.

The project's embodied component, i.e. the guest experts who are on hand to engage viewers in conversations, on the other hand can be seen to present a unique opportunity for viewers to directly encounter and engage with individuals who have first-hand knowledge due to their personal experiences of the circumstances of war. As Deller presented his project both within the museum space and outside of it he generated opportunities for both art- and non-art-world audiences to encounter the exhibit. Thus, the range of spaces in which the project was exhibited undoubtedly increased the diversity of viewers. This is particularly significant in the context of Deller's project since the strength of the project and the artistic strategy underlying it lie in the project's design for viewer participation, to the extent that viewer involvement becomes indispensable to the realization of the project. It is this interactive approach that is manifest in Deller's project that is equally of critical importance in the work of Wafaa Bilal who similarly draws attention to civilian suffering.

4.3.1 Domestic Tension

‘Desperate times require desperate measures and if this is what it takes to engage people, it’s a small price compared to what the Iraqis are going through.’⁴⁹

– Wafaa Bilal

In a similar vein to Deller’s conversational project, Iraqi-American artist Wafaa Bilal explores the experience of civilians in the war zone by utilizing a participatory approach geared toward the facilitation of dialogue. For his project *Domestic Tension* the artist confined himself to a small gallery space and invited audiences to interact with him over the Internet. In order to draw attention to the trauma of living in the line of fire Bilal set up a webcam and a paintball gun that Internet users could direct to take shots at him. The project brought Bilal worldwide attention due to its distinctive conceptualization and the timely geopolitical commentary it offered.

Bilal, who fled Iraq in 1991 and found asylum in the United States, is known for artworks with provocative undertones and his artistic practice has sparked controversy throughout his career – both in his native homeland and in his adoptive country. As a young artist in Iraq Bilal attracted attention for creating work that was critical of Saddam Hussein, was arrested as a dissident and forced to cease criticizing the regime in his art.⁵⁰ After spending two years in a Saudi refugee camp and eventually arriving in the United States, Bilal continued to create artwork of a political nature and began to produce work that examined American foreign policy and military intervention in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq.

For instance, his installation *Sorrow of Baghdad* of 1999 included a number of works that commented on American political and economic power, among them a cross-shaped wooden box in which a dildo wrapped in an American flag and fixed to a cross is juxtaposed with images of Iraqi war victims and pages from the Bible and a work that displayed a life-size figure – with a boar’s head and dressed in a business suit sitting in a chair surrounded by desert sand and oil wells – watching television and

⁴⁹ Bilal cited in: Caro, Mark, ‘A point-and-shoot exhibit’, *Chicago Tribune*, May 10th 2007, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-05-10/news/0705091398_1_paintballs-gun-yellow, accessed February 4th 2010

⁵⁰ Lydersen, Kari, ‘In the Crosshairs’, *In These Times*, June 15th 2007, http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3222/in_the_crosshairs/, accessed January 14th 2010

laughing periodically in response to the misery the figure observes unfolding on the television screen. On display at the Harwood Art Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico the installation was vandalized by an exhibition visitor who felt offended by the anti-American imagery.⁵¹

Even greater controversy, however, surrounded Bilal's video game based artwork *The Night of Bush Capturing: A Virtual Jihadi* (2008) in which he cast himself in the role of an Al Qaeda recruit in a modified version of the popular video game 'Quest for Saddam' in which players target and eliminate Iraqis in their pursuit of the Iraqi leader. In Bilal's version the objective is the assassination of President George W. Bush and the first-person avatar that is modelled on Bilal functions as a suicide bomber who is sent on a mission to kill the American President. Through his tactic of re-appropriation Bilal intended to comment on racist stereotypes inherent in action games such as 'Quest for Saddam' and aimed to draw attention to the Iraqi population's vulnerability to recruitment by Al Qaeda due to the invading forces' failure to secure and stabilize Iraq.⁵² The work, however, was deemed too controversial and was censored by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York where its exhibition was scheduled to open at the university's art gallery in March of 2008 as well as subsequently cancelled by the Sanctuary for Independent Media in the same city following protests from local politicians and residents.⁵³

Undeterred, Bilal has since presented further politically charged work that addresses contemporary geopolitical concerns, such as his project *Dog or Iraqi* (2008)⁵⁴ for which he set up a webpage on which a vote could be cast determining whether Bilal or a dog should be subjected to the torture technique of waterboarding which simulates the experience of drowning. Bilal was chosen over the dog and

⁵¹ Coffey, Robyn, 'Desecrating the Flag: The flag amendment, free speech and provocation using stars and bars', *F-Newsmagazine School of the Art Institute of Chicago*, March 2006, http://www.fnews magazine.com/2006-mar/controversy_1.html, accessed February 4th 2010

⁵² For further information on Virtual Jihadi see the artist's webpage at: <http://wafaabilal.com/virtual-jihadi/>, accessed January 3rd 2010

⁵³ LaBelle, Monica, 'Wafaa Bilal', *F-Newsmagazine School of the Art Institute of Chicago*, April 4th 2008, <http://fnewsmagazine.com/wp/2008/04/wafaa-bilal/>, accessed February 4th 2010

⁵⁴ See the video of Dog or Iraqi here: Bilal, Wafaa, Dog or Iraqi video, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XVgfJVs0nw>, accessed February 4th 2010

underwent waterboarding, video documentation of which was made accessible on YouTube.

Subsequently, in the spring of 2010, Bilal staged *...and Counting*, a live performance streamed over the Internet, in which he had his back tattooed over the course of twenty-four hours with five thousand dots to symbolize American military casualties – in red ink – and one hundred thousand dots representing Iraqi casualties – in green UV ink that is rendered visible only under black light – in a bid to draw attention to the forgotten casualties of the war in Iraq. As the names of Iraqi cities were also tattooed into his back and mapped out so that the dots could be etched into his skin in proximity to the cities in or near which each individual died, volunteers stood next to Bilal and read out the names of the dead.⁵⁵ In and through this performance Bilal literally turned his body into a permanent memorial to war.

Considering the recurring theme of the interdependence of American power politics and the Iraqi experience that is palpable in Bilal's artistic practice, the consistency with which he addresses contemporary warfare becomes evident. Bilal's topical persistence speaks of determination and urgency driven by a desire to highlight the consequences of warfare and to increase the visibility of civilian plight. Clearly, as illustrated in the traces of his personal narrative in his artworks, for Bilal art and life cannot be separated. Arguably, the artist's identity and background can be seen to signal a unique authenticity with which Bilal can comment on the experience of the civilian in the midst of war. Whilst he, like any creative practitioner, employs artistic creativity to conceive his artworks, Bilal's practice appears to not only represent the result of creative imagination but also to resemble an exercise in re-enactment. Thus, as he translates facets of his biography into his artworks Bilal is expressing aesthetically a number of political realities that he himself has experienced and survived.

The objective that emerges unmistakably from Bilal's recent art projects – evident in each of the aforementioned works independently yet even more recognizable

⁵⁵ Adeeb, Ali, '105,000 Dots for Iraq, and Counting', *The New York Times*, March 4th 2010, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/04/15000-dots-for-iraq-and-counting/>, accessed March 12th 2010; for further information and a video of the performance see the artist's webpage at: <http://wafaabilal.com/and-counting/>, accessed January 3rd 2010

in consideration of the artworks in conjunction – is the artist's endeavour to render the experience of the civilian perceptible for audiences that are far removed from the immediate experience of warfare. Accordingly, Bilal's artistic intent revolves around the development of artistic strategies that evoke in audiences not only recognition but also contemplation and acknowledgment of the figure of the civilian.

The *Domestic Tension* project is no exception to this principle and represents the project that marked the beginning of Bilal's focus on the contemporary situation in Iraq as well as the introduction of the presence and appropriation of the artist's own body in his artworks. *Domestic Tension*, in line with Bilal's broader work, stems from personal motivations as the artist is attempting to reconstruct the daily realities faced by his fellow Iraqi citizens and his own immediate family in Iraq. Like all of his work, *Domestic Tension* is thus also clearly characterized by political content intertwined with palpable autobiographical references.

4.3.2 Art imitating Life

Bilal had been critical of the military intervention in Iraq since its beginning but when he learned that his brother had been killed by explosives dropped by the American military during the siege of Najaf the war became 'intensely personal'.⁵⁶ Growing ever more alienated by the indifference to the suffering of civilians that he perceived in the American public, Bilal was prompted to merge his political stance with his artistic practice when he saw a television interview with a young female American soldier who, based in Colorado, directed bombs to targets in Iraq remotely from a computer. When asked whether she had any reservations about the task she was performing the soldier replied that she was confident that the information she received was accurate and that she trusted her superiors in the chain of command.⁵⁷

For Bilal the circumstance that death can be unleashed at the touch of a button from ground-control stations at distances of thousands of miles from the battlefields

⁵⁶ Bilal, Wafaa and Kari Lydersen, *Shoot an Iraqi – Art, Life and Resistance under the Gun*, (San Francisco: City Lights, 2008), 9

⁵⁷ Thompson, Gabriel, 'Would You "Shoot an Iraqi" in Cyberspace?', *AlterNet*, December 2nd 2008, http://www.alternet.org/world/109275/would_you_%22shoot_an_iraqi%22_in_cyberspace/, accessed January 7th 2010

symbolized the pinnacle of contemporary warfare and shed light on the increasing asymmetry of risk exposure that emerges from remote-controlled warfare. It moreover suggested a mode of sanitizing warfare since in an implementation of violence that is ever more dependent on technologies that produce the look and feel of war as game⁵⁸ recognition of the terror and devastation experienced at the receiving end of military might is exponentially diminished.

Deeply unnerved by the remoteness with which violence could be inflicted on populations in distant lands, Bilal developed the concept for *Domestic Tension* in an attempt to address not only the dichotomy between the virtual and the real but also the 'chasm between the comfort and conflict zones'.⁵⁹ As he had made the transition from living in environments characterized by violence and instability to the relative safety that the United States offered, Bilal felt a need to reconnect with the trauma his family in Iraq was experiencing on a daily basis. He emphasizes in this context that he 'wanted to be physically and emotionally closer` to the suffering in the conflict zone where the population finds itself under bombardment and largely confined to their homes as 'to go outside, even to shop for food, is to risk death`.⁶⁰

Thus, in order to replicate the conditions of civilian life Bilal decided to symbolically put himself in the line of fire so as to embody the precariousness of existence in the conflict zone. For the realization of his interactive performance, Bilal moved into the FlatFile Galleries in Chicago in the spring of 2007 and confined himself to a 32x15 foot performance space that he had equipped with some furniture – including a desk, office chair, computer, lamp, coffee table and bed.⁶¹ He then lived in the gallery for a month in front of the paintball gun that had been set up to face the performance space and programmed to discharge as online audiences directed the gun

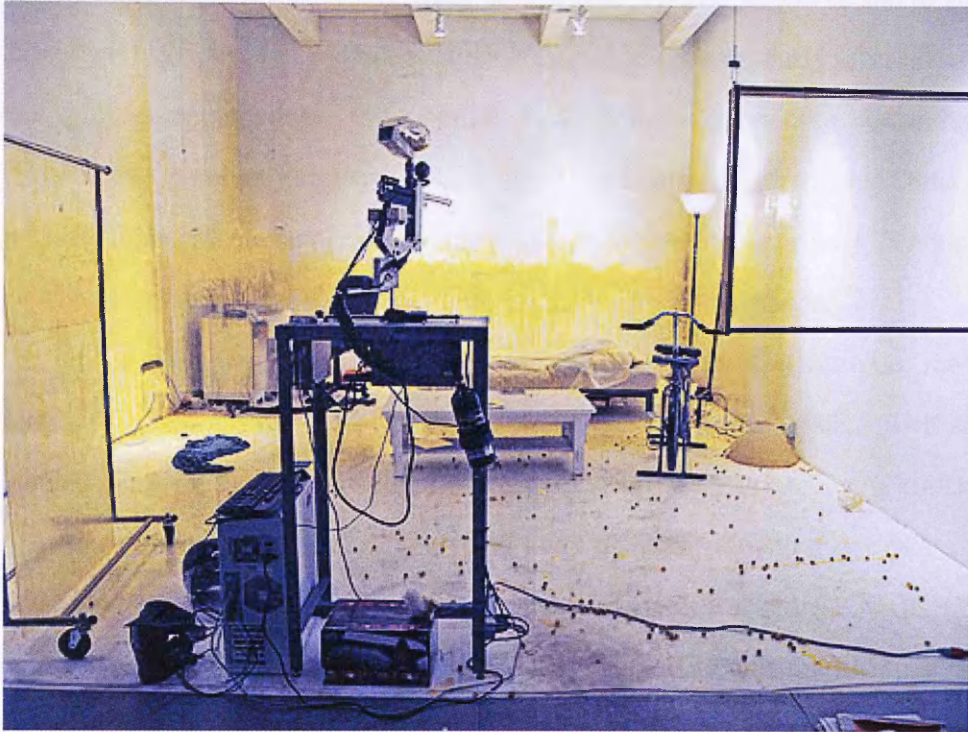
⁵⁸ See the work of James Der Derian, for example Der Derian, James, 'War as Game', *Brown Journal of International Affairs*, (10: 1: Summer/Fall 2003), 37-48; Der Derian, James, 'Virtuous War/Virtual Theory', *International Affairs*, (76: 4: October 2000), 771-788; and Der Derian, James, *Virtuous War – Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, (New York: Routledge, 2009)

⁵⁹ Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 11

⁶⁰ Bilal cited in: Braiker, Brian, 'Shoot the Iraqi!', *Newsweek*, May 25th 2007, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2007/05/24/shoot-the-iraqi.html>, accessed February 4th 2010

⁶¹ Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 2

over the Internet and fired via the click of their computer mice on the project's website where audiences saw a live picture of the gallery space.



[Figure 9: set up of the performance space, FlatFile Galleries, Chicago, 2007]⁶²

The paintball gun could be directed along a horizontal axis back and forth from left to right and could be fought over when multiple users attempted to control and fire the gun simultaneously. Bilal wore a protective vest and goggles so as to shield his chest and eyes from the impact of the paintballs. In order to be enabled to work on his computer to record, edit and upload a video diary on YouTube as well as to monitor and engage in dialogue with audiences in a chat room on the project's website a Plexiglas shield was installed to protect the technological hardware and to allow Bilal to temporarily escape from the range of the gun. During his confinement in the gallery Bilal would only ever leave the performance space for short periods of time, for instance in order to use the bathroom, take a shower or to give media interviews.⁶³

⁶² Image source: Rötzer, Florian, "Shoot an Iraqi" – Wafaa Bilal's project Domestic Tension, *Nafas Art Magazine*, May 2007, http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2007/wafaa_bilal_photos/, accessed January 12th 2010

⁶³ Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 2-3

When Bilal first set foot in the performance space he could not anticipate the reach that the project would have yet he quickly realized that there would be no shortage of people who were willing to take aim at him. As the project began to attract media coverage traffic on the project's website intensified, particularly after an article about the project appeared on the popular news website Digg.com. Overall, the project's website received eighty million hits from one hundred and thirty-six countries, two thousand pages of commentary were recorded in the project's chat room and sixty-five thousand paintballs were fired into the performance space.⁶⁴

It was within days that Bilal's living quarters were transformed into an environment that became less and less habitable as the space was riddled with stains and saturated with the unpleasant smell of fish oil from the paintballs. At times the firing was so relentless that Bilal struggled to keep up with reloading the gun as the paintballs kept flying and crashing into the artist, the furniture and the walls of the performance space where they burst and left a trail of greasy paint that dripped down and covered the floor, causing considerable damage to the space, eventually seeping into the basement of the gallery.

Yet, whilst the damage to the space and objects within it was soon visible the effect that living under fire had on Bilal was not immediately discernible. However, as the performance turned into a test of endurance the self-imposed confinement began to put a strain on the artist. Bilal's sense of vulnerability that stemmed from the twenty-four hours a day exposure to the gun intensified as time went by and inevitably resulted in Bilal's increasing efforts to hide from the gun. Halfway through the project Bilal began to suffer from sleep deprivation, ear and chest pain, and anxiety related to the constant sound of the gas-powered paintball gun.⁶⁵

Towards the end of the project's duration the confinement had taken an even greater physical and psychological toll on the artist as symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder from which Bilal had suffered after leaving Iraq returned in the context

⁶⁴ Artner, Alan, 'Wafaa Bilal – Interactive performance piece is altering perspectives on war, one paintball at a time', *Chicago Tribune*, December 30th 2007, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-12-30/news/0712280359_1_paintballs-art-institute-viewers, accessed February 4th 2010

⁶⁵ Lydersen, op.cit.

of the project. Evidence of the artist's physical and emotional decline was clearly discernible to anyone who followed the project via the daily video recordings in which Bilal reported on the project's evolution.⁶⁶ Bilal concedes that the project 'was certainly not a true representation of life in a conflict zone where one hit would mean death or serious injury'⁶⁷ yet by positioning himself as an embodied symbol of civilian suffering and in enduring the stress and anxiety that he experienced Bilal clearly went to great length in his quest to shed light on the trauma of those living under real bombardment.

4.3.3 The Body as Canvas

As Bilal situated himself as a living target for shooting practice he became the main entity within the artwork. Therein, *Domestic Tension* is firmly located in the rich tradition of performance art in which the body of the artist represents both the subject and object of the artwork as the body is utilized as the central entity of artistic expression and experimentation. Emerging in the 1960s, the employment of the body in the articulation of art has increasingly politicized the art scene since much of the commentary on social realities and the human condition thus expressed has centered on issues of authority, violence and injustice. Interlaced with the ideas of conceptual art, for many performance artists 'working with the body [became] a means of conveying an idea or universal truth rather than creating an object'.⁶⁸

In terms of its political nature, Bilal's *Domestic Tension* is in line with contemporary performance art that has emerged in response to the 'war on terror' as exemplified by such projects as *Operation First Casualty*, a series of street theater performances by American veteran organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) in which veterans re-enact combat patrols in various American cities; Cuban-American artist Coco Fusco's performances *Operation Atropos*, *Bare Life Study#1* and *A Room of One's Own*, all of which explore the role of female interrogators and methods of humiliation in the 'war on terror'; and Finnish artist Pia Lindman's *New*

⁶⁶ See the video diary here: Bilal, Wafaa, *Domestic Tension* video diary, YouTube, Days 1-31, May 6th 2007 – June 5th 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/user/mewafaa/videos>, accessed February 6th 2010

⁶⁷ Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 4

⁶⁸ Tate Liverpool, 'Artist as Subject', http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/the-twentieth-century/fig_subject.shtm, accessed January 14th 2010

York Times Project in which the artist publicly re-enacted gestures of grief depicted in newspaper photographs in the aftermath of terrorist attacks such as the attack on the World Trade Center.⁶⁹

Considering the elements of endurance and ordeal in Bilal's performance the parallels to performance art that involves the infliction of bodily pain are equally evident: for instance, American artist Chris Burden's numerous performances in which he exposed himself to bodily harm – such as his 1970s performances *Shoot* in which he was shot in the arm, *Through the night softly* in which he crawled through broken glass; and *Trans-fixed* in which he was nailed on to a Volkswagen – constitute early examples of performance art in which the infliction of pain becomes a central feature of the work. Cypriot-Australian artist Stelarc, known for experimentation in body modification and flesh-hook suspension performances; Italian performer Franko B, known for wounding and bloodletting performances; American artist Ron Athey's scarring, stitching and piercing performances; and Australian artist Mike Parr's endurance and self-mutilation performances also come to mind in this context of performance art that explores the limitations of the human body and tests the perimeters of endurance.⁷⁰

Bilal's concept of the performer's confinement, on the other hand, is preceded in such performances as German artist Joseph Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes Me* in which Beuys lived in a gallery space in New York alongside a coyote; Taiwanese-American artist Tehching Hsieh's *Cage Piece* in which the artist spent a year in near-solitary confinement in a cage in his artist studio depriving himself

⁶⁹ For further information on these performances see, for IVAW's performances: <http://www.ivaw.org/blog/operation-first-casualty-march-14-2009>, accessed May 3rd 2011; for Coco Fusco's performances see artist's webpage at: <http://www.cocofusco.com/>, accessed January 2nd 2011; and for Pia Lindman's performance see artist's webpage at: <http://www.pialindman.com/projects/archive/NYTproject/index.html>, accessed February 23rd 2010

⁷⁰ For further information on these artists see, for Chris Burden: Hoffman, Fred, *Chris Burden*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007); for Stelarc: Smith, Marquard (ed.), *Stelarc – The Monograph*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005); for Franko B: Watson, Gray and Sarah Wilson, *Franko B – Oh Lover Boy*, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2001); for Ron Athey: Johnson, Dominic (ed.), *Pleading in the Blood: The Art and Performances of Ron Athey*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2013); and for Mike Parr: Young, Michael, 'Decapitations and Protestations – Cut, Burn, Stitch and Draw: Mike Parr', *ArtAsiaPacific*, (62: March-April 2009)

of interaction with the world and British artist Mark Wallinger's *Sleeper* in which the artist, dressed in a bear suit, wandered around an empty gallery space in Berlin.⁷¹

In contrast to the aforementioned performances, however, Bilal's performance is not self-contained as the work is enacted in the interaction with audiences who are turned into viewer-participants. In order to facilitate the interactive element of the project Bilal aligns his performance with technology. *Domestic Tension* thus constitutes a digital performance piece characterized by interactivity made possible through the use of technological tools that enable the encounter between the performer and the audience. The incorporation of technological tools in his artistic practice can be seen to exemplify the rise of technology-aided artworks that utilize technological advancements in a response to the new artistic possibilities thus engendered.

However, it is worth noting that Bilal employs technology not merely to allow for audience input but also so as to increase the project's accessibility. With an objective that resembles Deller's, Bilal designed his project to 'reach people outside the gallery and established art worlds' as a means to 'democratize the process of viewing and interacting' with the work.⁷² Whilst the project was accessible to the public in an unmediated manner as people could visit the artist in the gallery, the vast majority of audiences experienced the project in virtual form via the computer screen. Utilizing the Internet as a platform for the encounter with the work afforded potential global exposure as it enabled Bilal to present *Domestic Tension* to audiences dispersed throughout the world and to transcend the limitations of work that is confined to the exhibition space.

Markedly, Bilal incorporates technology not merely so as to enable interaction and to amplify the work's reach but also in order to question modern technology and its employment in warfare. He offers a critique of the 'dehumanizing effects' that

⁷¹ For further information on these artists and their works see, for Joseph Beuys' performance: Tisdall, Caroline, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote*, (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, 2008); for Tehching Hsieh's performance: Smith, Roberta, 'A Year in a Cage: A Life Shrunk to Expand Art', *The New York Times*, February 18th 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/19/arts/design/19perf.html>, accessed May 8th 2010; and for Mark Wallinger's performance: Higgins, Charlotte, 'Bear man walks away with Turner Prize', *The Guardian*, December 3rd 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2007/dec/03/art.turnerprize20071>, accessed March 12th 2011

⁷² Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 78

materialize when there is ‘absolutely no physical or psychological connection’ to the death and destruction that is produced in remote locales when warfare is exercised from a distance.⁷³ In order to emphasize this loss of connection and in order to provide an insight into the remote execution of violence, in *Domestic Tension* the ability to exercise violence is replicated for audiences as they can engage Bilal remotely via the click of a mouse. The sense of detachment and remoteness that Bilal attempts to simulate is heightened by the lack of sound on the project’s website which meant that the noise of the gun firing could not be heard. Viewers therefore had to rely on their sight to determine whether Bilal had been hit which accentuated the performer’s bodily presence as the viewers’ eyes tracked the embodied target moving around the gallery space attempting to avoid getting hit.

Bilal thus places his audience in a position akin to that of soldiers who, far removed from combat on the ground, are able to unleash death from a distance at the touch of a button from behind a bank of computer screens on military bases far removed from the battlefield.⁷⁴ As viewers are enabled to take on the role of soldiers and to see and enact warfare in its highly technologized form in which sight and agency are possible without physical presence on the ground, they acquire an insight not only into the perspective of soldiers who operate remotely but also into the detached gaze of contemporary weapons technologies. In simulating the soldier’s perspective and actions for his viewers, Bilal invites them into the world of remote controlled warfare in which the boundaries between the virtual and the real appear difficult to discern.

Situated within the framework of a video game and role play scenario, *Domestic Tension* can thus be seen to offer viewers an experience of what it looks and feels like to engage a remote target. The unconventional and interactive staging of these high-tech circumstances of contemporary warfare in Bilal’s project is innovative in its use of

⁷³ Ibid., 1

⁷⁴ For information on the rise of remotely controlled planes in the ‘war on terror’ see for instance: Gelling, Peter, ‘Drone Wars: The rationale’, *Global Post*, October 10th 2011, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/pakistan/111010/drone-wars-logic-cia-pakistan-somalia-yemen-al-qaeda>, accessed October 15th 2011 and Martin, Rachel, ‘Drone Pilots: The Future Of Aerial Warfare’, *NPR*, November 29th 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/29/142858358/drone-pilots-the-future-of-aerial-warfare>, accessed January 12th 2012; see also Shapiro, Michael J., ‘The new violent Cartography’, *Security Dialogue*, (38: 3: September 2007), 291-313

the Internet and gaming technologies and distinctive in the ways in which it aligns reality and gaming. It can be seen to enable a concrete experience for the viewers that is unique in its potential to foster better understanding not only of the ways in which soldiers perceive war when they are implementing violence from a distance but also of the ways in which technology and remoteness lead to increasing dissociation from the material effects on the ground.

Yet, since Bilal's shooters can perceive some of the consequences of their actions on the receiving end, such as the artist's efforts to evade the hail of paintball bullets, the artistic strategy of placing viewers in the role of the remote shooter and the experience that this situating enables can also be seen to, on the one hand, foster awareness of the fact that the perceived separation between the virtual and the real is but an illusion and, on the other hand, facilitate recognition of the fact that the target that viewers perceive via their computer screens is a living human being capable of suffering rather than merely a target that is to be eliminated. As viewers are thus reminded that war is not a game and prompted to consider the experience of the civilian, Bilal can be seen to convey to his viewers in a vivid and direct manner the circumstances of remote controlled warfare.

It thus becomes apparent that Bilal employs his corporeal presence within the project not only in order to forge an entry point into the encounter with the project but also in order to promote recognition of the very real human cost of war as in staging his body as a substitute for the figure of the civilian Bilal challenges audiences to reflect on their engagement with and attitudes toward the civilian bodies that he references. As Bilal presents himself to audiences in a defenseless and vulnerable manner – since he is unarmed in contrast to their control over the gun – the image that emerges strongly echoes the depiction of the civilian figure in Goya's *The Third of May, 1808*. In Goya's representation of the defenseless civilian the central figure has his hands raised into the air in a gesture of surrender as he faces a number of rifles pointed in his direction. The resonance is heightened by the yellow colour of the civilian's clothing in Goya's painting that resembles the appearance of Bilal as he is increasingly marked by yellow paint blotches.

The uniformity of the colour of the paintballs represented an intentional choice by Bilal as it was intended to allude to the yellow 'Support the Troops' ribbons.⁷⁵ It could be argued that this choice of colour alludes not only to the strong sense of patriotism that is prevalent in the United States but also to the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' that emerges in the context of warfare and the alleged impossibility to support and have sympathy for both warring parties in the face of a perceived 'kill or be killed' scenario in war. Whilst the civilian is not the enemy, from a patriotic perspective his life and survival are secondary to that of the soldier. The civilian casualty is thus generally tolerated and accepted when death or injury to the civilian body denotes a reduction in risk to the soldier.⁷⁶

Importantly, Bilal does neither condemn patriotic support for the troops nor does he suggest that the civilian's life should be elevated above that of the soldier. Rather, the yellow colour of the paintballs can be seen to denote the disparity in visibility of and sympathy for these different sets of bodies. Against this background Bilal's artistic strategy appears to be aimed as much at raising the profile of the civilian figure in the consciousness of those situated in the comfort zones as it is geared towards the creation of an interactive space in which the artist can explore sentiments towards the civilian figure.

4.3.4 To shoot or not to shoot

In designing the project so as to resemble the configurations of video games, Bilal taps into the culture of cybergaming and therefore the Internet-based project was likely to especially attract younger audiences who represent a demographic group that has become particularly desensitized to violence and who are increasingly at home in the virtual realm. 'You have to understand the culture and use it to reach them', Bilal asserts, further suggesting that people use the Internet as they 'are looking for something to bring them together and occupy their time, so this [project] pulls them in

⁷⁵ Caro, op.cit.

⁷⁶ Shaw, op.cit., 1, see also: Owens, Patricia, 'Accidents Don't Just Happen: The Liberal Politics of High-Technology "Humanitarian" War', *Millennium*, (32: 3: December 2003), 595-616

and later you engage them`.⁷⁷ Modelling the project on first-person shooter games that are often characterized by a glorification of war and combat narratives interlaced with racial stereotyping not only enabled Bilal to direct his commentary at one of the sources of the dehumanization of the `enemy other` but also allowed him to articulate his concern for the civilian in an ostensibly playful manner. Arguably, audiences were thus drawn into the project without immediately recognizing the project's underlying objectives of visualizing the suffering of civilians and of re-humanizing them.



[Figure 10: the artist engages with viewer-participants via his computer]⁷⁸

Considering that Bilal had initially planned to entitle his project `Shoot an Iraqi`⁷⁹ the central strategy for the facilitation of audience input is evident: Bilal at once tenders an invitation, a temptation and a choice to audiences. As in contrast to video games in which shooters' actions have no material effects shooters in Bilal's project were firing at a living target who could physically and psychologically feel the impact of the paintballs, the opportunity to shoot at him materialized as a decision-making task

⁷⁷ Bilal cited in: Lydersen, op.cit.

⁷⁸ Image source: Bilal, Wafaa, Domestic Tension, <http://wafaabilal.com/domestic-tension/>, accessed January 3rd 2010

⁷⁹ The owner of the gallery had concerns regarding the provocative tone of the proposed title and feared that the title could be perceived as a literal invitation; Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 14

in which the artist forced viewers to decide whether or not they would take aim and shoot at him. In this context each viewer had to 'confront their own motives, their own internal conflict about shooting'⁸⁰ at Bilal and as they had to do so individually and independently the responsibility for their decision was entirely their own. Other than taking aim at the artist viewers could opt to merely observe him or to engage in conversation in the project's chat room. Therein, Bilal presents viewers with multiple choices for participation, the overlap of which, however, remains difficult to assess. Yet, what is clear is that Bilal's project design, in similarity to Deller's, drew in a variety of viewers with a diversity of political views.

The accommodating nature of Bilal's project that also characterized Deller's work is evidenced in the tug-of-war that ensued over the Iraqi living in front of the gun. Echoing the contest over the treatment of Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic in her performance *Rhythm 0* – in which audiences were invited to manipulate her body with objects, some of which inflicted physical pain⁸¹ – Bilal's viewer-participants divided into opposing factions of aggressors and protectors. Indeed, the 'conceptually simple project' that invited online audiences to 'shoot at an Iraqi over the Internet' turned into a 'complicated mess of conflicting emotions'.⁸² There was no shortage of aggression directed at Bilal, both in the sense that the gun hardly ever ceased firing and in an abundance of vitriol posted in the chat room.

Markedly, other than Bilal's body, a lamp and a plant that had been given to Bilal by a gallery visitor became favourite targets for shooters – as if anything within the performance space that signaled life had to be eliminated. Moreover, two weeks into the project hackers programmed the gun to fire automatically which significantly increased the strain that the artist was experiencing. Whilst living in an environment characterized by paint residue, foul smell and constant gun fire undoubtedly took a toll on the subject under fire, the verbal feedback and interactions that he had with the anonymous shooters only served to further add to his distress. Many of the comments

⁸⁰ Ibid., 143

⁸¹ See for example: Eyre, Hermione, 'A pain in the art: Marina Abramovic', *London Evening Standard*, September 23rd 2010, <http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/a-pain-in-the-art-marina-abramovic-6517086.html>, accessed March 4th 2011

⁸² Thompson, op.cit.

directed at him in the chat room contained hostile remarks, ranging from racist slurs and threats of violence to comments of a sexual nature.

Those who took a hostile stance also attacked and labelled those who articulated an anti-war attitude or sympathy for Bilal and Iraqis more generally as 'Jihadist sympathizers'.⁸³ Whilst Bilal went into 'survival mode' some of the shooters went into 'hunting mode', patiently lying in wait, ready to attack whenever Bilal made a mistake and moved into the line of fire. Some would also post bitter complaints whenever the artist left the performance space or when the server went down.

In striking contrast to the aggressive shooters other viewers refrained from firing the gun, posted encouraging comments and engaged in political conversation with Bilal and one another. Towards the end of the project a few viewers collaborated via the chat room and organized the 'Virtual Human Shield', an initiative to protect Bilal from being hit by directing the gun away from him – agreeing on schedules to cover him around the clock by constantly clicking the gun to the far left in a bid to out-click the shooters who were firing at him.⁸⁴ Thus, whilst the project demonstrated the 'misanthropic and brutal elements of cyberculture and human nature' it simultaneously illustrated how the Internet can be utilized as 'a forum of community resistance and empowerment'.⁸⁵ As Bilal embodied multiple roles, representing a 'symbol of the anti-war movement' as much as a 'lightning rod for hatred and racism',⁸⁶ the project provided a platform for encounters and contest between diverse audiences who likely would not otherwise have come across one another.

Consequentially, *Domestic Tension* – much like Deller's conversational project – constitutes an open narrative that continues to evolve and change as it is created and generated by everyone who participates in it. That Bilal succeeded in facilitating dialogue and reflection is evidenced in the fact that there were viewer-participants who initially shot at him – out of curiosity, boredom, or because they did not immediately realize that they had been tempted into shooting at a real human target who was

⁸³ Lydersen, op.cit.

⁸⁴ Artner, op.cit.

⁸⁵ Bilal and Lydersen, op.cit., 143

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 110-111

experiencing the debilitating effect of the paintballs on his body – and then apologized after talking to him. For instance, one viewer-participant told Bilal that although ‘shooting seemed really fun at the time’ now that she understood that it was negatively affecting him she ‘felt really bad’ which, for Bilal, attested to ‘the power of communicating human being to human being’.⁸⁷ Whilst the project thus clearly had the capacity to prompt contemplation of the circumstances of the civilian in war, its impact in changing attitudes was neither guaranteed nor quantifiable.

Yet, when taking as a premise that art ‘does not have to change life’ but rather that ‘it just has to start something’, the accomplishment of the project is straightforward: ‘it is a success if that simple encounter gives birth to conversation’.⁸⁸ In utilizing the Internet in order to reach into peoples’ homes, therein bringing the conflict zone into the midst of the comfort zone, Bilal’s project can be seen to interrupt the routines of audiences with his embodiment of civilian suffering in a distant land. As the virtual command to shoot fired actual ammunition into the performance space, the project forced Internet surfers to confront their willingness to shoot at a human being and to consider the physical repercussions of their actions. Bilal thus collapses the illusion of a separation between the virtual realm and real life, reminding audiences that virtual and remote actions are not isolated from the material effects that are produced in the world beyond the simulation.

Furthermore, in enabling audiences to emulate the act of inflicting violence remotely akin to how soldiers implement it, Bilal’s audiences are enlisted to partake in the demonstration of the disengagement of remote-controlled warfare and the ways in which technology produces detachment. As Bilal situated himself in front of the gun he literally put his fate into the hands of the viewers who united and divided in their contest over the living target. Thus, the tension in the domestic realm that Bilal’s project title alludes to is not only indicative of the anxiety that constitutes a daily reality for civilians in the conflict zone and of the stress that Bilal is personally experiencing in his makeshift living quarters but also speaks to the tension caused in the domestic

⁸⁷ Bilal and Lydersen, *op.cit.*, 74, 78

⁸⁸ Bilal cited in: Lydersen, *op.cit.*

sphere of the United States as well as in and across other comfort zones across the globe in the negotiations over the direction of foreign policy directed at the conflict zones. As the artist performs the lived reality of the civilian in the line of fire, Bilal creates a space of conflict in and through his project that forces audiences to confront their stereotypical attitudes toward 'Otherness' and to recognize the civilian's humanity in challenging audiences to acknowledge the consequences of violent conflict and the toll on the civilian body.

4.4 Giving a Voice to the Voiceless

Both Deller and Bilal innovatively comment on the plight of the civilian caught up in the turmoil of war. They assert that there exists a deficit in attention to the civilian figure in the Western consciousness. As the discussion has shown, Bilal and Deller independently of one another employ similar artistic strategies in their conceptual approaches in an attempt to redress the information gap, to go beyond 'black-and-white readings'⁸⁹ of contemporary conflict and to 'push the limits of understanding of those ensconced purely in the comfort zone'.⁹⁰ As Deller's and Bilal's works represent platforms for the exploration of pressing political concerns both art projects ask more questions than they answer. Indeed, both artists appear to employ a Socratic method of inquiry as they utilize dialogue as the means of gaining insight into the experience of the civilian in war. Consequentially, the projects entail the prospect of revealing audiences to themselves as self-knowledge is made possible and errors in perception are exposed, challenged and potentially amended.

Both artists are evidently invested in building encounters and conceptualized their respective projects with the objective of creating a more perceptible dimension of civilian suffering and a space for discussing socio-political concerns in the public realm. Specifically, whilst Bilal underscores the contradiction of engagement and disengagement via the physical and virtual realms and comments on the ways in which technology sanitizes violence, Deller foregrounds the complexity of contemporary

⁸⁹ Hoptman, L., A. Mackie and N. Thompson, 'Project Description', *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, <http://www.conversationsaboutiraq.org/description.php>, accessed December 5th 2010

⁹⁰ Bilal and Lydersen, *op.cit.*, 11

warfare and calls attention to the lack of sensible discussion and the scarcity of first-hand testimony.

As they cannot literally take audiences to the conflict zone, the artists instead endeavour to bring the civilian's experience into the comfort zone. The geographical boundaries that Deller broke down by physically bringing a car wreck and individuals with first-hand knowledge to the United States are figuratively collapsed in Bilal's reach into the virtual realm via which his project enters audiences' homes. Whilst Deller utilizes museums and public spaces across the United States in order to enable audiences to directly encounter an object and witnesses of war Bilal utilizes the gallery environment by means of transforming the performance space into a warzone. In bringing the human cost of war into the midst of the comfort zone both projects afford experiences that confront audiences with the suffering of civilians in a more direct and tangible manner than that mediated in media images.

Moreover, *It Is What It Is* and *Domestic Tension* are similarly characterized not only by their reach beyond the museum space that allows for the projects' to be encountered by non-art-world audiences but also by their open designs that allow for the accommodation and participation of diverse audiences who are drawn into the encounters by their non-didactic nature. Rather than being presented with stark and polarizing messages, in these projects audiences can be seen to self-educate by way of conversation as the projects are conceptualized in such a manner as to not only permit but indeed to require audiences to bring their own meanings to the experiences.

The projects thus demand more than audience spectatorship as they become all 'about people meeting each other'.⁹¹ Not only are audiences confronted with choices – to engage with Deller's car and experts or to ignore them and respectively to take aim at Bilal or refrain from doing so as well as to enter into dialogue or abstain from it – but they are also challenged to take a stance and to disclose it in articulating it. Against this conceptual background audiences become viewer-participants whose interaction with

⁹¹ Deller cited in: *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, Laura Hoptman, Nato Thompson, and Amy Mackie, in conversation with Jeremy Deller, op.cit

and in the projects constitutes a central and indispensable element without which neither project could have been realized.

Hence, a sharing of authorship is at the core of the projects' designs, literally built into the evolution and meaning of the works as in order to allow for audience participation the artists have to relinquish a considerable share of control over their projects. As they are present and involved throughout the durations of their projects both Deller and Bilal can be seen to represent artist-curators who take on supportive roles rather than directing roles once the audience has entered into the encounters. Due to their unscripted nature the projects constitute experiments with unanticipated results as they materialize in and through successive contacts with viewer-participants.

The catalyst for dialogue in both projects is represented in the object and subject within the respective projects that principally references the civilian figure. In Deller's work the entry point is constituted in the car wreck that is utilized to serve as a starting point for conversations with the expert witnesses whereas Bilal draws on audiences' familiarity with the gaming interface and tempts them to engage him via the gun, therein embodying the initial access point from which dialogue is generated. As the car wreck represents a 'terrible relic' of war that signals the death and injury of civilians it prompts viewers to realize that, as one passerby remarks, 'you are not looking at a car – you are looking at 38 dead people'.⁹²

In contrast, in Bilal's performance, as virtual weapons, virtual bullets and virtual targets are exchanged for a real gun, paintball ammunition and a living target, the actions of viewers transform 'the virtual experience into a very physical one'.⁹³ Thus, whilst Deller references the civilian body abstractly, via an inanimate object, Bilal presents himself as a manifestation of the civilian figure. It is in this context that the authenticity of the projects emerges as Deller bestows authenticity on his project by presenting a genuine artefact of war alongside the invited individuals who have first-hand experience of war whilst in Bilal's work authenticity stems from his identity and personal knowledge of the traumatizing circumstances of the conflict zone.

⁹² Comment of a passerby cited in: Jones, 'How artist Jeremy Deller is bringing the Iraq war home to Americans', op.cit.

⁹³ Bilal, Wafaa, Domestic Tension, op.cit.

Whilst they reference different sources of violence – insurgent violence vis-à-vis violence inflicted at the hands of the invading forces – the violence that is alluded to is not only as contemporary as it is political but also uniform in its effects at the receiving end. Therein the projects speak to the crippling effects of war's violence on daily life in locales of conflict, characterized as much by insecurity and instability as by destruction, trauma and death. Although Deller's and Bilal's works specifically reference the conflict in Iraq, the civilian experience that they shed light on is arguably not only equally applicable to the war in Afghanistan but also an illustration of the life-threatening circumstances of civilians caught up in the midst of violent conflict more generally. As the car wreck turns heads and people stop to talk about the blown up vehicle and as Internet surfers confront their qualms about shooting at a human being in both *It Is What It Is* and *Domestic Tension* the figure of the civilian is rescued from the realm of abstraction.

In stark contrast to the reduction to casualty numbers that is prevalent in news coverage of war and violence as well as in defiance of the vast numbers of civilian injuries and deaths that remain unreported and unknown due to the difficulties in accurately tallying civilian casualties in nations destabilized by conflict,⁹⁴ both Deller's and Bilal's projects can be seen to strive to rematerialize audiences' vision by means of reinforcing recognition of the countless civilians who remain anonymous and unavowed. Thus, the conversations that the projects engender not only allow for viewer-participants to make themselves heard but also permit Deller's experts and Bilal – on behalf of the civilians in the conflict zone – to be heard, therein affording greater perceptibility to the civilian figure.

As both artists put a premium on dialogue their belief in the power of communication is palpable. The artists themselves attest to this as evident in the fact that Deller emphasizes that when his experts talk 'about places they've been to and people they've met and their experiences, it won't be like hearing a news story'⁹⁵ and

⁹⁴ Brownstein, Catherine A. and John Brownstein, 'Estimating Excess Mortality in Post-Invasion Iraq', *The New England Journal of Medicine*, (358: January 2008), 445

⁹⁵ Deller cited in: *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, 'Laura Hoptman, Nato Thompson, and Amy Mackie, in conversation with Jeremy Deller', op.cit.

Bilal asserts that 'talking humanizes people, both me and them'.⁹⁶ In the interactive situations that the artists stage the remote, sanitized and detached ways in which comfort zone publics perceive war are interrupted and space is opened up for the engagement of audiences in the negotiation over the civilian figure. Deller's viewer-participants are physically present and have to literally face up to the stances they take in the conversations with the guest experts whilst Bilal's viewer-participants remain largely anonymous. Nonetheless, in both projects audiences can be seen to be empowered in the sense that they are reminded of their political voice and the fact that disengagement from war can be overcome when audiences choose to engage and allocate attention to the topic, which the projects are encouraging them to do.

Regardless of the projects' similarities in conceptual underpinnings and differences in execution they equally restore the civilian figure in rendering the civilian body real, human and vulnerable. Therefore, in highlighting the trauma of living in the midst of war and in forcefully drawing attention to the invisibility of the civilian experience in the eyes of comfort zone publics, these two artists – one investing his time to tour across the United States and the other investing his body in a performance – can be seen to deliver not only critical inspections and hard-hitting reminders of the civilian's sentient experience and humanity but also art experiences that help to rematerialize viewers' vision.

⁹⁶ Bilal and Lydersen, *op.cit.*, 74

Chapter 5.1 The Fate of the Suspect

‘Rarely do any prisons, much less the especially secretive military prisons, emerge from the edge of geo-social consciousness where they reside.’¹

Following on from the discussions in the previous two chapters in which artistic responses that focus on the experiences of sets of bodies that have long been central to war have been considered, this chapter discusses artworks on the ‘war on terror’ that concentrate on a figure that has only recently emerged in the matrix of bodies that are centrally involved in war. Pivotal in the ‘war on terror’, the figure of the suspect can, by its very emergence, be seen to speak to changes and transformations in the nature of war that characterize warfare in the early twenty-first century.² Since artists, as illustrated in Chapter 2, have always been creative commentators who are quick to scrutinize the status quo, it is not surprising that the figure of the suspect soon became a focus of contemporary artists’ attention. Thus, whilst there is – in marked contrast to the traditions of artworks on both the figure of the soldier and the figure of the civilian – no tradition of artworks on the figure of the suspect, there are numerous artworks addressing the theme that have emerged throughout the first twenty-first century decade.

To illustrate this contemporary focus of artistic attention to the figure of the suspect, this chapter examines two works of art that – in contrast to McQueen’s and Broomberg and Chanarin’s focus on the circumstances of the soldier, and Deller’s and Bilal’s concentration on the civilian – turn attention to the experience of the suspect in the ‘war on terror’. German artist Gregor Schneider and Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo, in their respective artworks, can be seen to comment on the emergence of a worldwide system of detention and interrogation. Both artists thereby speak to the ways in which the ‘war on terror’ has given rise to the emergence of a wide range of suspect bodies. As the discussions will show, both artists, on the one hand, provocatively

¹ Gordon, Avery, ‘Abu Ghraib: imprisonment and the war on terror’, *Race&Class*, (48: 1: July 2006), 43:

² On the emergence of the figure of the suspect and the utilization of torture see for example the following work: Levinson, Sanford (ed.), *Torture: a collection*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Giroux, Henry, *Against the New Authoritarianism – Politics after Abu Ghraib*, (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2005); and Hersh, Seymour, *Chain of Command – The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005)

investigate what it means to be a suspect in the 'war on terror' and, on the other hand, confront audiences with the suspect's experience in surprising ways. As both artworks address the ways in which suspect bodies are detained, made defenseless and violated, the artists directly thematize the conditions facing suspect bodies and draw attention to the fact that such bodies have become a central element of the 'war on terror' and a central facet of contemporary existence.

Akin to Deller's and Bilal's projects, the works of Schneider and Galindo are both ephemeral in nature, yet whilst Schneider's work is exhibited in an atypical surrounding Galindo invites her audience to encounter her work in the gallery environment. Whilst Galindo's work presents an embodied representation of the encounter between an interrogator and a suspect, depicting the materialization of violence in a very direct manner, Schneider's work conjures up the suspect's plight less graphically. As the following pages illustrate, both artworks can be seen to uncover experiences that materialize in spaces that otherwise remain largely hidden from view and generally inaccessible to the public. In referring to the spaces in which suspect bodies are confined and controlled, Schneider traces the architecture of detention whereas Galindo portrays what occurs within such spaces.

The chapter first considers Schneider's work and begins by sketching his artistic practice. Following from a discussion of the design of his work, an installation, and the artistic strategy utilized to comment on the suspect's experience of incarceration in the 'war on terror', the chapter considers the ways in which Schneider's audience encountered, experienced and reacted to the work. The chapter then turns to Galindo's work, a performance in which the artist re-enacts the violence that occurs in spaces of detention. Subsequent to situating Galindo's performance in the context of her artistic practice, the chapter examines the distinctive artistic strategy that the artist employed for her commentary on the violence experienced by suspect bodies before considering the audience's reaction to the work. The chapter's final pages compare and contrast the two artworks and their respective commentaries on the figure of the suspect.

5.2.1 Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells

There are some art projects which steer us towards a brighter future, and some which turn in towards a very dark present – and it's pretty clear which of the two Gregor Schneider is interested in.³

– James Lingwood

Gregor Schneider's examination of contemporary spaces of detention takes the form of a large-scale architectural space that the artist constructed with a view to offering audiences a sensory experience of enclosure. His *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells*, a publicly accessible installation on Sydney's Bondi Beach, was commissioned by Kaldor Public Art Projects in 2007. The free-standing artwork consisted of a grid of twenty-one identical cells that were installed in the form of a square that covered a total of four hundred square metres. As a work of art in the public realm, Schneider's installation in the white sand of one of Australia's most famous stretches of coastal land not only took beachgoers by surprise but also represented a critical re-interpretation of space.

The installation followed in the long tradition of Schneider's artistic practice at the intersection of sculpture and installation and his practice of exploring the symbolism and history of diverse rooms and spaces and the reactions they inspire in audiences. Schneider made a name for himself representing Germany at the Venice Biennale in 2001 with *Totes Haus ur (Dead House ur)* for which he won the prestigious Golden Lion Award for best work. For the display in the German Pavilion he organized the transport of various rooms – such as a bedroom, kitchen, and cellar from his house in Germany – in eight lorries to Venice, making his exhibit the largest and heaviest exhibition in the history of the German Pavilion.⁴ The Venice presentation represented the most extensive reconstruction of Schneider's *Haus ur (House ur)*, his family home in Rheydt that he has been rebuilding since 1985 and over the years transformed into a labyrinth of rooms and corridors as he has installed double floors, artificial partitions, and mounted walls that lead hallways into dead ends. Once rooms have been taken out

³ James Lingwood, co-director of Artangel, cited in: Kennedy, Maev, 'Artist brings sinister installation to East End', *The Guardian*, September 29th 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/sep/29/arts.arts.news1>, accessed April 12th 2011

⁴ Mack, Gerhard, 'Die Hölle ist eine Baustelle', *Art – Das Kunstmagazin*, (6: 2001), 12-16

of *Haus ur* – his magnum opus and central place of work as well as place of residence in which the artist's work and life have become almost indistinguishable from one another – and reassembled in museums and galleries they never return to Rheydt but are instead replaced with new rooms in his ever-changing convoluted abode.

The long-term alteration of his childhood home has seen the house transformed from a living space that is generally associated with feelings of security, stability and belonging – a safe haven that represents 'the place where most of what matters in people's lives takes place'⁵ – into an uninhabitable space that causes claustrophobic reactions in visitors. Labelled a 'house of horrors' not only due to the discomfort and anxiety evoked by the narrow and dark rooms but also due to the allusions to death and decay, *Haus ur* gained Schneider a reputation for the creation of terrifying environments. Critics often suggest that Schneider's continued excavations and alterations, undertaken since the death of his father when he was sixteen years old, may stem from trauma.⁶

Schneider continued his theme of uncanny spaces in his 2004 Artangel commission *Die Familie Schneider (The Schneider Family)* which saw two identical neighbouring houses in London's Whitechapel district populated with six sets of identical twins – among them a woman doing the dishes in the kitchen and a man masturbating in the shower – who paid no attention to the visitors who were invited to enter both houses and to freely move around within them, like intruders or voyeurs, only to find that they were encountering the exact same set up and activities in both houses.⁷ In 2009 another installation in which Schneider continued his exploration of the private space of the home and offered a similarly disturbing vision of family normality, *Kinderzimmer (Nursery)*, on view at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, invited visitors into a 'completely dark space, a discombobulating, deserted blackness'⁸ that challenged visitors' sense of orientation.

⁵ Miller, David, *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001), 3

⁶ Lack, Jessica, 'Artist of the week 28: Gregor Schneider', *The Guardian*, February 11th 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/feb/10/gregor-schneider-artist>, accessed April 2nd 2011

⁷ See for instance: Fox, Dan, 'Die Familie Schneider', *Frieze*, (2008: February 2005)

⁸ Campbell-Johnston, Rachel, 'The inner space man', *The Times*, (27th January 2009), 13

Equally hazardous to visit was the artist's outdoor installation *End* (2008) in front of the Abteiberg museum in Mönchengladbach, Germany, that consisted of a large black square leading into a tunnel that constituted an alternative entrance to the museum, an installation for which visitors had to sign a disclaimer prior to entering an environment characterized by almost complete darkness that forced visitors to navigate the space by moving slowly along the walls solely relying on their sense of touch.⁹ It is due to the creation of distressing environments such as these that Schneider has long been considered the darkest and most uncanny artist working today.¹⁰

He is moreover well known for provocative works that have caused controversy in recent years on several occasions. For the 2005 Venice Biennale he proposed *Cube* – a large square tower of scaffolding draped in black fabric that was to be placed on the Piazza San Marco – but due to the work's suggestion of the Kaaba in Mecca the installation was censored by Italian authorities for fear of offending the Muslim community. A year later the work was censored once more by the Hamburger-Bahnhof-Museum in Berlin despite the museum's initial invitation to exhibit the piece. *Cube* was eventually realized in 2007 as part of a group exhibition in homage to Russian painter Kasimir Malevich's famous oil painting *Black Square* (1915).¹¹

Even greater controversy, however, was caused in 2008 when Schneider mentioned in an interview that he was planning to build a room for a person to die in. The artist considered it a matter of investigating the taboo surrounding death and a matter of addressing the often undignified and hidden circumstances of death and dying in hospitals and care homes. Whilst he aimed to make death and dying visible in public, the public reaction was one of outrage and detestation. Schneider – who stated that he was hoping to 'show the beauty of death' and thus wanted to 'display a person dying naturally in the piece or somebody who has just died'¹² – received death threats and was criticized in the press as the proposal was deemed vulgar, perverse and offensive

⁹ See: Schneider, Gregor, *End*, (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2010)

¹⁰ Schreiber, Mathias, 'Die Bürgerhasser', *Der Spiegel*, (18: April 2008), 164

¹¹ See: Haase, Amine, 'Kunst im Zeitalter des Globalen Terrorismus', *Kunstforum International*, (117: September-October 2005), 318-323 and Eichler, Dominic, 'Gregor Schneider', *Frieze*, (108: June-August 2007), 246-247

¹² Schneider, Gregor, 'There is nothing perverse about a dying person in an art gallery', *The Guardian*, April 26th 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/apr/26/art>, accessed March 12th 2011

due to its suggestion to stage the act of dying as art.¹³ His *Sterberaum (Dying Room)* – albeit without a dying or deceased person – has since been exhibited twice, first in Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria in 2011 and subsequently in the National Museum in Szczecin, Poland in 2012.

What becomes apparent in view of the artist's creative practice is that, without exception, the spaces that Schneider creates are always unnerving. In building architectural spaces that facilitate an unusual sensory experience that differs from the everyday perception of space and in engendering physical and psychological reactions to the intense environments that he constructs, Schneider's art explores the disturbing effects that rooms can have. Renowned for pushing the boundaries through his interest in the darker aspects of the human psyche the artist's works are never apolitical and the socio-political references in his works are never subtle, yet Schneider merely considers himself a sculptural designer, 'a constructor of rooms',¹⁴ whose primary concern lies with the formal aesthetics and architectural design of the spaces he constructs.

It is against this background of some of the artist's better known works that his installation in Australia can be seen to be in line with the artist's overall creative practice as it follows his conceptual procedure of relocation and replication. Adhering to Schneider's artistic principle of challenging audiences to expose themselves to and embrace unfamiliar experiences the beach cell project constituted a walk-in work as with all of his works. With the sensation of trepidation underlying all of his works the project on the shores of the Australian continent was no exception in its uncanniness and thought-provoking potential.

5.2.2 Cages in the Sand

Schneider's site-specific beach cell installation, which turned Sydney's Bondi Beach into a temporary art space, was installed on the beach from 28th September to 21st October 2007. The grid of identical cells, each measuring 4m x 4m, was constructed from Australian fencing wire and each cell was furnished with an inflatable mattress,

¹³ Lösel, Anja, 'Tod als PR-Gag?', *Stern*, April 22nd 2008, <http://www.stern.de/kultur/kunst/kuenstler-gregor-schneider-tod-als-pr-gag-618066.html>, accessed May 5th 2010

¹⁴ Schneider cited in: Campbell-Johnston, op.cit., 13

beach umbrella and a black bin bag. The installation was freely accessible and whoever ventured inside could move around the space and enter and exit most of the compartmentalized cells within the structure, even though some of the access points in between cells were blocked off.

As the entire structure was open to the elements, lightweight in material, spacious and transparent in nature – which meant that the construction was flooded with air and light – the beach cell project markedly differed from Schneider’s other works which, as indicated, are generally characterized by darkness, density of material, and compactness of structure as well as by audiences’ inability to discern prior to entering what awaits them on the inside. Likewise, whilst many of his other works are filled with suggestions of corporeal presence – be it in the form of mattresses and other cluttered accumulations of furniture in rooms or the population of spaces with mannequins or real people – *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* is noticeably disembodied.



[Figure 11: Installation view of *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells*, Sydney, Australia]¹⁵

Invited to realize a project in Australia by John Kaldor of Kaldor Public Art Projects for its long-standing series of public art commissions, Schneider purposefully

¹⁵ Image source: Schneider, Gregor, Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells, http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/2007sydnev/pages/20070928_bondi_beach_sydney_09.htm, accessed March 10th 2010

chose the location of Bondi Beach as it represented 'an essential part of the Australian national identity'.¹⁶ Having conceptualized the installation specifically for the venue, the artist evoked associations with Australian racial tensions, worldwide detention practices and border security.

The work was inspired by the Cronulla race riots, the imprisonment of illegal immigrants in Australian detention centres, and the architecture of the American Military prison at Guantanamo Bay.¹⁷ In intervening in national debates on societal disharmony, nationalism, immigration and asylum as well as in broader international debates on freedom, terrorism and security the installation captured the current socio-political atmosphere of insecurity and suspicion. In its commentary on the 'drastic new emphasis on security issues around the world' the work revealed, as one commentator observed, the artist's 'acute sensitivity to the tenor of the times'.¹⁸

With regard to Australia's domestic situation the installation spoke to the racially motivated mob violence that occurred in Sydney's beachside suburb of Cronulla in 2005 when several thousand young white Australians mobilized to attack people of Middle Eastern appearance following an attack on lifesavers by a group of Lebanese men. The race riots gave rise to a level of violence that was unprecedented in the history of Australia and turned the principal site of the riot, Cronulla Beach, into a battleground.¹⁹ The beach cell structure likewise alluded to Australian detention centres, the country's strict stance on immigration under Prime Minister John Howard's conservative government and its controversial border protection policies.²⁰

Therein the confinement structure in the sand brought 'into question the values that we associate with the sun, surf and sand image of the Australian beach' and asked

¹⁶ McMahon, Barbara, 'Sun, sea and steel cells', *The Guardian*, October 1st 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2007/oct/01/sunseaandsteelcells?INTCMP=SRCH>, accessed March 12th 2012

¹⁷ Kaldor Art Projects, 'Gregor Schneider 2007', <http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/gregor-schneider-2007>, accessed October 22nd 2010

¹⁸ Smee, Sebastian, 'Artist aims to bust beach myths', *The Australian*, September 27th 2007, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/artist-aims-to-bust-beach-myths/story-e6frg8n6-111114529762>, accessed March 14th 2012

¹⁹ See for instance: Kennedy, Les and Murphy, Damien, 'Racist furore as mobs riot', *The Age*, December 12th 2005, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/racist-furore-as-mobs-riot/2005/12/11/1134235948497.html>, accessed April 3rd 2012

²⁰ See for instance: Maynard, Roger, 'Revolt over Australia immigration bill', *The Guardian*, August 9th 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/aug/09/australia.immigration>, accessed April 2nd 2012

the Australian public 'to consider the fundamental openness of Australian society, the freedoms and liberties we enjoy as citizens and the larger global picture, what is happening in the world around us'.²¹ The juxtaposition of the beach and the cell cages was stark as it contrasted two opposing symbolisms of, on the one hand, a space of freedom, leisure, recreation and community, and, on the other hand, a space of captivity, control, punishment, isolation and powerlessness.

The dark associations of detention and imprisonment and the uneasy atmosphere of racism and suspicion that Schneider's cell structure suggested thus challenged the country's egalitarian self-image in a provocative manner. Pointing to the political realities that lie hidden underneath 'Australia's image of itself as hedonistic, compassionate, beach-loving, democratic'²² the installation brought questions of inclusion and exclusion into sharp focus. Due to its location on the beach the installation not only transformed the space but also reinterpreted its meaning. Considered the country's 'emblematic public space' that is 'chief among the sacrosanct elements of the national psyche' the beach has long been 'collectively espoused as a golden realm of egalitarianism, tolerance, and vitality' and a 'symbol of an open, optimistic, and tolerant national character'.²³ Schneider's installation can thus be seen to disrupt and deconstruct this meaning as it unsettles the established positive image of the beach.

Rather than conceiving the beach as an egalitarian space or reinforcing its role as a national symbol, in Schneider's work the space comes to symbolize segregation, detainment and movement control. The beach considered as border and barrier speaks to the dichotomy of inside and outside and points to the contradictory experiences in the location – the very space that symbolizes relaxation and leisure activities for some represents the end point and an environment in which hopes and dreams are shattered for others.

²¹ John Kaldor cited in: Kaldor Art Projects, 'Media Release: Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells', August 27th 2007, http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/2007sydney/pages/20070928_bondibeach_sydney_006.htm, accessed March 10th 2010

²² Smee, Sebastian, 'Captive Audience', *The Australian*, October 20th 2007, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/captive-audience/story-e6frg8qx-1111114654452>, accessed March 14th 2012

²³ Harding, Laura, '21 Beach Cells', *Landscape Architecture Australia*, (117: February 2008), 64

Strikingly, with a view to the installation's commentary on the conditions that people hoping to gain access to the country face Schneider's work is reminiscent of the work of Mike Parr²⁴ who has addressed Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in several durational performances – such as his ten day hunger strike *For Water from the Mouth* (2002); *Close the Concentration Camps* (2002) in which Parr stitched his eyebrows, ears, nostrils and lips together and branded the word 'Alien' into his thigh; and *Malevich [A Political Arm]* (2003) in which the artist sat in a gallery with his arm nailed to the wall.²⁵

In the global context the plight of refugees and asylum seekers similarly informs the work of Cuban installation and performance artist Tania Bruguera whose ongoing art project *Immigrant Movement International* (2010-2015) examines migration as an increasingly important aspect of contemporary existence.²⁶ Yet, as Schneider's cell cages also evoke associations with the architecture of the prison facilities at Guantanamo Bay as well as with the global system of detention that has emerged in the context of the 'war on terror' more generally, thus also alluding to the treatment of suspect bodies across the globe, the work far exceeded the specificity of the Australian context.

It is worth noting that the Bondi Beach installation is not the only work inspired by Guantanamo Bay as another of Schneider's works of the same year was also influenced by the architecture of Guantanamo's maximum-security facilities. Schneider's installation *Weisse Folter (White Torture)*, built into the museum space of K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, Germany, parallels *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* in its focus on the prison environment. The installation was exhibited for four months and modelled on images of Guantanamo Bay that Schneider found on the Internet. The rooms in *Weisse Folter* – only minimally furnished, clean and sterile – presented a maze of soundproof spaces that were suggestive of the

²⁴ Cf. Chapter 4.3.3, 136

²⁵ For information about Parr's performances see: Jamieson, Michelle, 'Malevich [A Political Arm] Mike Parr', *Artlink*, (22: 3: 2002), 83-84 and Young, Michael, 'Decapitations and Protestations – Cut, Burn, Stitch and Draw: Mike Parr', *ArtAsiaPacific*, (62: March-April 2009)

²⁶ See the artist's webpage at: <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/486-0-Immigrant+Movement+International.htm>, accessed May 12th 2011

detention cells at Guantanamo Bay due to their architecture and the interrogation techniques that the work's title referenced – a type of torture that is psychological and leaves no visible traces, including such practices as solitary confinement, stress positions, sensory deprivation, and sleep deprivation; thus principally targeting the mind rather than the body.²⁷

Whilst the suggestion of both Guantanamo Bay and the practices that occur within such spaces of detention is more explicit in *Weisse Folter*, the work lacks the contradictory aspect that exists in *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* due to its placement vis-à-vis the coastal backdrop. Notwithstanding the more immersive environment of *Weisse Folter* in its more authentic replication of the prison structure, the installation can to some extent be seen to merely reproduce the experience afforded by guided prison tours, albeit in artistic terms. The Guantanamo Bay detention camp itself may one day be transformed into a site that is accessible to the public – this at least appears to be the vision of the organizers of *The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History*, a cultural institution that claims to already be established at the site despite the fact that it is, to date, an entirely imaginary museum.²⁸

With regard to detention in the 'war on terror' and the violence that materializes in such spaces of imprisonment the Bondi Beach installation is, however, not only paralleled by Schneider's own corresponding installation at K21 but also resembles the work of Swiss artist duo Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud whose long-term project *Zone*Interdite (Forbidden Zone)* (2000-ongoing) reconstructs the restricted terrain of highly militarized locales in the 'war on terror'. As the web-based project enables a virtual walk through restricted military zones such as *inter alia* the facilities at Guantanamo Bay, the artists invite audiences to virtually trespass into forbidden spaces, thus transforming these otherwise off-limits zones into spaces of visibility and accessibility. Since visitors to the online platform are encouraged to contribute information on military spaces in order to further develop the project, the material

²⁷ For a review of *Weisse Folter* see: Eichler, op.cit., and for images of the installation see the artist's webpage at: http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/2007ddorf/pages/20070317_k20k21_duesseldorf_0001.htm, accessed March 22nd 2011

²⁸ See: The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History webpage at: <http://www.guantanamo bay museum.org/>, accessed November 5th 2012

available on the webpage has expanded to include information sections and chat and screenshot functions in addition to the maps and virtual 3D tours.²⁹

Likewise, Schneider's Bondi Beach installation bears a resemblance to the *This is Camp X-Ray* project by artist Jai Redman who replicated parts of the Cuban detention facilities on waste land in Hulme, Manchester in 2003. Aimed at simulating the harsh conditions of the genuine camp in Cuba` the project entailed the imprisonment of nine volunteers – one for each of the British citizens incarcerated in Cuba at the time – for nine days under twenty-four-hour surveillance by volunteer guards.³⁰ As the project essentially represented a role play scenario in which both prisoners and guards performed predetermined roles and since public access to the space was limited, the Hulme reproduction brings Philip Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford prison experiment to mind, even as Redman's project was not intended as a psychological experiment but rather, akin to Schneider's beach cells, as an intervention in the public realm. In contrast to these projects *Bondi Beach*, *21 Beach Cells* represented a project and experience that – unlike *This is Camp X-Ray* – was accessible to the public; that – unlike the virtual exploration of *Zone*Interdite* – was physical in nature; and that – unlike *Weisse Folter* – was presented outside the museum environment and could thus be encountered by non-art-world audiences.

5.2.3 Voluntary Incarceration

The beachgoers who came across the installation in the sand were offered an opportunity to experience a situation that most people would generally prefer to avoid and one that the majority of people are unfamiliar with. Since the architecture of the detention system – be it the interrogation cells of the 'war on terror', holding cells for illegal immigrants, or prison cells in police stations – is generally only known to those who experienced imprisonment themselves and those who are situated within

²⁹ See the project webpage at: <http://www.zone-interdite.net/forum/about-zoneinterdite/>, accessed March 14th 2012

³⁰ Schaffer, David, 'Eerie reality of X-Ray's cousin', *BBC News*, October 12th 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/3183850.stm>, accessed March 12th 2012 ; for images of the project see: Ultimate Holding Company (UHC), 'This is Camp X-Ray', <http://uhc.org.uk/art-studio/this-is-camp-x-ray/>, accessed March 12th 2012

correctional systems as guards or in other such roles related to the custody of human beings, Schneider's installation offered an insight into spaces that are otherwise largely beyond the public's view. As with all of his works, the cages in the sand were not merely meant to be looked at but intended to be actively experienced as soon as visitors stepped inside.

Once inside, beachgoers found themselves in a square space adjacent to many more identical such spaces and in front of the amenities that were provided for them in each cell. When they chose to explore the cage structure further and tried to move from one cell to another those who had gone inside soon discovered that they could not move freely between all of the cells as some of the doors between cells had been wired shut. This, as one reviewer observes, 'induces an unnerving sense of apprehension as one attempts to move through the dazzling moiré of gridded steel'.³¹ Since not all doors allowed entry into other cells, visitors found themselves confronted with the task of finding their way through the structure. This forced them to try different routes in their attempt to navigate their way through the maze. Confronted at various points with reminders of their entrapment, visitors were thus coerced to engage in continuous decision-making and to retrace their steps throughout the confusing passageways.

Those inside the labyrinth soon realized that the work's transparency gave a misleading impression regarding ease of navigation as its transparent appearance did not make orientation easier or effortless. Whether and to what extent those caught inside a cell experienced feelings of anxiety or even the emergence of a sense of panic is, of course, a matter of individual reactions to the space, yet there can be no doubt that the sense of entrapment had a tendency to inspire uneasiness, alarm and disorientation. Those who experienced a great sense of discomfort were also likely those who would feel a greater sense of relief and liberation upon managing to find their way out and leaving the structure on to the open space of the beach.

Depending on the vantage point, continually changing as those inside move from cell to cell, the view of the installation and the beach and sea that lie beyond it varied greatly yet panoramic vision is made unattainable throughout the entire structure

³¹ Harding, *op.cit.*, 64

by the gridded cell walls. Fragmenting vision and regulating perception the cells' walls thus impose their enclosing presence on those inside and function to heighten awareness of containment. Concurrently, however, the structure's transparency produced consciousness of visibility and a sense of being on display. 'As in a panopticon', notes another commentator, 'there is no place to hide. No matter how far in you go, you remain as visible as you were on the outside.'³² Those inside the cells thus were subject to inspection and surveillance which many found disconcerting as the public isolation made them uncomfortable and hindered relaxation.

Consequently, 'stifled by self-consciousness' activity in the cells tended to have 'a studied air' which compellingly suggests that 'a few minutes in a steel cage is a powerful reminder that privacy is a deeply human need'.³³ Even as it is modelled on real spaces and existing detention structures, Schneider's emulated version of a detainment facility and the experience it affords can only allude to the reality and circumstances of actual incarceration, yet it arguably suffices to give visitors an impression. What occurs within such spaces of internment, what violent practices materialize within them and what desperation they produce, remains unreferenced by Schneider and is thus left for the visitors to imagine.

Markedly, the furnishings with which Schneider equipped all twenty-one cells do not yield any insight and thus do not guide visitors in their interpretation of the work. On the contrary, as the inserted elements are provided for visitors to the beach the installation does not only stand in stark contrast to its coastal surrounding but also contains a stark juxtaposition within itself. Rather than inserting furnishings that point to either a specific group of suspect and incarcerated bodies – such as an orange overall, a pair of flip-flops, and a copy of the Koran which, as they are the minimum of items that all detainees at Guantanamo Bay are given,³⁴ would have made associations with detention in the 'war on terror' inevitable – or furnishing the cells with elements that suggest the atmosphere and incidents within spaces of detention – such as tools

³² Smee, 'Captive Audience', op.cit.

³³ Harding, op.cit., 64-65

³⁴ *BBC News*, 'Life in a Guantanamo cell', February 7th 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1766037.stm>, accessed June 3rd 2010

that imply brutality, be it thumbscrews, electro-shock technologies or hoods – Schneider opted to include more ambiguous items.

This arguably represents an important aspect of his artistic strategy: not only would more suggestive furnishings have guided viewers in their interpretation of the work – which would have limited the range of associations, thus narrowing the work's commentary – but they would also have been at odds with the artist's principle of challenging and confusing audiences, of leaving them on their own and unsure of what they are seeing which, in view of Schneider's other work, is undoubtedly a staple of his practice. That Schneider is not given to explaining the spaces he creates is also evidenced in the indistinct title of the work that offers little indication as to the artist's thought processes. Rather, *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* visualizes spaces of detention in a matter-of-fact manner without resorting to explicit finger-pointing or accusations. Consequently, viewers are left to draw their own conclusions and to develop their own interpretations.

As Schneider furnished the cells with elements that would serve to encourage visitors to remain in the cells, to spend time in and in that sense to take temporary possession of the space, the installation and the way in which it can be experienced differ markedly from the experience that visitors would have in a museum setting. Situating the installation on the beach meant that it was encountered by chance and by people who were drawn to the space for the purpose of spending leisure time rather than specifically seeking an art encounter. The unusual location for an art installation and the haphazard encounter that art in the public realm affords here turns beachgoers into accidental art audiences.

Rather than merely walking past, around or through the artwork as is commonly the case in the museum environment, visitors on the beach are permitted to make use of the space as they see fit. With this in mind, it becomes evident that the structure can also be seen to afford a space of refuge and a retreat that can offer welcome separation from other people on the beach. It is thus that the 'indeterminate purpose and function of the 21 beach cells positioned them between comfort and isolation, safety and

imprisonment³⁵ which presented a contradictory duality of simultaneous entrapment and protection. Consequently, in their varying reactions to the space those who have gone inside the installation are left to negotiate the dichotomy between imprisonment, exposure and scrutiny on the one hand, and privacy and safety on the other hand.



[Figure 12: the installation populated with beachgoers]³⁶

Moreover, the furnishings in the cages can not only be seen to invite visitors to remain in the installation and to supplement visitors' enjoyment of their stay at the beach but also as symbols of Western lifestyles. As such they can be seen to blur the inside and the outside of the installation as they serve as a reminder of how both detention of suspect bodies and the violence that materializes within spaces of imprisonment are aimed at defending the liberal lifestyle that the furnishings symbolize. In referencing what is being defended and protected against those who are perceived as a threat by keeping them out and by implementing control by means of incarceration, the installation arguably speaks as much to establishing control over suspect bodies as it does to securing Western values and lifestyles, as indeed the two are interrelated.

³⁵ Kaldor Art Projects, 'Gregor Schneider 2007', op.cit.

³⁶ Image source: Schneider, Gregor, Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells, http://www.gregorschneider.de/places/2007svdnev/pages/20070928_bondi_beach_sydney_09.htm, accessed March 10th 2010

As the installation is devoid of visible traces of human presence and occupation in the context of incarceration, its disembodied atmosphere can be seen as indicative and reflective of the namelessness and facelessness of the vast majority of suspect bodies. From anonymous illegal immigrants to 'ghost detainees' in the 'war on terror', most of these suspect bodies remain publicly unidentified and their perception in the public eye thus indistinct. However, in appropriating and populating the space those who decide to stay fill the otherwise disembodied space of the cells with life, thereby becoming substitutes for the suspect and detained bodies that Schneider references.

The beachgoers-turned-art audience-turned-substitute bodies in the cells, as they can be seen to represent a cross-section of society in terms of age, ethnicity, gender and social standing, can also be seen to symbolize, indeed embody, another new reality, namely that epitomized in the case of Jean Charles de Menezes, the young Brazilian electrician who was shot dead by police at Stockwell tube station in London in 2005,³⁷ which suggests that anyone can become a suspect in the 'war on terror' at any moment.

In view of the various associations and the different impressions that the installation evokes it becomes clear that Schneider's Bondi Beach installation is much more complex than it at first appears. As he literally transplants an emulated version of a prison space into a new and unlikely environment, Schneider not only confronts his audience with an unfamiliar space but in inviting visitors to physically insert themselves into the installation he also enables them to experience the psychological effects that the space has on them.

It is against this background that the installation can be seen to have different moments: a first one linked to beachgoers' decision to venture inside the structure, which is a matter of free choice as visitors are not forced to enter but can decide whether or not they do. The second moment arises in the psychological reactions to the space that occur in the interaction between the visitors and the space. Finally, another moment occurs when visitors regain their freedom upon exiting the structure.

³⁷ See for instance: Dennis, Jon, 'Shot man was not bomber', *The Guardian*, July 23rd 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jul/23/july7.uksecurity11>, accessed November 4th 2010

Arguably, it is this last moment in particular that holds the potential for visitors to realize the value of freedom and agency as well as the contrast between the privilege of their ability to exit and actually detained individuals' lack thereof. Likewise, visitors might be prompted to contemplate the significance of the private sphere that is infringed upon when an individual is held captive and is denied control over their privacy. Thus, in the exploration of the space that Schneider has created on the beach processes of realization are engendered.

In exploring the interplay between body and space Schneider clearly demonstrates 'a talent for making us see political issues in psychological terms'.³⁸ Using spaces as his medium, Schneider not only visualizes urgent political realities in his installation but also investigates the presence and absence of bodies in spaces of social significance and points to their relative invisibility in the public eye. Offering opportunities for contemplation and debate about imprisonment and detention in the 'war on terror', Schneider's work can thus be seen to contribute to the perceptibility of these realities as he places the circumstances of detainees in plain sight. The focus on contemporary spaces of detention and the production of control that they facilitate similarly represents the central theme of the work of Regina José Galindo. However, whilst Schneider pointedly draws attention to the geography of the worldwide detention system, Galindo addresses the violence that occurs within these spaces.

5.3.1 Confesión

'In performance art, everything is real action: the energy
explodes, reaches unexpected boundaries. The experience involves
my entire being and sometimes even the beings of the people present.'³⁹

– Regina José Galindo

In the same month of the same year, at exactly the same time as Schneider was in the process of constructing his cell cages in Australia, the Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo was preparing for a performance that would take place in Palma de Mallorca,

³⁸ Smee, 'Captive Audience', op.cit.

³⁹ Galindo cited in: Goldman, Francisco, 'Regina José Galindo', *BOMB Magazine*, No. 94, Winter 2006, <http://bombsite.com/issues/94/articles/2780>, accessed June 3rd 2010

the capital city of the island of Majorca off the coast of Spain, on 20th September 2007. Widely acclaimed for her performance art ever since she won the Golden Lion Award for best young artist at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005, Galindo has become recognized as an artist 'at the forefront of the new generation of performance art' and is considered 'one of the most subversive voices in contemporary art today'.⁴⁰ Using her body as the basis for her art, Galindo produced work that addresses various abuses of power, often testing the limits of endurance in her performances.

In her performance in Palma the artist subjected herself to a version of water-torture in an attempt to draw attention to the torture exercised on suspect bodies in the 'war on terror'. Commissioned by La Caja Blanca, a commercial gallery in Palma, Galindo's first performance on Spanish soil was staged in conjunction with an exhibition of videos and photographs of a range of the artist's previous performances. Whilst all of her works are informed by socio-political realities, the work in Spain in its engagement with global politics differed from the artist's earlier work that has been influenced by the historical and present-day violence in her native Guatemala.

She began performing in 1999, gaining attention with *Lo voy a gritar al viento* (*I'll shout it to the wind*), her first public performance in which she hung suspended from a building's arch in Guatemala City reading poems, tearing pages from a book and scattering them to the wind, commenting on women's voices going unheard in her country. Sexism and violence against women have informed many of her works since then, to the extent that the concern with the abuse of women can be seen to dominate Galindo's artistic practice. In *No perdemos nada con nacer* (*We lose nothing by being born*) the artist, naked and wrapped in transparent plastic, had herself dumped into a landfill in an attempt to address the regular discovery of discarded corpses in such sites. In two performances at the Venice Biennale in 2005, *Perra* (*Bitch*) and *(279) Golpes* (*279 Blows*), Galindo expressed the violent conditions in Guatemala by carving the word 'Perra' into her thigh and by self-inflicting two hundred and seventy nine lashes on her body, one for every woman murdered in Guatemala that year.

⁴⁰ La Caja Blanca, 'Regina José Galindo', http://lacajablanca.com/projects/projects_2007_reginajosegalindo.html, accessed June 3rd 2010

Through performances such as these Galindo responds to the injustices towards women in a country in which they are often not only murdered but also 'subjected to horrible forms of torture, cut into little pieces and decapitated'.⁴¹ In her best known performance, *¿Quién puede borrar las huellas? (Who Can Erase The Traces)* from 2003, Galindo walked barefoot from the Constitutional Court to the National Palace in Guatemala City whilst carrying a basin filled with human blood. As she repeatedly dipped her feet into the blood, Galindo created a trail of red footprints whilst she walked. Staged as a protest against the candidacy for President by José Efraín Ríos Montt whose military dictatorship in the 1980s was characterized by extensive torture and acts of genocide, Galindo's performance evoked the victims of the brutal military regimes of Guatemala's violent past.⁴²

Although works such as these specifically address the socio-political context of her country they can also be seen to speak to socio-political injustices and inequalities in a global context. Indeed, as Galindo creatively explores questions of corporeal presence and absence as well as the effects of power on the body her performances speak universally. This brief survey of some of her works further indicates that Galindo's artistic practice is not only consistent in its political references but also constant in its conceptual underpinnings. Whilst the performances vary in their demands on the artist and their psychological and physical intensity – some more violent, strenuous and hazardous than others – they are paralleled in Galindo's use and abuse of her own body as the medium for her art and resemble one another in their simplicity, directness and candor.

Moreover, Galindo's performances are characterized by the unpretentious and precise manner in which she delivers them. Reflecting on her artistic practice Galindo states that she is 'obsessed by reality and the power relationships driving, infiltrating and controlling our society', furthermore noting in this context that in order to create an artistic experience she believes that it is 'important that artists take risks, and try to

⁴¹ Galindo cited in: Goldman, op.cit.

⁴² For information and images of all of the aforementioned performances see the artist's webpage at: <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/>, accessed May 12th 2010

work with different forms, investigating, and exploring'.⁴³ With regard to the realization of her performances she explains that she experiences 'a certain amount of nervousness and anxiety before every performance' but that they have affected her differently: 'Every performance requires a different energy, and in each of them I have experienced distinct sensations and thoughts.'⁴⁴

As is common in the genre, Galindo documents her performances through photography and video and thus – whilst photographic and video documentation do not offer the same experience and immediacy as watching a live performance – her performances remain accessible to audiences beyond the time-frame and geographic locations in which they were staged. Since Galindo's performances have been recorded by a diverse range of hired photographers and camerapersons, often laymen rather than professionals, many of the photographs and videos that document her performances do not have the look of professional camera work. On the contrary, the documentation is often grainy and lacks the glossy finish that characterizes the documentation of other performance artists. It could thus be argued that Galindo stages her performances with more of a concern for live audiences than for recording devices and the formats through which her work is preserved and circulated. This likewise suggests that the artist prioritizes a focus on content over concerns regarding the performances' aesthetics.

In her artistic practice Galindo evidently draws on the legacy of feminist body art from the 1960s onwards both in terms of thematic resemblances and formal similarities. That much of her work is informed by her predecessors in the world of body-based art is manifested in the parallels with Latin American performance artists Ana Mendieta and María Evelia Marmolejo, both of whom also utilized bodily fluids and nudity in their works. Likewise, Galindo's acts of self-mutilation, such as in *Perra*, suggest parallels with the self-inflicted injuring of Marina Abramovic and Gina Pane, specifically with Abramovic's *Lips of Thomas* (1975) in which the artist, using a razor blade, carved a pentagram on to her stomach and equally with Pane's *Sentimental*

⁴³ Galindo cited in: Agnello, Chiara, 'Interview with Regina José Galindo' in: Castro, Jota (ed.), *Phobia Paper*, A publication for The Fear Society, Pabellón de la Urgencia, 53rd Venice Biennale, Murcia Cultural S.A., (2009), IX

⁴⁴ Galindo cited in: Goldman, op.cit.

action (1973) in which Pane stuck thorns from a rose into her arm and then cut her arm to cause bleeding.⁴⁵

Galindo acknowledges the similarities with and references to other artists' works and the ways in which her predecessors explored their physical limits. 'Nobody can work totally out of historical context, of what has happened, and what's already been made', she asserts and concedes that 'some specific pieces were made with absolute consciousness of the fact that they had already been tackled by these artists previously, but with a new approach, in my own way'.⁴⁶ Indeed, Galindo's work differs from that of earlier performance artists in its consistent focus on the political circumstances to which her performances refer and also in terms of being less narcissistic and autobiographical. Following in the tradition of performance artists whose practice helped to establish the conventions of the genre – symbolic actions, mortification of the flesh and endurance – Galindo has emerged as a 'fearless performer' who, as one critic notes, is 'fierce, intense and direct' and who by making her art 'so viscerally about current political realities' manages to endow her predecessors' gestures 'with renewed relevance and urgency'.⁴⁷

In consideration of her work it becomes apparent that Galindo lends her body to her performances in ways that turn her body into a site of resistance. A former advertising copy editor, Galindo scales down her ideas to create visual metaphors that are straightforward and easily deciphered. Her artistic practice moreover displays a tendency to forego the use of elaborate props or a complex staging of her performances. In line with her previous works, these inclinations were also evident in her performance in Palma.

⁴⁵ For detailed information about these artists and their works see for example: Fajardo-Hill, Cecilia, 'Maria Evelia Marmolejo's Political Body', *ArtNexus*, (85: June 2012) and Grosenick, Uta, *Women Artists: In the 20th and 21st Century*, (Cologne: Taschen, 2001) 18-23 for Abramovic, 342-347 for Mendieta, and 426-431 for Pane

⁴⁶ Galindo cited in: Agnello, op.cit., IX

⁴⁷ Wolin, Joseph, 'Art Review – Regina José Galindo', *Time Out New York*, (734: October 2009), 20

5.3.2 Enacting Torture

For her commission by La Caja Blanca Galindo conceptualized her performance *Confesión (Confession)* based on CIA documents that provide instructions for different torture techniques. Aware of reports in the international media that the United States had been using Palma as a transit point through which terror suspects were passing in the context of ‘rendering’, the outsourcing of interrogation and torture, Galindo planned to enact her own version of water-torture with the help of a collaborator who would take on the role of torturer. To this end she hired a Spanish nightclub bouncer who would subject her to the practice. The performance took place on Palma’s ‘Nit de l’Art’ (Night of Art), an established annual event in the city’s cultural calendar, the island’s most important art event and thus the highlight of the year for art lovers. On this night museums, galleries and artist studios stay open until midnight and numerous exhibitions are inaugurated.

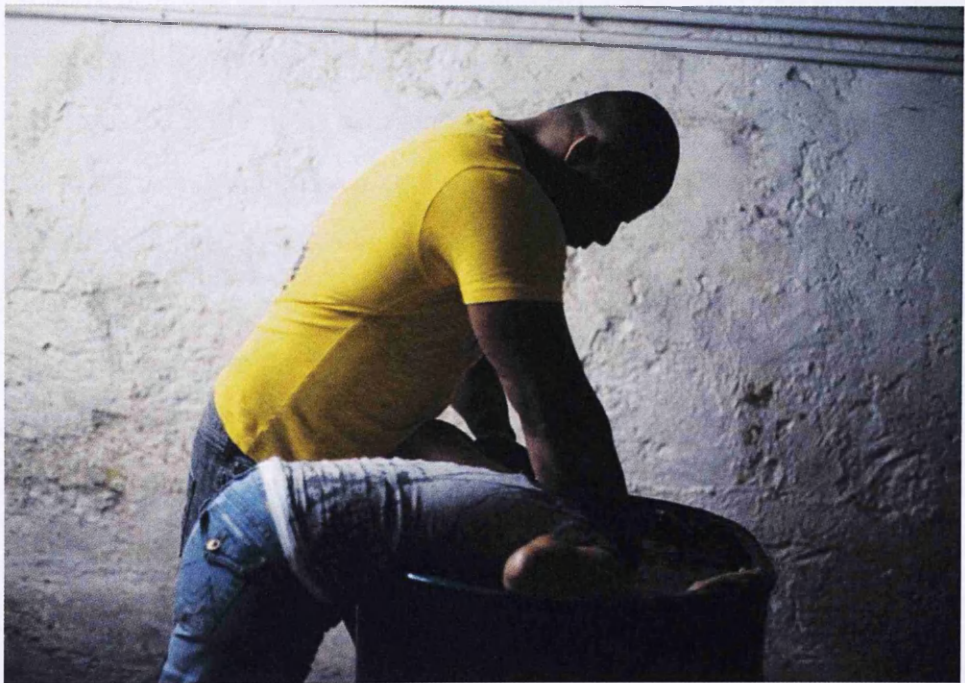
The gallery announced the performance a few days in advance, publicizing its date but neither its exact time or location, nor its subject, i.e. what it was about and what form it would take. Rather, people who were interested to attend the performance were asked to RSVP and to leave a contact phone number. A few hours before the event the gallery contacted all those who had indicated their interest to see the performance and revealed its time and location. What viewers would witness when they attended the performance, however, remained undisclosed.⁴⁸

The performance took place in a ‘semi sótano’, a semi-basement with small windows through which the audience could look into the space from the street outside and could moreover be observed on a large screen in the building’s patio. The performance was documented in photographs and video, both of which have since been exhibited several times, for instance at MoMA PS1 in New York in 2008; Modern Art Oxford in 2009; the European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück, Germany in 2009; Rollo Contemporary Art in London in 2010 and Molaa in Long Beach, California in

⁴⁸ E-mail exchange with Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, Co-Director of La Caja Blanca, February-March 2010

2012.⁴⁹ The gallery owners estimated that the live performance was attended by 'approximately 150 to 200 people'.⁵⁰

The performance began without a formal introduction when the audience suddenly saw two people appear in the door frame of the semi-basement, a tall and muscular male pulling behind him the small and slight artist into the dim space. The room was empty except for a large barrel that was filled with water towards which the bouncer dragged Galindo and immediately began forcing her head into the water. After a few seconds he pulled her head out but kept a tight grip on the back of her neck whilst she gasped for air. As he repeatedly pushed her forward and downward towards the surface of the water, Galindo tried to push back but her efforts were to no avail.



[Figure 13: the bouncer forces the artist's head under water]⁵¹

After the bouncer had repeated the cycle of submerging and pulling her head out again for a total of nine times, he tossed the artist into the corner of the room where she collapsed when she hit the concrete floor. The voluntary perpetrator and his victim did

⁴⁹ The video of the performance can be seen here: VideoArtWorld, 'Regina José Galindo – Confesión', http://www.videoartworld.com/video_295.html, accessed June 1st 2010

⁵⁰ E-mail exchange with Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, op.cit.

⁵¹ Image source: Galindo, Regina José, Confesión, <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com/confesion>, accessed May 12th 2010

not speak a single word to one another throughout their violent interaction, rather the only sounds that could be heard were those of Galindo whimpering, coughing and gasping for air, the splatter of water from the barrel, and the thudding sound of her body hitting the hard floor. Even as the performance was brief and staged, lasting less than three minutes overall, the physical toll on the artist was evident.

Fleeting and violent, the performance was choreographed by the artist to appear as realistic as possible even as there were some security measures in place. Galindo had briefed the bouncer to immerse her head seven times for seven seconds and had asked him not to be gentle with her: 'This is the first time that I am doing a performance where the person leading the action is not me', she had told him, 'so I depend on you to do this properly or it will be useless'.⁵² She had furthermore given him a code that she would use to signal if she could not cope anymore. Yet, despite these instructions the performance took on a life of its own since the voluntary perpetrator became slightly more eager in his role than had been agreed: not only did he disregard the prearranged stop signal and continued to force her head into the barrel of water an additional two times, he moreover sent the artist flying across the room on his own initiative.⁵³

This deviation from the script, although unbeknown to the audience, highlights that the artist relinquished control over the performance, not only theoretically but also practically, as she does in fact lose all control and finds herself entirely at her captor's mercy. Both the violence and Galindo's powerlessness are thus genuine and real. It is for this reason that the performance leaves little doubt as to the brutal nature of water-torture. Indeed, it could be argued that Galindo's enactment lays the practice bare in a manner that not only raises serious doubts about the notion that it does not constitute torture but makes such a conception all but impossible.

Water-torture as a technique to punish, produce confessions or to extract information dates back as far as the Spanish Inquisition and encompasses a range of different methods yet all variations revolve around the utilization of water to induce the sensation of drowning. The effects of water-torture tend to set in within seconds and are

⁵² Galindo cited in: E-mail exchange with Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, op.cit.

⁵³ Ibid.

experienced as both a psychological and a physical reaction, the former related to the panic that arises in response to the fear of drowning and the latter in the form of coughing and choking, eventually leading to more severe effects such as collapsing lungs, rapid heartbeat and death as a result of asphyxiation. The version of water-torture that Galindo visualizes represents a version that most closely corresponds with what is known in Latin American countries as the 'submarine', a practice in which the legs and hands are tied together and subjects are blindfolded or hooded before the head is submerged until water begins to enter the lungs.⁵⁴

The method of torture visualized by Galindo thus differs from water-boarding as exercised in the 'war on terror', a more refined technique in which the subject is strapped to an inclined board with the head positioned lower than the rest of the body whilst the face is covered with a cloth or plastic film before water is poured upon it, causing the gag reflex to set in as soon as water begins to enter the breathing passage. Despite such differences, Dr. Allen Keller, the director of the Bellevue/N.Y.U. Program for Survivors of Torture, firmly locates all near-drowning techniques in the realm of torture, noting that as the subject 'gags and chokes the terror of imminent death is pervasive' and that there 'is a real risk of death from actually drowning or suffering a heart attack or damage to the lungs from inhalation of water'.⁵⁵

Moreover, whilst the specific methods may vary all versions of water-torture tend to have debilitating and long-lasting psychological effects even as those subjected to it usually do not sustain permanent physical injuries. In fact, the psychological injury can be as severe and as difficult to manage as physical injuries and those who have been subjected to water-torture report experiencing a number of trauma symptoms, such as feelings of fear and insecurity, worthlessness, shame, guilt, worthlessness, anxiety, depression and hopelessness.⁵⁶

Denying the severity of its long-term effects, the Bush administration long maintained that water-boarding did not constitute torture but rather defended and

⁵⁴ Correa, Cristián, 'Waterboarding Prisoners and Justifying Torture: Lessons for the U.S. from the Chilean Experience', *Human Rights Brief*, (14: 2: Winter 2007), 22

⁵⁵ Keller cited in: Akers, Becky, 'Top-level Torture', *The New American*, June 8th 2008, <http://www.the.newamerican.com/usnews/constitution/item/7610-top-level-torture>, accessed March 14th 2011

⁵⁶ Correa, op.cit., 22

justified its use in the context of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’, asserting that it represented an effective means of obtaining actionable intelligence from terrorist suspects. In accordance with this view Vice President Dick Cheney remained adamant that water-boarding constituted an appropriate interrogation method even after the coercive interrogation program that the administration had approved for use by the CIA against Al-Qaeda suspects had been outlawed by Congress in 2008.⁵⁷

Critics of this viewpoint, however, have argued that water-boarding constitutes torture and is thus unlawful under international law, specifically as outlined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and in the United Nation’s Convention Against Torture of 1984, the latter defining torture as ‘any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person’ whether for the purpose of obtaining information or a confession, or as a punishment for an act an individual has committed or is suspected of having committed.⁵⁸ One critic, the British-American journalist Christopher Hitchens, who – much like Galindo – voluntarily subjected himself to the torture method unequivocally asserted that water-boarding did not *simulate* the sensation of drowning but that those subjected to it *are* actually drowning and he consequently forcefully summarized his verdict on the debate as to whether or not it constitutes torture in the headline of his article for *Vanity Fair*, declaring that it undoubtedly did.⁵⁹

Yet driven by the desire to acquire intelligence that would help to prevent future attacks and notwithstanding the fact that violent interrogation techniques also lead to the acquisition of unreliable information – in essence working from the premise that, as Pentagon consultant John Arquilla noted, the ‘war on terror’ is ‘a war in which

⁵⁷ See for instance: Pilkington, Ed, “I think we’ve done pretty well.” Dick Cheney has no regrets about eight years in office’, *The Guardian*, December 17th 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/17/dick-cheney-interview-guantanamo-waterboarding>, accessed March 6th 2010

⁵⁸ Greenberg, Karen (ed.), *The Torture Debate in America*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 364

⁵⁹ Hitchens underwent water-boarding in a controlled environment at the hands of Special Forces in the context of the SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) program that trains military personnel to resist torture, for a video of Hitchens’ water-boarding see: <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2012/06/christopher-hitchens-waterboarding-video-original-eric-holder> and for his article see: Hitchens, Christopher, ‘Believe Me, It’s Torture’, *Vanity Fair*, August 2008, <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/08/hitchens200808>, accessed January 2nd 2010

intelligence is everything⁶⁰ – the Bush administration made the extraction of information from suspects a top priority from the beginning of the war effort.

The endeavour to redefine torture by means of narrowing its definition with the help of legal memoranda drafted by the Department of Justice led to the authorization of coercive interrogation techniques that would soon become an element of standard interrogation procedures in places such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib as well as in 'black sites', i.e. secret prisons operated by the CIA outside of American legal jurisdiction, all over the world. In order to transport suspected terrorists from Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations to these military prisons as well as into the custody of other states for interrogation – including Egypt, Jordan and Syria – the United States made use of the practice of 'rendition' whereby suspects are transferred from one country to another 'by means that bypass all judicial and administrative due process', a practice that has largely been carried out under the auspices of the CIA and 'with the collaboration, complicity or acquiescence of other governments'.⁶¹

Whilst the scope of the practice remains difficult to determine due to the secrecy surrounding the 'rendition' programme, it has been estimated that by 2005 hundreds of suspects had been rendered to prisons in the Middle East, and that between 2001 and 2006 over one thousand CIA 'rendition flights' had passed over European territory, *inter alia* crossing the air space and using airports on British, Irish, German, Polish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish soil.⁶² It is the media coverage of a 2006 investigation of the European Parliament into CIA activities in Europe⁶³ that revealed information about 'rendition flights' landing in Mallorca and the Canary Islands to which Galindo reacts in her site-specific performance in Palma. Conceptualized against this background Galindo's performance in Palma thus clearly speaks to the Spanish state's indirect facilitation of what amounts to transfers to torture.

⁶⁰ Arquilla cited in: Hersh, Seymour, *Chain of Command – The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 2

⁶¹ Amnesty International, 'USA: Below the radar: Secret flights to torture and "disappearance"', April 4th 2006, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/051/2006>, accessed June 4th 2010

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ European Parliament, 'Press Release – CIA activities in Europe', February 14th 2007, <http://www.europa.eu/parl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20070209IPR02947&language=EN>, accessed June 5th 2011

5.3.3 Bearing Witness to Torture

As Galindo resorts to her own body and its capacity to endure pain for her commentary on the abuse of suspect bodies in the 'war on terror', she exposes her audience to a violent act in her artistic response. In visualizing torture in such an explicit and graphic way she makes an aspect of the brutality of the 'war on terror' starkly visible in a performance that – in marked contrast to Schneider's work – is characterized by the direct embodiment of the figure of the suspect. Likewise, as Galindo moreover visualizes not only the torture itself but also the torturer, i.e. the source of the violence, her work differs from those of the previously discussed artists in its direct illustration of both the violence and its origin. Yet, in her attempt to capture a likeness of water-torture in such a radical and direct way, she confronts, challenges and provokes the audience in the pursuit of her art. Clearly, Galindo's performance is not for the faint-hearted: to observe Galindo's struggle and her suffering – above all evident in the way in which she fiercely tries to resist her tormentor's power over her and also in the harrowing sound of her desperately gasping for air – is disturbing and sickening.

Since there is nothing oblique about the performance and since the struggle between the artist and the torturer occurs in the presence of the audience, Galindo forces her audience not only into the uncomfortable position of witnesses to violence but also coerces them into a voyeuristic engagement with the events before their eyes. The French-American artist and critic Rachel Rosenthal notes in this context that in performance art that entails acts of violence, whether self-inflicted or exercised on the artist's body by another, the audience 'is forced to endure the artist's plight empathetically' and that it is usually the audience who "gives up" before the artist'.⁶⁴

The latter observation in particular appears to be applicable to Galindo's performance in Palma as, on the whole, the audience reacted negatively to the display of violence to which they found themselves exposed: the Co-Director of the gallery that commissioned Galindo's performance, Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, observed not only surprise and shock but also disgust in the live audience when the performance started.

⁶⁴ Rosenthal, Rachel, 'Performance Notes: Taboo Subjects: Performance and the Masochist Tradition', *High Performance*, (4: Winter 1981-1982), 24

Moreover, a number of people immediately walked out in anger. Those who stayed, on the other hand, appeared to have their attention entirely concentrated on the violence and tension emerged in the audience: 'tensions mounted, and everyone seemed to become hypnotized by what was going on'.⁶⁵

After the brief performance had ended, when the audience slowly realized that nothing else was going to take place, a sense of anger developed that the performance had been so short-lived and members of the audience complained about the violent nature of the work. The criticism, both at the event itself and in complaints received by the gallery in the weeks following the performance, was uniformly directed at the artist, whilst neither the gallery nor the volunteer torturer were criticized for their facilitation of and participation in the work. The fact that members of the audience directed their criticism exclusively at the artist can be seen to indicate that they identified Galindo as the person in charge of the performance. Moreover, Galindo appears to have been perceived as responsible not only for the performance but also as the person to blame for the irritation and anger that the performance produced in the audience. This would then also appear to signal that in the minds of audience members the artist represented the person who bore responsibility for the performance, its content, the way in which the audience was situated in relation to the work, and, by extension, the way it made the audience react and feel, both during the performance and afterwards.

Audience members *inter alia* articulated that 'they were utterly disgusted by an artist who chose to mutilate herself in that way' and that they felt that Galindo had aimed to provoke the public.⁶⁶ Whether or to what extent the audience felt empathy for the artist's suffering remains difficult to determine against such a backlash of opinion and the alienating and unsettling characteristics of the performance. Whilst the irritation and anger on the part of the audience at least in part likely stemmed from a sense of having been tricked into attending a performance that they might not have chosen to attend had they been aware of the performance's theme and content in advance, the negative sentiments of the audience might also have stemmed from

⁶⁵ E-mail exchange with Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, op.cit.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

resentment due to having been brought into a situation in which the audience found itself situated as eye-witnesses exposed to graphic violence. Additionally, some members of the audience might also have been frustrated by a sense of helplessness and lack of agency due to their inability to intervene in the events before their eyes.

Considering that they advertised the performance in such a clandestine manner it would appear that Galindo and the directors of the gallery who organized the performance took into consideration the possibility that audiences might not want to attend and witness a violent performance. Both the element of surprise and shock and the prospect of potentially offending viewers thus clearly appear to have been factored into the artistic endeavour.

Yet, it would not appear that the desire to shock, offend or alienate the audience constituted a central concern of Galindo's. Rather, her artistic discourse is primarily motivated by her desire to translate political subject matters that occupy her thinking into works of art and as such she can be seen to externalize through her works the pain and enragement she feels as a result of her knowledge about suffering and injustice in the world. Galindo has explicitly stated that everything she does she does for herself even as, in doing so, she also endeavours to channel her pain and energy in order 'to transform it into something more collective'.⁶⁷

Thus, her artistic practice can be seen to function both as a cathartic release and as a means of sharing and spreading knowledge of socio-political violence. Markedly, a gendered undertone of the performance – whilst it would undoubtedly suggest itself given that the constellation of protagonists in the performance quite clearly gives rise to associations with male domination and female victimization – does arguably not represent a core consideration in Galindo's conceptualization of the piece. Rather, *Confesión* can be seen to speak to the relationship between oppressor and oppressed regardless of gender, and thus be more generally conceived in terms of one human being dominating another and in terms of power and lack thereof.

⁶⁷ Galindo cited in: Goldman, op.cit.



[Figure 14: the artist collapses on the floor at the end of the performance]⁶⁸

With regard to anger of the audience stemming from the impossibility to intervene whilst Galindo is tortured, the feeling of being incapacitated to act can only arise in the context of a live performance such as this one, i.e. one in which the liveness of the performance does not allow for distanced perception *whilst* the inaccessibility of the performance space eliminates the possibility to encroach upon the violent interaction. The audience cannot prevent or end Galindo's suffering, they are literally immobilized in that they can only witness it and must do so without being able to interfere despite their proximity to the artist, both spatially and temporally. It is this dimension of live performance that crystallizes the disparity between immediate experience of the event vis-à-vis the encounter with documentation of the artwork, the latter neither carrying the same intensity and authenticity as the former, nor giving rise to the predicament of being present but unable to take action. Looking at the photographs or watching the video of the performance, as unsettling as that can also be, can thus not match the experience of seeing the performance in the flesh.

Considering that Galindo denies her audience the capacity to act, her performance could not differ more from Bilal's performance *Domestic Tension* in which spectators are turned into protagonists in their own right as they are transformed

⁶⁸ Image source: image courtesy of La Caja Blanca, photograph by Julian Stallabrass

into viewer-participants and central to the work's realization.⁶⁹ Whilst Bilal interacts with the viewer-participants from a distance via the screen, without sound and only grainy vision of the paintballs impacting in his performance space, Galindo does neither afford her audience the comfort of distance to her suffering nor allow for her plight to be perceived in a mono-sensual manner, instead rendering the violation that she is experiencing both clearly visible *and* audible. This, it could be argued, makes her performance much more difficult to observe than Bilal's: in *Domestic Tension* the artist is neither performing an experience as acute and life-threatening as Galindo does in hers nor does he expose his viewers to a clearly discernible multi-sensual enactment.

Moreover, Bilal's performance is also less confrontational as audience engagement in his work is not only enabled but also has an apparent playful element to it. Thus, even as both artists are similarly putting themselves into the place of the figures that they are referencing, the civilian and the suspect respectively, their performances differ markedly. In one notable way, however, the two performances bear a striking similarity, namely in the ways in which they both turn the audience into accomplices. Indeed, the anger of Galindo's audience might not only have arisen from having been tricked into viewing the performance, from having been caught unprepared with regard to its violent content, and from the impossibility to intervene but in part might also have been a response to a sense of indictment in what has taken place before their eyes. It is in this context that the title of Galindo's performance reveals itself as highly ambiguous as the notion of confession appears diversely applicable. The notion of a confession arguably immediately gives rise to associations with torture and thus also with the figure of the suspect – who is tortured so as to be made to confess.⁷⁰

In Galindo's performance, however, the idea of confession can moreover be seen to be applicable not only to the torturer but also to the audience. This is because the volunteer torturer can be perceived to represent a confession in the sense that he can be seen not only to symbolize the audience – he is a Spaniard and an average civilian just like them – but also the Spanish nation-state as a whole. His agreement to

⁶⁹ Cf. discussion of Bilal's performance in Chapter 4, especially 4.3.3 and 4.3.4, 135-145

⁷⁰ See the United Nation's Convention Against Torture and its definition of torture in: Greenberg, *op.cit.*, 361-376

participate in a violent act thus speaks both to how easily individuals can be enticed to engage in violence and to Spain's role in the facilitation of torture.

The audience, on the other hand, can be seen to be complicit, and hence to be guilty of allowing such violence as the torturing of suspect bodies in the 'war on terror' to occur and to continue, turning away, looking on, and remaining passive and indifferent. Pointing to a lack of concern with the human rights abuses that Galindo visualizes and the audience's own state's aiding and abetting in the transfer of suspect bodies does not appear unreasonable in view of the fact that Mallorca's residents on the whole remained 'perfectly indifferent' and chose to 'look the other way' when news of Spain's role in rendition flights made headlines in 2006.⁷¹

Thus, having generated in her audience a sense of anger on numerous accounts, Galindo's violent performance evidently has a provocative and accusatory element to it. Yet, it is precisely because Galindo's performance appears uncompromising and radical in its conceptualization as the work is confrontational in both its content and the manner of its staging that the conduct of the artist can be called into question on ethical grounds. Indeed, her viewers might not only have felt irritated and angered but might also have felt violated by the performance, and by extension, by the artist – to whom they, as their reactions indicate, allocate responsibility for the performance's content, the way in which it was staged and the way in which they as viewers were incorporated. In view of the clandestine manner in which Galindo went about attracting viewers to her performance, capitalizing on audience members curiosity and interest to attend a performance on Palma's 'Night of Art' without knowing what the performance would be about, it appears that some audience members might have felt deceived and taken advantage of when they realized that they had been tricked into observing graphic violence.

Considering that Galindo further to managing to attract viewers to her performance in a clandestine manner then confronted her audience with a display of a very violent interaction right before their eyes, the artist can be seen to have problematically positioned her viewers in relation to her work as the graphic and

⁷¹ E-mail exchange with Eva Shakouri Torreadrado, op.cit.

violent content overwhelmed the audience. Placing her audience in a position in which they are made to observe violence without having chosen to do so whilst furthermore giving them very little space and time to react and act can be seen to constitute a violation of viewers in the sense that the artist has created a situation in which the audience is not only unprepared and unconsenting but also deprived of agency in the context of which feelings of paralysis and powerlessness can arise. That circumstances such as these carry the potential to upset, offend and agitate viewers and make them feel uneasy and unsure about how to respond is not surprising as they give rise to questions regarding the ethics surrounding the spectatorship of violence and the pain and suffering that it effects.⁷²

Moreover, the way in which Galindo positions her audience and the way in which she stages her presentation of the suspect's experience in an explicit manner can be seen to not only have held the potential to agitate and distress but also to shock, disturb or even traumatize viewers. Producing alienation and incomprehension, Galindo's drastic approach to representing contemporary violence demonstrates that she does not shy away from putting her own physical and psychological health at stake. Yet, whilst she might not be hesitant to jeopardize her own health, it is also worth considering that in exposing her audience to the violent encounter that she stages in their presence Galindo might potentially also have endangered her viewers' mental health. As observing the artist physically struggling against her captor, hearing her coughing and gasping for air, and recognizing her helplessness and agony and the brutality with which she is treated by her torturer is emotionally disturbing, Galindo's violent performance appears to represent the kind of violent act that has the potential to be trauma inducing not only for the artist but also for everyone else present.

According to literature on the topic, the experience of a traumatic event generally denotes a situation in which the victim feels that 'they were helpless in their enforced encounter with death, violence and brutality' and accordingly trauma stems from an experience of violence that represents 'a threat to those people involved, their

⁷² Cf. Chapter 2.4, 55-58

lives and integrity'.⁷³ Defined as 'the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena', trauma thus has a modifying power that transforms individuals.⁷⁴ Whilst trauma may result from a single violent event, it may also stem from a sustained experience of violence. Moreover, trauma may not only occur in individuals who have experienced physical or psychological violence themselves but may also occur in individuals who have perpetrated violence against others and in individuals who have witnessed it.⁷⁵ It thus becomes clear that trauma-inducing violence can intimately affect a range of individuals.

It is also in this context that it becomes apparent that in staging her performance in the manner that she did Galindo can not only be seen to have problematically positioned her audience and endangered their mental health, but that the artist has also problematically situated and endangered the mental health of her collaborator in the performance. Similarly to the way in which she tricked her audience into attending and witnessing her performance, Galindo can be seen to have tricked the bouncer into participating in the work. Whilst the bouncer was aware of the performance's content and the role that he was asked to take on, and whilst he had agreed to participate in the performance and to enact the violence on the artist, he arguably could not have foreseen the exact and specific dynamics that the performance would take on as the artist had merely told him what she wanted him to do but had not rehearsed the violent interaction with him prior to the performance. In this sense the violent interaction in which the bouncer agreed to participate might have been overwhelming for and detrimental to him, too, as he, not unlike the audience, can be seen to have also been unprepared for the violent enactment.

Since it appears that the bouncer got somewhat lost in the performance – not only disregarding the prearranged stop signal but also ending the violent interaction by throwing the artist across the room – it is possible that the performance and his conduct

⁷³ Edkins, Jenny, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3

⁷⁴ Caruth, Cathy, 'Traumatic Awakenings' in: De Vries, Hent and Samuel Weber (eds.), *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 208

⁷⁵ Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, op.cit., 4

in it raised unsettling questions for the volunteer torturer. He might have found himself confronted – and possibly surprised – not only by his own capacity for violence but also by questions regarding the reasons underlying his willingness to enact the violence, his eagerness during the performance, his possible enjoyment of inflicting violence, and his capacity for or lack of self-control. Indeed, it appears that the performance and his participation and role in it did not leave the bouncer untouched but rather that they had a lasting impact on him. This is evidenced in the fact that Galindo later stated that it was the volunteer torturer ‘who, in the end, was the most affected by the work’.⁷⁶

However, the circumstance that she might also be putting the psychological health of her audience and that of her collaborator in the performance at risk as she problematically situates them in the context of her work appears to either not have been considered by the artist, or to have been accepted as a risk she felt worth taking in her pursuit to visualize torture as starkly as possible. The latter might in fact constitute the more likely scenario in view of Galindo’s objective of externalizing and sharing her knowledge and pain. Since she firmly believes that works of art ‘can act as a detonator, a starting point for discussion and reflection on certain events’⁷⁷ and since she hopes that her work will prompt contemplation and debate about the violence exercised on suspect bodies Galindo appears willing to both use and abuse her own body and to exploit her audience and performance collaborator in confronting, offending, and harming them. Certainly, the boldness with which Galindo not only lends her own body to a direct visualization of the suspect’s experience but also situates the audience and the bouncer in the context of her performance can in itself be seen to be radical, uncompromising and ruthless and thus can be seen to constitute a further basis on which the performance was deemed provocative and offensive.

Shocking and offending the audience – whilst not a novel by-product in the realm of art, whether intended by the artist or not⁷⁸ – can moreover be seen as

⁷⁶ Galindo cited in: Agnello, op.cit., IX

⁷⁷ Ibid., IV

⁷⁸ For instance, British painter Chris Ofili’s *The Holy Virgin Mary* portraying the Virgin Mary surrounded by elephant dung and pornographic images of female genitalia; Australian artist Ivan

problematic in terms of risking the audience's disengagement and rejection of the work and undermining the audience's ability for reflection. In view of the audience's disapproving reaction to such a stark confrontation with a political reality it would appear that Galindo did not evoke empathy for her suffering. Likewise, it remains uncertain whether or to what extent the audience was able to contemplate the political context of the work during the performance – due not only to the violent and graphic representation that did not allow for the audience's attention to drift from the artist's suffering but also due to its short duration. Arguably, both a sense of empathy and reflection on the work's content would have had a greater chance to develop had the performance been more durational. In the form that it was presented the work ultimately provided too little time to move beyond the state of shock and mesmerization that the violent nature of the performance produced.

Since Galindo's artistic strategy of surprising and shocking her audience with graphic content in such an intense and short-lived performance ran the risk of shutting down the audience's ability to process the content during the event itself, it would appear that the artist relied heavily on the audience to reflect on the work and its implications post factum. Thus, contemplation of their relationship with the suffering body that was exposed to their view can only occur when the impression gained from the encounter with the work outlasts the event itself. Likewise, reflection on why the artist voluntarily suffered at the hands of a tormentor, what political circumstances and what bodies she is referencing can take place when the impact of the performance goes beyond the time and space in which the audience was witnessing the violence to which Galindo submitted herself.

Undoubtedly, such reliance on the audience's later contemplation can be seen as problematic as it is not guaranteed. However, Galindo's performance stood a good chance to induce belated consideration precisely because the performance was unforgettable due to not only visualizing a reality that is rarely represented in such graphic detail but also due to the performance being memorable specifically because it

Durrant's dumping of a freshly slaughtered cow in front of the National Gallery in Victoria in 1975; and the *Marat/Sade* play staged in 2011 by the Royal Shakespeare Company constitute cases in point with regard to outraged audiences.

was shocking and disturbing. The extreme to which she goes in order to call attention to the violence exercised on suspect bodies in the 'war on terror', literally having herself physically silenced in order to create a voice for them, reveals Galindo as a resolute and determined performer who goes to great lengths in her quest to communicate the pain of others.

5.4 Bestowing Visibility on Detention and Torture

In their respective works both Schneider and Galindo address the experience of suspect bodies in the current geopolitical circumstances and both do so in ways that render the figure of the suspect starkly visible by bringing it into view. In visualizing geopolitical realities that are largely hidden and concealed yet inevitably present in a world characterized by a global network of detention centres, the artists draw critical attention to practices of incarceration and the violence that occurs within such spaces. Indeed, their works can be seen to supplement each other as the architecture that Schneider references is inextricably linked to the human rights violations that Galindo addresses as it is the former that enables the latter. Thus, Schneider's *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* and Galindo's *Confesión* point to what happens when 'endless war is taken to justify endless incarcerations'.⁷⁹ Both Schneider and Galindo transplant the realities to which they refer by presenting them in the midst of Western society and similarly catch their respective audiences off guard. Schneider does so in terms of location as he exhibits his work in the public space of the beach and Galindo in terms of content by keeping the performance's subject matter undisclosed. In this way both artists have opted for artistic strategies that result in them confronting their audiences with socio-political commentary on pressing political issues in encounters with art that the audiences were neither seeking nor prepared for.

Moreover, in both artworks audiences are made to feel uncomfortable: Schneider creates an element of discomfort as visitors to the installation not only find themselves on display and subjected to scrutiny but also entrapped in the cells in their

⁷⁹ Sontag, Susan, 'Regarding the torture of others', *The New York Times*, May 23rd 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html?src=pm>, accessed January 12th 2010

efforts to navigate a way out whilst Galindo unnerves her audience with her graphic display of the imbalance of power that materializes when brutality is exercised by one person over another. Galindo's audience can be seen as similarly entrapped, immobilized in a trance-like state in the face of the aggression before them and in a loss of agency in terms of an ability to intervene. Equally, audiences can choose to engage with the works and their subject matter or decide to ignore or reject them. With regards to *Confesión* the choice is one of staying or leaving whereas *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* requires audiences to decide whether or not they want to step inside and experience the structure.

Whilst Schneider's installation and Galindo's performance thus have much in common – in thematic focus and conceptual approach – the two works clearly differ in other aspects. In Schneider's installation beachgoers could spend as much time as they wished throughout the weeks in which the cell structure was installed on the beach which meant that visitors had ample time to experience the work and to contemplate its connotations. Galindo, on the other hand, not only gave her audience a very limited time to experience her performance due to its extreme brevity but also little opportunity to contemplate the work due to surprising and captivating viewers with her radical action. Whilst there is plenty of scope for it in Schneider's work, there is neither room for habituation nor for imagination in Galindo's shocking, fleeting and graphic performance.

Galindo's *Confesión* is fundamentally embodied by the two performers – the tortured and the torturer – whose presence fills the space in which they are enacting the violence. Schneider's *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells* in contrast presents a disembodied space in which the bodies that he references remain unnamed and unvisualized, yet even as there are no visible traces of their presence they haunt the space as Schneider's cage structure screams loudly of their existence. However, the cell cages on the beach are soon transformed as the structure comes to life when visitors begin to roam and populate it, thus turning that which is only ghostly present into bodily substitutes of the suspect bodies. As the visitors themselves become internees they bestow presence and

visibility on the countless and unknown incarcerated suspects that remain largely hidden from public view.

This is not only true for suspect bodies in the ‘war on terror’ but also for a wide range of other individuals whom Schneider also references – such as migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees – who have increasingly become subject to ever more rigorous ‘policing and administrative action’ that have emerged in Western nations as the domestic counterpart to the ‘real war’ in the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸⁰ Thus, Schneider references not only military prisons but also other types of holding centres in a political climate in which such prominent internment facilities as those at Guantanamo Bay merely represent the tip of the iceberg of contemporary detention practices that are implemented in order to deal with terror suspects and to manage migrant and refugee flows.

Indeed, even as prisons such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib have gained public attention they undoubtedly remain rare access points to the global detention system. Rather than anomalies, they represent islands ‘in a global penal archipelago’ in and across which suspect bodies are detained, secretly transferred, interrogated and tortured.⁸¹ The existence of officially undisclosed facilities such as a detention facility at Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan⁸² and secret facilities elsewhere in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in Pakistan, Jordan and on United States’ warships at sea⁸³ indicates that undoubtedly much of what happens to suspect bodies worldwide remains unseen and unknown. Furthermore, not only the locations of detention facilities but also much of what materializes in these locales remains steeped in secrecy.

In presenting reminders of the state of exception, the erosion of law and human rights violations to Western audiences both artworks speak to the ways in which control and domination are implemented and exercised in a quest to defend Western values and

⁸⁰ Shaw, *op.cit.*, 78

⁸¹ Kaplan, Amy ‘Where is Guantanamo?’, *American Quarterly*, (57: 3: September 2005), 831

⁸² See for instance: Gebauer, Matthias, ‘Prisoner Abuse Continues at Bagram Prison in Afghanistan’, *Der Spiegel*, September 21st 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,650242,00.html>, accessed September 23rd 2010

⁸³ See: Pearlstein, Deborah, ‘Ending Secret Detentions’, Report for Human Rights First, June 2004, http://secure.humanrightsfirst.org/us_law/PDF/EndingSecretDetentions_web.pdf, accessed March 3rd 2010, 4

to combat the security threat posed by terrorism. Thus, *Bondi Beach*, *21 Beach Cells* and *Confesión* highlight the lengths to which Western democracies are willing to go in their attempt to restore order in the international system. Specifically, Schneider's and Galindo's works not only strive to afford recognition of contemporary detention and torture, but also strive to promote debate about the experiences of suspect bodies in the 'war on terror' and of the effects that detention and torture have upon those subjected to such circumstances. In showing what it means to become a suspect body and by enabling audiences to acquire a sense of the experience of incarceration and torture, the artworks not only make the suspect's precarious situation perceptible but also confront audiences with their passive relationship to such abuses of power.

Whilst 'enhanced interrogation techniques' and rendition practices were implemented during the Bush years, President Obama's own 'aggressive views of national security' have led to an 'undeniable continuity with many of his predecessor's most controversial policies', which meant that even though he ordered the closure of 'black sites' and an end to coercive interrogation, CIA rendition flights continued when Obama took office.⁸⁴ Rather than continuing with capture, rendition and detention of suspect bodies on the scale of the Bush administration, Obama opted for 'no-fuss aerial assassinations' and expanded the use of drones to target Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders as well as other suspect bodies whose assassination he regularly orders 'off a secret "kill list"'.⁸⁵ Being or becoming a suspect body thus continues to constitute a precarious existence. It is this vulnerable position of those who are deemed suspect and consequentially seen as detainable, abusable and killable bodies that Schneider and Galindo compellingly reference in their works through establishing a visible dimension of the figure of the suspect.

⁸⁴ McCoy, Alfred, 'Impunity at Home, Rendition Abroad', *Guernica*, August 12th 2012, <http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/alfred-w-mccoy-impunity-at-home-rendition-abroad/>, accessed June 12th 2010

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 6.1 The Survivor of War

‘Only the dead have seen the end of the war.’¹

Following on from the previous chapters in which artistic responses that are geared toward three central figures of the ‘war on terror’ and the ways in which contemporary artists are attempting to connect audiences to these figures’ experiences have been discussed, this chapter considers an artwork by German artist Evelina Rajca who draws attention to the circumstances of the contemporary survivor of war. As outlined in the introduction chapter, the figure of the survivor can be seen to integrate the former three figures and is conceived as an enduring figure.² The figure of the survivor has already emerged as significant in the context of the ‘war on terror’ since survivors have already begun to emerge in great numbers, due not least to the length of the war that has already outlasted the combined duration of the First and Second World Wars. Rajca addresses the survivors’ circumstances by exploring the ways in which the experience of war continues to affect the lives of those who have directly been touched by war’s violence, and by innovatively connecting viewers to this experience.

Specifically, in her installation *Lockvogel (Decoy)* the artist attends to the rupture of the body vis-à-vis medical efforts to heal, mend and restore that which was torn apart. The artwork, consisting of prosthetic arms attached to a wall, specifically addresses the loss of physical integrity. However, the installation can be seen to speak to the ways in which the wounds and scars of war materialize in both physical and psychological realms. Moreover, the work offers an apt metaphor for the longevity of injuries sustained in the ‘war on terror’ as it points to their persistent and life-altering properties. Therein, Rajca’s work foregrounds the long-term impact of war’s violence and turns consideration to the survivors’ struggles in coming to terms with their experience of war and the difficulties in rebuilding their lives.

It is worth noting that in its focus on the mutilation of the body, Rajca’s work is reminiscent of several of Otto Dix’s paintings from 1920 that depict the devastating

¹ Santayana, George, *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*, (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1922), 102

² Cf. Chapter 1.4, 28-30

physical effects of the First World War, such as *Streichholzhändler (Match Seller I)*, *Kriegskrüppel (War Cripples)* and *Die Skatspieler (Skat Players)*, all of which portray grotesquely disfigured war veterans, many with missing limbs and facial wounds, on crutches or fitted with prostheses.³ Similarly, Erich Heckel's numerous works on the subject – such as the woodcuts *Zwei Verwundete (Two Wounded Men)* from 1914 and *Verwundeter Matrose (Wounded Sailor)* from 1915 or the lithograph *Irrer Soldat (Insane Soldier)* from 1916 – as well as George Grosz's lithograph *Der Held (Hero)* from 1933 graphically depict surviving soldiers' physical and psychological wounds.⁴ Decades later Bill Woodrow took up the figure of the survivor both in his 1989 sculpture *For Queen and Country* which depicts a maimed body walking on crutches⁵ and in his sculpture *Refugee* of the same year that speaks to the wartime experience of civilians forced to flee from the violence of war.⁶

In the contemporary context, concern with the circumstances of the survivor is likewise evident in a number of works of art across a variety of media. For instance, Czech-born German filmmaker and video artist Harun Farocki's video installation *Immersion* (2009) documents the use of virtual-reality software and game technology in the treatment of traumatized American veterans in the context of Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET), a form of immersion psychotherapy.⁷ In illustrating how the same technology that is utilized to recruit and train military personnel for deployment in war zones is also employed as a treatment device in the management of psychological wounds such as PTSD, Farocki's work speaks to both the stark contrast between soldiers' pre- and post-deployment reality and circumstances and to the surviving soldiers' attempts to regain mental health by means of repeatedly reliving the conditions of war in virtual reality.

³ See for example: Werner, Gabriele, 'Otto Dix – Der Krieg' in: Duppler, Jörg and Gerhard Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 299-314

⁴ See: D'Alessandro, Stephanie, *German Expressionist Print – The Marcia and Granvil Specks Collection*, (Vermont: Hudson Hills Press, 2003), 118-125 for Grosz's work and 128-147 for Heckel's works

⁵ Cf. Chapter 3.2.3, 74

⁶ See the artist's webpage at: http://www.billwoodrow.com/dev/sculpture_by_letter.php?page=2&i=13&sel_let ter=r, accessed February 12th 2012

⁷ See for example: Beil, Rolf and Antje Ehmann (eds.), *Serious Games – Krieg, Medien, Kunst*, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 80-85 and artist webpage at: <http://www.farocki-film.de/immerseg.htm>, accessed April 5th 2011

The surviving soldier likewise constitutes the subject of inquiry in several photography projects, such as Dutch photographer Claire Felicie's series *Marked* (2009-2010); American photographer Nina Berman's *Purple Hearts* (2003-2004) and *Marine Wedding* (2006) series; and American photographer Suzanne Opton's *Soldier* (2005) and *Many Wars* (2009-2010) series.⁸ Turning her attention also to surviving civilians, Opton furthermore completed a series entitled *Citizen* (2007) for which she photographed Iraqi civilians in exile in Jordan. In a similar vein, American multi-media artist Peter Buotte explores civilians' hopes for the post-war era, for a life after war, in his *Iraqis' Dreams For Iraq* (2008).⁹ The after-effects of the suspect's experience, on the other hand, are addressed in American painter and printmaker Daniel Heyman's series of watercolour paintings *Iraqi Portraits* (2006-2008) in which the artist records testimonies of former Abu Ghraib detainees. Offering a unique insight into the physical and psychological violence from the perspective of the abused, Heyman's work not only amounts to an irrefutable collection of evidence but also discloses the depth of their trauma.¹⁰

Whilst these diverse artists all tackle the survivors' circumstances with explicit reference to specific figures, Rajca's work in contrast neither suggests nor specifies the identities of the bodies she alludes to and therein her work transcends the specificity that characterizes the aforementioned artworks. In fact, due to the work's indeterminate reference – which ultimately conveys the implicit suggestion that the injured body could be anybody's and everybody's – Rajca's *Lockvogel* can be seen to not only integrate and absorb the figures of the soldier, the civilian and the suspect but moreover to encompass any other sets of bodies occupied in war and subjected to its injurious nature. With this in mind the work can be seen to also incorporate – and acknowledge – the circumstances of figures such as the war correspondent, for instance the respective experiences of American television journalist Bob Woodruff, Portuguese photographer

⁸ See artists' webpages at: <http://clairefelicie.com/>, accessed May 5th 2012; <http://www.ninaberman.com/>, accessed August 8th 2011; and <http://www.suzanneopton.com/>, accessed June 10th 2010

⁹ See artist's webpage at: <http://www.peterbuotte.com/pbiraq.html>, accessed December 5th 2010

¹⁰ See artist's webpage at: http://www.danielheyman.com/projects_works_iraq.htm, accessed March 20th 2010

João Silva and British photographer Giles Duley, all of whom were seriously injured by IEDs whilst working in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹¹

As the discussion will show, by directly addressing and visually manifesting the long-term effects of the violence of war, Rajca's work draws critical attention to the ramifications of war for survivors and thematizes the potential for recovery whilst questioning the possibility thereof. The chapter begins by discussing the work's design and the history of prosthetic reconstruction of the body. It then turns to a discussion of the contemporary 'signature wounds' that Rajca's work can be seen to speak to and the ways in which soldiers, civilians, and suspects are affected by these wounds. Thereafter, the chapter examines the ways in which audiences react to and interact with the installation, and the way in which the artist has built ambiguity into the work.

6.2 *Lockvogel*

Rajca's work *Lockvogel* (2008) was first exhibited as part of the 22nd European Media Art Festival (EMAF) in Osnabrück, Germany, in 2009 and subsequently in the context of the Deutsches Technikmuseum's *Art of Engineering* exhibition in Berlin in 2010. As part of EMAF's exhibition *Bilderschichten – 2000 Jahre Nachrichten aus dem Krieg* that traced the long history of the coverage of war through technological, media and art exhibits,¹² Rajca's work served to draw attention to the legacy of war's violence. The Berlin exhibition presented the work of the finalists of the *Art of Engineering 2010* competition, an annual interdisciplinary art competition organized by Ferchau Engineering, in which Rajca won a special award for her installation.¹³ An emerging artist at the time, Rajca was still studying for a degree in audiovisual media at the Academy for Media Arts in Cologne when she began to present her work in

¹¹ See for instance: Steinberg, Jacques, 'Changes at ABC, Where the War Is More Than News', *The New York Times*, February 4th 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/04/arts/television/04abc.html?_r=0, accessed June 3rd 2010; Doward, Jamie, 'Mine injures Bang-Bang photographer', *The Guardian*, October 24th 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/24/war-photographer-silva-injured>, accessed October 25th 2010, and Moorhead, Joanna, 'Giles Duley: My siblings saved me after I stepped on a landmine', *The Guardian*, February 16th 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2013/feb/16/giles-duley-siblings-helped-landmine-afghanistan>, accessed February 13th 2013

¹² Nöring et al., *EMAF Programmzeitung 2009*, European Media Art Festival, (Osnabrück: Fromm, 2009), 14-16

¹³ Ferchau, 'Art of Engineering 2010: Die Preisträger', <http://www.ferchau.de/wettbewerbe/art-of-engineering/preistraeger/2010/>, accessed June 12th 2011

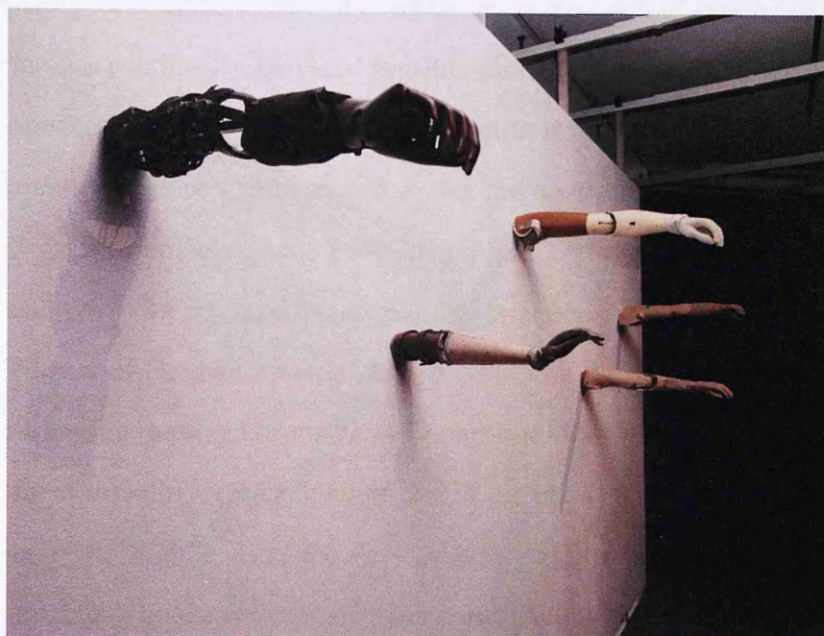
exhibitions. She has since relocated to the Netherlands where she continues to develop her multidisciplinary artistic practice.

For *Lockvogel*, Rajca attached five prosthetic arms to a wall and equipped each of the artificial limbs with a mechanism that she had developed in order to make the installation interactive. The prosthetic arms, mounted at different heights across a wall of four metres in length, differ in size, material and quality. Rajca fitted the prosthetic arms with a ball-and-socket joint in order to enable wrist movement in the prostheses. All of the arms are moreover furnished with a servo-steering mechanism that is connected to a device embedded in the wall that randomly generates movement of the prosthetic hands. The prostheses are programmed to respond to motion in their proximity via infrared sensors that register activity in front of the installation. When triggered through the recognition of motion in their vicinity as viewers approach and stand next to or under them, the prosthetic arms might move their hands in a stroking gesture. Yet, the occurrence of the hands' activity is not guaranteed as the device controlling the ball-and-socket joints in the wrists at random produces and prevents the hand movement even as the infrared sensors send a signal in response to activity within their range.¹⁴ When the hand movement does occur, it occurs as a recurring and slightly tilted left-to-right motion of the hand which materializes as a gentle and caressing gesture due to the hand's smooth and fluent back-and-forth movement.

In contrast, when the random generator device prevents the hand movement the prostheses remain completely still and motionless despite viewers' movements around them. Thus, whether or not viewers who position themselves underneath one of the prosthetic arms receive the hand's tender stroke over the head remains incalculable. Accordingly, it becomes apparent that whilst the viewers' input by means of their presence and movement that initiate the potential of the hands' responsiveness is clearly central and indispensable to the interaction, the viewers alone cannot determine the outcome. Rather, due to the installation's unique design it is as if the prostheses themselves decide whether or not to react to and engage with the viewer. Whilst it is

¹⁴ Ferchau, 'Sonderpreis: "Lockvogel"', <http://www.ferchau.de/wettbewerbe/art-of-engineering/preistraeger/2010/sonderpreis-lockvogel-414/>, accessed June 12th 2011

this dynamic between viewers and the prostheses that renders the installation interactive, it is also the aspect that bestows a surprising agency on the artificial limbs which as lifeless artefacts signal the loss of bodily integrity and rupture of the body.



[Figure 15: Installation view of *Lockvogel*, Art of Engineering exhibition, Berlin, 2010] ¹⁵

The prostheses that Rajca presents in her installation span the development of upper extremity prosthetic devices from a wooden prosthetic arm from 1919 to a contemporary prosthetic arm with a silicone hand.¹⁶ It is thus that the prostheses at first glance appear to represent a historical assortment of artificial appendages that denote the development and advancement of prosthetic devices throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Indeed, the way in which the prosthetic arms are displayed is reminiscent of the presentation of such artefacts in technological museum collections. The immediately discernible differences in their colours, materials and conditions indicate the increasingly sophisticated design and technology of artificial limbs, and as such speak to the evolving transformation in terms of both aesthetic and functional features. On a broader scale, however, the prosthetic arms bear witness not

¹⁵ Image source: Ferchau, 'Lockvogel', Bildarchiv, <http://ferchau.mediainformationssystem.de/images/index/page:9>, accessed June 12th 2011

¹⁶ Czogalla, Philipp, 'Evelina Rajca – Lockvogel' in: Nöring et al. (eds.), *Bilderschichten – 2000 Jahre Nachrichten aus dem Krieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 106

only to medical advances per se, but also to the underlying relationship between war and medicine.

Whilst the history of prosthetic reconstruction of the body is closely intertwined with the history of civilization on the whole, it is the violent nature of warfare in particular that has continually provided impetus for developments in prosthetic devices. The term prosthesis derives from the Greek words *pros*, meaning 'in addition', and *tithenai*, meaning 'to place', and accordingly 'in the medical world it denotes to put, or fit, artificial parts or devices to the body' as replacements for biological body parts.¹⁷ An early example of an advanced hand prostheses is constituted in the iron hand with adjustable fingers of German imperial knight Götz von Berlichingen who had lost his right forearm during the siege of the city of Landshut in 1504, but was able to continue his involvement in belligerent campaigns due to the prosthetic replacement.¹⁸ Up until and throughout the Middle Ages the devices fashioned to replace lost limbs, such as peg legs and hand hooks, overall remained rudimentary and it was not until the Renaissance that significant advances were made.

Developments in prosthetic devices were paralleled by the invention of new surgical techniques in the sixteenth century, such as procedures developed by the French army surgeon Ambroise Paré, and changes in the treatment of wounds through developments in anesthesia and antisepsis. It was also during this time that prostheses, generally made of wood, iron, steel and copper, slowly began to shift from being bulky and heavy towards the incorporation of lighter materials such as leather in the manufacturing process. At the same time functionality improved considerably due to refinements in mechanisms and the integration of springs and gears.¹⁹ The American Civil War, the First World War and the Second World War all created greater demand for the prosthetic reconstruction of surviving bodies, and consequently fuelled prosthetic development.

¹⁷ Plettenburg, Dick, *Upper Extremity Prosthetics: Current Status & Evaluation*, (Delft: VSSD, 2006), 2

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4

¹⁹ For a historical account of the development of prostheses see: Norton, Kim, 'A Brief History of Prosthetics', *InMotion*, (17: 7: November/December 2007), 11-13

Yet, it was not until the post-Vietnam War era that the modular endoskeletal lower extremity prosthesis – with a hard inner core and a cosmetic and softer outer material – and the myoelectrically controlled upper extremity prosthesis – using suction technology, batteries and electronic motors rather than relying on body-power, cables and harnesses – were developed.²⁰ Further advances in technology and materials have since been made and today's more advanced prosthetic devices are made of metal alloys, plastic and carbon-fiber composites and equipped with electronic technologies such as microprocessors and sensors. Whilst contemporary prostheses are thus closer than ever before in functionality and appearance to the biological limbs that they are meant to replace, they still fail to compensate for the physical loss as they cannot truly make up for the loss of coordinated movement, flesh and skin like appearance, and, perhaps most fundamentally, the loss of the capacity for tactile sensation.

Therefore, the quest to develop even more lifelike, more comfortable, and better functioning devices persists and progress continues to be made in the pursuit of aligning technological prostheses with the organic material of the body. Most recently, the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, like the wars of the past, have prompted new attempts at technological developments in prosthetics. The latest endeavours have in particular focused on the initiation of new solutions for upper extremity prostheses for arm, hand and finger amputees as the complexity of the sensory and physical functions of these body parts have long posed particular engineering challenges for prosthetic substitution.

Moreover, upper extremity limb loss has historically always been much less common than lower extremity limb loss whilst worldwide upper extremity prostheses rejection rates have continuously been significantly higher than rejection rates of lower extremity prostheses.²¹ It is in this context that development of upper extremity prostheses has long lacked behind that of lower extremity replacements. With the increase of blast-related injuries that have led to higher numbers not only in lower limb amputations but also in upper limb loss in military personnel, the incentive for further

²⁰ Lusardi et al., *Orthotics and Prosthetics in Rehabilitation*, (St. Louis: Elsevier Saunders, 2012), 3

²¹ O'Keeffe, Bernard, 'Prosthetic rehabilitation of the upper limb amputee', *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery*, (44: 2: May-August 2011), 252

research in the field of prosthetic science is evident and it is thus not surprising that the military itself is the driving force behind current exploratory research in artificial limb technology.

Schemes such as the *Revolutionizing Prosthetics* project of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the U.S. Department of Defense's agency responsible for the development of innovative technologies for the military, have already succeeded in making significant progress in the improvement of prosthetic devices, *inter alia* through the creation of the first neurally-controlled arm prosthesis.²² The medical research that DARPA has been funding since the project was launched in 2006 resulted in some of the newly developed technology being applied to small robotic systems that the military is using in the handling of unexploded ordnance, thus enabling military personnel to defuse IEDs remotely.²³

It is these developments in prosthetic technology that Rajca's historical composition of prosthetic arms traces. Considering the clear influence that warfare has long had and continues to have on medical efforts at recovery and rehabilitation, the interdependence between the two is distinctly apparent. Accordingly, Rajca's selection of artificial limbs can be seen to exemplify the reciprocity between the science of healing and the technologies and methods developed to destroy and injure, the former continually striving to keep pace with the latter. Concurrently, however, the prosthetic arms presented by Rajca call attention to the long-term sequelae of war.

6.3.1 Ruptured Bodies

Rajca's installation foregrounds the life-changing experience of contemporary warfare in highlighting that the pain and suffering that war engenders is not restricted to the battlefields but transcends the immediacy of war and continues to impact on the lives of those who survived the encounter with war's violence. Both war-related physical and psychological injuries have been evident consequences of war since the beginning of

²² See DARPA's Revolutionizing Prosthetics section at: http://www.darpa.mil/Our_Work/DSO/Programs/Revolutionizing_Prosthetics.aspx, accessed March 12th 2013

²³ Ibid.

warfare itself. Yet, the nature of the wounds that survivors have to come to terms with has differed markedly throughout history.

The consequence of changes in weapon technologies, military tactics and battlefield environments, the injuries sustained in war correlate to the changes in the nature of warfare. It is in this context that in the last century alone there has been a profound transformation in what can be referred to as 'signature wounds'. The First World War saw an increase in wounds caused by grenades, shrapnel, and rifle fire as well as the first use of chemical warfare agents such as tear gas, mustard gas and chlorine gas that blistered the skin and produced severe damage to the throat and lungs, often leaving survivors visibly scarred and blind.²⁴ In trench warfare the injuries sustained from exposure to gas and sniper fire left their mark in particular on the survivors' faces, often wounded beyond surgical repair despite advances in reconstructive surgery. Termed *les gueules cassées* (the broken faces) in France, survivors of the First World War suffered such partial or complete facial disfigurement that many opted to disguise their maimed faces with prosthetic masks in an effort to conceal their unsightly wounds.²⁵

The Second World War on the other hand saw high rates of burns and scalds due to the extensive use of incendiary bombs and the use of petrol for tanks, ships and airplanes, whilst the Korean War was characterized by small arms injuries and cold injuries such as frostbite.²⁶ In the war in Vietnam, the majority of injuries was caused by mines and booby-traps with devastating effects also produced by Napalm bombing that led to severe burns and the toxic chemical herbicide Agent Orange which led to increased rates of cancers and respiratory and skin disorders.²⁷ The lasting legacy of the First Gulf War, in contrast, is constituted in the so-called 'Gulf War Syndrome', a

²⁴ Tucker, Spencer C., *World War One*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 474-479

²⁵ For a discussion of these facial prostheses see: Lubin, David M., 'Masks, Mutilation and Modernity – Anna Coleman Ladd and the First World War', *Archives of American Art Journal*, (47: 3-4: Fall 2008), 4-15

²⁶ For information about the prevalence of burn injuries in the Second World War see for example: Wakeley, Cecil P.G., 'The Treatment of War Burns' in: Runes, Dagobert D. (ed.), *War Medicine: A Symposium*, (New York: The Philosophical Library Inc., 1942), 41-67; and for information on Korean War injuries see: McCallum, Jack E., *Military Medicine – From Ancient Times to the 21st Century*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 179-184

²⁷ See: Isserman, Maurice, *Vietnam War*, (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2003), 67-81

multi-symptom condition that includes psychological and cognitive disorders such as depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, insomnia, headaches and memory loss.²⁸

More recently, the 'signature wounds' that have begun to emerge out of the 'war on terror' are constituted in the high occurrences of limb loss, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Both physical and psychological in nature, these wounds manifest themselves in starkly visible ways as well as in ways that remain largely or even entirely invisible to the naked eye. To a large extent stemming from IEDs, these contemporary 'signature wounds' – much like their historical predecessors – are indicative of the circumstances and conditions in which the violence of war is taking place.

6.3.2 The Soldier

For the soldiers of the Coalition forces survival rates are unprecedented in Western military history with the ratio of wounded to killed significantly higher than in previous wars, which is due not only to the considerable advances in battlefield medicine that allow for more sophisticated and rapid treatment and evacuation, but also due to improvements in body armor. As a result of these developments wounded soldiers who would likely have succumbed to their injuries in previous wars survive their deployment, yet upon return become part of 'the growing number of survivors with extensive and often incapacitating injuries'.²⁹ Whilst the fatality and injury numbers in Iraq have sharply declined over the years, especially from late 2007 onwards, the fatality and injury numbers in Afghanistan have risen since 2006 and remained high in recent years.

It is in this context that the injuries sustained from detonations of IEDs undoubtedly represent some of the most severe contemporary wounds of war, having led not only to high numbers in the loss of fingers, hands, arms, legs, feet and toes, but also to testicular injuries and genital loss as well as high rates of moderate to severe

²⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of Gulf War Syndrome see: Wessely, Simon and Matthew Hotopf, 'Gulf War Syndrome' in: Marrs, Timothy C. et al. (eds.), *Chemical Warfare Agents – Toxicology and Treatment*, (Chichester: Wiley, 2007), 355-373

²⁹ McCallum, op.cit., xxii

TBI. Studies estimate that approximately fifty per cent of injuries sustained by Coalition forces in the early years of the war in Iraq were injuries to the extremities, with many surviving soldiers suffering multiple limb loss.³⁰ Whereas in Iraq blast-related casualties significantly decreased when 'use of IEDs plummeted after reaching a peak of 23,000 attacks in 2007', in Afghanistan the destruction caused by IEDs has been on the rise for several years, with an eighty per cent increase in IED incidents since 2010 and nearly '15,000 IED incidents' in 2012 alone.³¹

In tandem with a surge in injuries necessitating amputations³² the rates of TBIs as a result of the shock waves generated by IED blasts have dramatically increased over the years. As TBI remains difficult to diagnose when no obvious external wounds to the head have been sustained, and as symptoms might develop over several years, it has come to represent a war wound that poses particular treatment challenges. The injury often leads to bleeding, contusions and swelling in the brain and typically causes damage to nerve axons that can lead to loss of neural connections and impair cognitive skills.³³ With effects ranging from severely impaired brain function to less serious yet nonetheless problematic symptoms such as language impairments, memory loss, attention deficits, headaches, and sleep disturbances as well as behavioural changes related to mood swings, anxiety, depression and impulsiveness, TBI can cause significant changes in personality and leave survivors in need of prolonged medical treatment and struggling to rebuild their lives.

The same is true for PTSD, the prevalence of which has increased over the last decade as growing numbers of surviving soldiers are developing symptoms of psychological injuries following their engagement in armed conflict. Studies suggest

³⁰ See: Wallace, Duncan. 'Trends in traumatic limb amputation in Allied Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*, (20: 2: April 2012), 31-35

³¹ Mashal, Mujib, 'Afghanistan's IED Complex', *Time*, January 2nd 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/01/02/afghanistans-ied-complex-inside-the-taliban-bomb-making-industry/>, accessed January 4th 2013

³² For amputation data for U.S. forces see: Fischer, Hannah, 'U.S. Military Casualty Statistics', CRS Report for Congress, Federation of American Scientists, February 5th 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22452.pdf>, accessed February 10th 2013, 9-10; and for amputation data for UK forces see: Cobain, Ian, 'Amputations for British forces in Afghanistan', *The Guardian*, February 19th 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/apr/30/amputation-british-afghanistan>, accessed February 20th 2013

³³ For a detailed account of the effects of TBI see: Okie, Susan, 'Traumatic Brain Injury in the War Zone', *The New England Journal of Medicine*, (352: 20: May 2005), 2043-2047

that by late 2012 over two hundred and fifty thousand U.S. soldiers had sustained a TBI during their deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and over one hundred thousand U.S. soldiers have been diagnosed with PTSD.³⁴ Whilst other estimates suggest that the numbers are much higher as many cases of both TBI and PTSD remain unrecognized and undiagnosed in line with their characteristics as predominantly ‘invisible wounds’, there appears to be consensus that their prevalence stems from the dangers of operating in IED environments and the particular circumstances of the contemporary deployment experience. Throughout the last decade soldiers have been faced not only with prolonged deployments but also with multiple deployments to two challenging combat theatres characterized by high levels of direct combat exposure. Amidst the chronic threat of IEDs soldiers experience being shot at, witness comrades being injured and killed, have to handle human remains and engage in the killing and injuring of an enemy who cannot easily be distinguished from civilians.

It is in this context that surviving soldiers’ probability of being affected by psychological after-effects of war is, for the first time in history, higher than the numbers of physical combat injuries and fatalities.³⁵ Much like limb loss and TBI, the effects of PTSD can manifest themselves as lifelong afflictions, requiring continuous medical care and leading to sustained psychological anguish. Thus, surviving soldiers’ homecoming and attempts at rehabilitation often constitute painful, gradual and ongoing processes. Considering that soldiers leave for war able-bodied and typically in the prime of their lives, many of the survivors who return bearing the wounds of war face a lifetime of dealing with the physical and psychological toll of war.

6.3.3 The Civilian

For surviving civilians a similar aftermath experience has begun to emerge. Whilst there is not only a lesser amount of, but also less accurate data on the injuries sustained by civilians than there is for soldiers, there exists enough evidence to suggest that Iraqi

³⁴ Fischer, *op.cit.*, 5-9

³⁵ Sammons, Morgan and Sonja Batten, ‘Psychological Services for Returning Veterans and Their Families: Evolving Conceptualizations of the Sequelae of War-Zone Experiences’, *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, (64: 8: August 2008), 923

and Afghan civilians are dealing with very similar and equally devastating and long-lasting wounds of war. The effects of warfare on the populations of both nations have been felt since the beginning of the military campaigns and are likely to have devastating consequences for generations to come. Civilians have been killed and wounded in greater numbers whenever the fighting intensified as civilians inevitably bear the brunt of the violence exercised on all sides.

The available data indicates that many of the injuries sustained by civilians have been caused by IEDs and thus civilians have also experienced both limb loss and TBIs in great numbers. In fact, IEDs have constituted one of the greatest threats to civilians for years. It has been estimated, for instance, that in Afghanistan thirty-three per cent of civilian deaths and injuries in 2012 were caused by IEDs.³⁶ Throughout the conflicts civilians have also been injured by aerial bombing and sustained wounds from gunfire, mortar attacks and artillery shelling. In stark contrast to the survival rates of soldiers, however, the chances of survival for wounded civilians are much slimmer as they do not have the same high standards of medical care available to them.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan the chaos and destruction that accompany conflict have yielded considerable damage to the countries' infrastructures; impaired access to food, drinking water, sanitation and health services; and caused large numbers of civilians to flee, among them many health professionals which has further compounded the suffering of the populations. Iraq in particular has seen what amounts to an exodus of doctors with an estimated twenty thousand doctors leaving the country after the 2003 invasion. Whilst a few thousand have since returned, the number of physicians – estimated at thirty-four thousand prior to the war – had by late 2008 been reduced to approximately sixteen thousand.³⁷

In both countries local and NGO-run hospitals alike have struggled to cope with the numbers of wounded civilians, and thus there also exists a lack in the provision of

³⁶ Chesser, Susan G., 'Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians', CRS Report for Congress, Federation of American Scientists, December 6th 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41084.pdf>, accessed February 10th 2013, 3

³⁷ O'Hanlon, Michael E. and Livingston, Ian, Iraq Index – Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq', Brookings Institution, August 30th 2011, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Centers/saban/iraq%20index/index20110830.PDF>, accessed September 10th 2012, 26

medical aftercare such as follow-up examinations and rehabilitation measures. Crucially, there remains a shortage of prosthetic devices for limb loss survivors even though humanitarian institutions such as the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) are managing a number of medical centres – six physical rehabilitation centres throughout Afghanistan and one local prosthetic components factory in Kabul, and thirteen facilities and a local unit manufacturing crutches in Iraq – to provide support for the ever growing number of disabled civilians.³⁸

Apart from the physical wounds civilians also suffer from the psychological trauma of experiencing warfare and there exists ample evidence of an increase in psychological distress in the populations of Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2009 it was estimated that two-thirds of Afghans suffer mental health problems such as anxiety, stress and depression related to the traumatic experience of war, poverty and loss, and that the psychological impact of the conflict is likely going to have a slow and corrosive effect on Afghan society, especially in view of the severe lack of psychologists and psychiatrists in the country – just over forty in 2010 – and in the absence of educational facilities dedicated to training more.³⁹ Similarly, as war and violence became part of day-to-day life, trauma-related symptoms and mental health disorders have also spiked in Iraq, a reality that is compounded by the country's lack of mental health workers, facilities and services.

Studies suggest that half of the population suffers from psychological trauma of some sort as a result of the conflict and that the rates of PTSD are particularly high in children whose upbringing has been seriously disrupted by the experience of loss,

³⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 'Physical Rehabilitation Programme – Annual Report 2009', Geneva, 2009, http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_4031.pdf, accessed January 10th 2013, 35-36 and 62-63

³⁹ See: Patience, Martin, 'Coping with a traumatized nation', *BBC News*, January 20th 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7838270.stm, accessed June 22nd 2011 and Salehi, Zarghona, 'Afghan health system failing people with mental illness', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, November 23rd 2010, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2010/11/23/afghan-health-system-failing-people-mental-illness>, accessed June 22nd 2011; for further information about mental health in Afghanistan see: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 'Afghanistan Opinion Survey and In-Depth Research, 2009', Geneva, 2009, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/2011/afghanistan-opinion-survey-2009.pdf>, accessed January 12th 2013

displacement, constant threat, fear and deprivation.⁴⁰ As the physical and psychological damage experienced by civilians can be extremely debilitating to their lives and livelihoods, and as the visible and invisible wounds of war impede on the rebuilding of stable communities the impact of war will be felt by survivors for decades to come.

6.3.4 The Suspect

Similarly to surviving soldiers and civilians, suspects likewise bear the marks of their experiences, both on their bodies and on their minds. The literature on the impact of detention and torture suggests that detainees often suffer both physical and psychological impairments following their incarceration, regardless of whether or not they were physically harmed during their captivity. Studies have found that the psychological consequences of incarceration are often persistent and that PTSD and other disorders such as major depression, dissociative disorders and substance abuse frequently develop in former detainees.⁴¹ Research also indicates that the experience of loss of control and helplessness as well as dependency on subjugators are important factors in the development of psychological distress, anxiety and fear that often outlast the duration of imprisonment and torture.

When detained suspects are not only imprisoned but also physically and psychologically tortured, it appears that the experience of physical anguish does not constitute ‘the most important determinant of traumatic stress in survivors of torture’, but rather that psychological manipulation in various forms – such as humiliation, isolation, sleep deprivation, blindfolding, stress positions, threats against detainees or

⁴⁰ See: Palmer, James, ‘Civilian toll: Iraqis exhibit more mental health problems’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 19th 2007, <http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/PROTESTERS-PLEAD-FOR-PEACE-Civilian-toll-2577721.php>, accessed February 10th 2012 and Mejia, Paula, ‘Wounds of War – PTSD in Iraqis and Veterans’, *The Majalla*, October 20th 2010, <http://www.majalla.com/eng/2010/10/article55165470>, accessed November 3rd 2010; for further information about mental health in Iraq see: Levy, Barry S. and Victor W. Sidel, ‘Adverse health consequences of the Iraq War’, *The Lancet*, (381: 9870: 16th March 2013), 949-958

⁴¹ See for example: Bichescu et al., ‘Long-term consequences of traumatic experiences: an assessment of former political detainees in Romania’, *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health*, (1: 1: Summer 2005), 1-11

their families and witnessing of torture of others – is generally experienced as equally distressing as physical violence and as likely to lead to long-term mental suffering.⁴²

Former detainees of U.S. detention facilities in Kandahar and Bagram in Afghanistan, Camp Bucca and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay are reported to have returned to their countries of origin or a third country with compromised physical and psychological health and many former detainees have not been treated for their post-detention physical and psychological suffering. Many give accounts of physical after-effects in the form of headaches, deteriorating eyesight and musculoskeletal pain in their limbs, neck, shoulders, back, joints, muscles, and ligaments as a result of prolonged short shackling, stress positions, suspensions and beatings. In terms of the psychological toll of detention and torture former detainees reportedly suffer from emotional trauma as a direct result of their incarceration and continue to experience intrusive memories and flashbacks, panic attacks, insomnia, disturbing dreams, concentration difficulties, irritability, hyper vigilance and suicidal thoughts long after their release.⁴³

It is against this background that overcoming their experiences is proving difficult for many survivors of imprisonment and torture. 'I was detained for only two years. I left Guantanamo at age 23. But it has put me in distress for the rest of my life', states one former detainee whilst another describes how the memories of his detention continue to haunt him: 'I still do get nightmares. I think I'm still back there, with chains and people swearing at me'.⁴⁴ As a consequence of their post-detention physical and psychological conditions formerly detained and tortured suspects are also frequently experiencing tremendous difficulties in trying to resume their old lives and to reintegrate into their communities after their release.

⁴² Basoglu et al., 'Torture vs other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment: is the distinction real or apparent?', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, (64: 3: March 2007), 283

⁴³ See: Hashemian et al., 'Broken Laws, Broken Lives – Medical Evidence of Torture by US Personnel and Its Impact', Physicians for Human Rights, June 2008, <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/reports/broken-laws-torture-report-2008.html>, accessed June 4th 2011, 89-93

⁴⁴ Fletcher, Laurel E. and Eric Stover, 'Guantánamo And Its Aftermath – U.S. Detention And Interrogation Practices And Their Impact On Former Detainees', Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, November 2008, <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/OathBetrayed/Gtmo-Aftermath.pdf>, accessed September 2nd 2011, 68, 73

Specifically, detention and torture survivors often encounter problems in reestablishing family relationships after estrangement due to long periods of separation; find that they carry a stigma and encounter hostility and suspicion due to their status as former detainees; and are facing economic hardships after losing their livelihoods and due to difficulties in finding employment – all of which compounds the feelings of despair and uncertainty that many former detainees continue to experience. Obstacles such as these undoubtedly make a recovery from the trauma of captivity all the more difficult. The physical and psychological legacy of their experiences and a sense of being perceived as ‘marked men’⁴⁵ that leaves them unable to shed the shadow of suspicion thus indicate that former detainees – just like surviving soldiers and civilians – will long remain impacted by their experiences and struggling to cope with their wounds of war.

Since Rajca in her installation does not specify the identity of the survivors she alludes to beyond the fact that they are human beings and whilst her prosthetic arms clearly point to the most starkly visible ‘signature wound’ of the ‘war on terror’, her work can be seen to speak to the various sequelae of war, both physical and psychological, visible and invisible, that continue to bear on survivors and indeed have become a part of them. Like other artists commenting on the very real fragmentation of bodies and minds before her, Rajca evokes the physical and psychological toll of war by tracing the effects of war’s violence through the obvious physical scars that are much more readily discernible than the psychological ones and correspondingly also more easily represented visually.

In artistically pointing to the long-lasting havoc that the violence of war is capable of inflicting on anyone it touches Rajca, it could be argued, creatively and imaginatively represents what Kenneth Waltz in his classic work *Man, the State and War* articulates in words: asking who won a war, he suggested, was like asking who won an earthquake, further stating that ‘in wars there is no victory but only varying degrees of defeat’.⁴⁶ Thus, by drawing attention to the durability and extent of the

⁴⁵ Hashemian, op.cit., 93

⁴⁶ Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 1

injuries sustained in the ‘war on terror’ and the difficulties all those who have directly experienced war’s violence continue to experience, Rajca’s artwork compellingly emphasizes that war itself constitutes only part of the story of the damage that it yields. Rather, and crucially, through her visual manifestation of the legacy of war’s violence, Rajca highlights that this further part of the story likewise demands not only awareness but also contemplation, inspection and discussion.

6.4 Bodies of Evidence

As Rajca’s installation forcefully underscores that a fundamental reality of war continues to be constituted in the tearing of flesh, her artwork can be seen to embody what war is fundamentally about. Visualizing less of war itself and more of its lasting consequences, the prosthetic arms appear to ask audiences to turn their attention to the future and to contemplate the implications for survivors, their families and for society as a whole. In addition to drawing attention to the severity and longevity of the damage that war yields, Rajca’s work alludes to the universality of the damage, her unidentified bodies signaling that all those directly touched by war, regardless of their political categorizations, are subject to the extreme experiences that warfare produces and equally capable of experiencing suffering and pain.

The installation puts audiences in direct contact with these realities and allows them to interact with the long-term effects of war as epitomized in the fragmented body of the amputee. Therein Rajca renders the legacy of war literally tangible. Through the installation’s apparent reference to the lived reality of the figure of the survivor the artist facilitates an encounter in which audiences who mostly experience war and its consequences as distant are confronted with artefacts that evoke those with intimate knowledge of war’s human cost. It is this symbolic formulation of lived reality that underwrites Rajca’s artistic practice in general.⁴⁷

In order to facilitate the interaction between viewers and the prosthetic limbs, the artist has designed the installation with a view not only to attract curiosity but also

⁴⁷ Reck, Hans Ulrich, ‘Bezeugende Ohnmacht’ in: Nöring et al. (eds.), *Bilderschlachten – 2000 Jahre Nachrichten aus dem Krieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 34

to capture attention beyond a cursory glance. Rajca accomplishes this by means of physically incorporating viewers into the artwork which can be seen to constitute a central aspect in the conceptualization of the work, aimed at breaking down the barrier between viewers and the installation. Viewers act upon the work by providing a physical input through their movements in the installation's vicinity, thereby potentially inducing motion in the prosthetic arms. The necessity for viewer input to trigger a response, the unpredictability of the artificial limbs' reaction to the input, and the unusual sight of an assortment of prosthetic arms that appear to be animated rather than lifeless can be seen to both attract and sustain viewer attention.



[Figure 16: viewers attempt to activate the installation]⁴⁸

The attempt to entice viewers to approach the installation and to engage in interaction with it is manifest in the title that Rajca chose for the artwork, *Lockvogel* (*Decoy*) conveying the objective to draw viewers towards the work. That Rajca does indeed achieve this is clearly apparent in the ways in which viewers are responding to the installation, as can be observed in a video recording showing viewers interacting with the prostheses.⁴⁹ A fascination with the prosthetic arms and amazement at the novelty of the encounter that they enable is palpable in viewers' reactions to the work.

⁴⁸ Image source: still from video showing audiences interacting with *Lockvogel* at the *Art of Engineering* exhibition; see video here: Academy of Media Arts Cologne, Evelina Rajca, 'Lockvogel (Decoy)', *Lab 3*, <http://interface.khm.de/index.php/art/projects/decoy/>, accessed June 12th 2011

⁴⁹ See the video here: Academy of Media Arts Cologne, Evelina Rajca, 'Lockvogel (Decoy)', *Lab 3*, <http://interface.khm.de/index.php/art/projects/decoy/>, accessed June 12th 2011

Viewers can be seen approaching the prosthetic arms and reaching out to them, tentatively touching them with their own hands and feeling the material of the artificial limbs. Hoping to receive a stroking gesture from one of the prosthetic arms, viewers can furthermore be seen moving in between the prostheses and positioning themselves underneath them.

The interaction between viewers and the prostheses appears to be marked by a degree of hesitation by some viewers, which might in part stem from uncertainty regarding whether or not they are allowed to touch the installation in the museum setting, but might also arise from insecurity regarding how to respond to the sight of prosthetic arms. Reflecting on this sense of apprehension and speaking to viewers' unfamiliarity with prosthetic devices and the uneasiness that they inspire, one review regards the artificial limbs as eerie and ghostly and therefore deems the installation macabre.⁵⁰ Yet, viewers' initial timidity can be seen to soon give way to an entirely different state of mind as a playful and explorative attitude appears to quickly emerge in some viewers. In an attempt to become a recipient of a patting on the head by one of the prosthetic arms some viewers appear to perceive the activation of the prosthetic arms as a challenge, trying to initiate movement of the arms by moving back and forth in between them, and positioning themselves underneath the palms of the artificial hands whenever any of them begin to show signs of motion.⁵¹

When viewers are successful in activating one of the prostheses and manage to position themselves under an arm in time to receive a stroking of the head, this gentle gesture emanating from an otherwise inanimate limb appears to fascinate viewers as they find themselves being caressed and comforted by a lifeless artefact. Indeed, the tender gesture and the solace that it suggests seem surprising considering that associations with victimhood are likely to arise at the sight of the prostheses.⁵² Therein then lies the paradox at the heart of the installation. An ability to comfort arguably

⁵⁰ Martens, Jörn, 'Die Zärtlichkeit ist nur ein Kunstprodukt', *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, May 20th 2009, <http://www.noz.de/lokales/26965092/die-zaertlichkeit-ist-nur-ein-kunstprodukt>, accessed January 12th 2010

⁵¹ This assessment is based on my own observations of audience interaction with Rajca's installation during four separate visits to the *Bilderschlachten* exhibition in Osnabrück, Germany, in 2009

⁵² Czogalla, op.cit., 106

represents one of the last things one would expect to be able to perceive in a prosthetic device. Accordingly, there appears to be a reversal of roles taking place in the encounter with the installation. Belonging to those who have experienced a substantial injury and consequential loss of their physical integrity, the prostheses that signal this rupture of the body here appear to offer reassurance to those who have not been touched by war's violence rather than asking the unaffected viewers to offer consolation to the war-torn bodies.

The implications of this are manifold. The notion that the prosthetic arms can afford consolation, that they can in effect represent a source of tenderness, gives rise to the question as to precisely where the body begins and ends. The boundaries between the organic tissue of the body and the rigid and inanimate artefact can at once be seen as evident and observable and as untraceable and vague given that prosthetic substitutes for missing limbs re-establish the contours of the body as it was prior to the injury. Undoubtedly, in view of modern medicine's capabilities and the development of ever more advanced prosthetic devices, the biologically determined corporeality of the body is increasingly called into question as the interaction between body and technology and the demarcations between them are becoming increasingly blurred.⁵³ Nonetheless, whether prostheses are considered to constitute devices that become an integrated part of the body or are seen as artificial additions that amount to little more than functional substitutes for a lost body part remains a matter of opinion and interpretation. It is thus that Rajca's artwork can be perceived as embodied whilst it can also be deemed to be disembodied.

It is also in this context that the notion of the prosthetic arms' agency that bestows them with the capacity to offer reassurance rather than signaling pain and suffering reveals an ambiguity in the artwork's perspective. Whilst Rajca's indication of the universality and severity of the damage produced by war is readily identifiable, the installation's suggestion regarding the potential for recovery is less easily determined. In fact, it appears that Rajca declines to offer a distinct perspective on the

⁵³ See for example: Office of Research and Development, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 'Prosthetics of Future Will Mesh Body, Mind and Machine', October 26th 2005, <http://www.research.va.gov/news/features/prosthetics.cfm#.UcF71uftQ2R>, accessed March 12th 2013

matter, but rather leaves it up to viewers to determine whether prosthetic limbs symbolize a repair of the body that signals renewal and recuperation, thus representing a mending that allows the rupture of the body to be overcome, or signify permanent and irreparable impairment that can neither be disguised nor undone, therein constituting an undeniable reminder of the war experience and the injuries sustained.



[Figure 17: a viewer receives a stroking of the head from one of the prosthetic arms]⁵⁴

In leaving the question as to whether the installation speaks to endurance and resilience or to vulnerability and frailty open, Rajca can also be seen to challenge viewers to contemplate whether the notion of and belief in medical achievements that enable a narrative of healing and recovery vis-à-vis the mayhem that war inflicts on the body and mind does not ultimately cover up and camouflage the true brutality of war. Given that Rajca's work can be perceived to suggest that contemporary medical science is well equipped to deal with the wounds of war, the installation appears to imply that medical capabilities have advanced significantly from the dawn of one century to another, and from a time in which, as American nurse and author Ellen LaMotte noted in the context of the First World War, 'the science of healing stood baffled before the

⁵⁴ Image source: still from video showing audiences interacting with *Lockvogel* at the *Art of Engineering* exhibition; see video here: Academy of Media Arts Cologne, Evelina Rajca, 'Lockvogel (Decoy)', *Lab 3*, <http://interface.khm.de/index.php/art/projects/decoy/>, accessed June 12th 2011

science of destroying'.⁵⁵ Conversely, however, the installation can be deemed to reaffirm that the past persists in the present and that the experience of war echoes into the future, leaving the physical and psychological toll of war lastingly imprinted on survivors.

It is due to the fact that both an account of defiance, reconstitution and overcoming and an account of war's mutilating and irreversible impact can be discovered in the installation that the work can be seen to fluctuate between concealment and exposure of survivors' war wounds. Regardless of the view taken, in giving rise to these questions that she offers for contemplation and debate, Rajca's installation also appears to accentuate the fact that the curative measures and the means utilized to inflict injury on bodies in equal measure spring from and are the outcome of human thought, imagination and creation. Prosthetic devices as representations of human-made artefacts symbolize the distinctive human capacity to both correct and effect disfigurement.

Bearing witness to the human ability of self-transformation with both humane and inhumane consequences, Rajca's display of prostheses gestures towards the origination of both medicine and war in human agency all the more since the artificial limbs that she presents are prostheses of the arms and hands. It is, after all, these body parts – the hands in particular – that craft and are utilized to translate and realize, therein bringing into being that which the mind conceives. In and through her creative socio-political commentary calling attention to the relationship between the capabilities of medicine and the capabilities of war, and in emphasizing the wounds of war that survivors bear and have to cope with, Rajca's installation can be seen to imaginatively communicate that the struggles in the aftermath constitute as much of a perennial feature of warfare as the fighting itself.

⁵⁵ LaMotte cited in: Lubin, *op.cit.*, 10

Chapter 7.1 Conclusion – Drawing back the curtain

‘To be an artist means never to avert one’s eyes.’¹

As the various artistic responses to the ‘war on terror’ discussed throughout the previous chapters illustrate, artists’ responses to warfare in the first decade of the twenty-first century have been as numerous as they have been diverse. Arguably, the works of art considered throughout the research project evidence the wide range of artistic strategies that contemporary artists have been utilizing to comment on corporeal experiences of the ‘war on terror’. In and through artworks such as these, it has been argued here, the pivotal place of the body in war is underscored in ways that render the centrality of corporeal experience visible and conceivable to audiences who observe war’s violence from a distance. By means of offering art experiences in the context of the pain and suffering effected in the ‘war on terror’ is rendered discernible, contemporary artists can be seen to facilitate a rematerialization of audiences’ vision of the ‘war on terror’ that challenges audiences to inspect their ways of seeing.

The artistic strategies that artists have developed to convey contemporary corporeal experience are innovative in the manners in which they situate both the bodies that are referenced and the audience in relation to the works. As has been illustrated throughout the discussion of the artworks, it is in the interplay between the two that discernibility of the corporeal experience of the ‘war on terror’ can be seen to occur. The ways in which artists comment on the body in pain can be seen to evidence that contemporary creative practitioners display recognition of the complexities surrounding the visualization of war and violence. This recognition speaks to artists’ awareness of the historical development of Western art on war and the traditions of artworks on war in which they are situated. It moreover indicates consciousness of the limits and ethical implications of representation in the context of the imaging of painful corporeal experiences and acknowledgment of the notion that representations can ultimately merely gesture toward the realities that they reference.

¹ Akira Kurosawa cited in: Prince, Stephen, *The Warrior’s Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 138

The imaginative ways in which artists have evidently grappled with the visualization of corporeal experiences of the 'war on terror' can be seen to confirm artists' aptitude for critical socio-political commentary. As political insights can be gained from works of art that shed light on the devastating impacts that war has on the body, and as such art probes, challenges and unsettles our perceptions and understanding of technologized warfare in the early twenty-first century that renders remote and obscures the pain and suffering produced in war, such art can be seen to be of relevance to the study of international politics. As has been discussed in Chapter 1, whilst both visual representations and the ways in which they bear on and shape international relations, and the significance of corporeal experience as a product of power relations remain largely negated in IR discourses and at the periphery of scholarly attention,² these themes merit much greater scholarly consideration precisely because they can be seen to trouble dominant conventions of academic discourse.

In investigating the artistic strategies by and through which contemporary artists endeavour to render visible and conceivable what otherwise remains largely abstracted and concealed, the thesis has aimed to contribute to the literature at the intersection between art and politics that concerns itself with the ways in which political subject matter is addressed in images and recognizes that analysis of the body and the ways in which it is affected by power and violence can uncover implications for the theorization of political subjects. It is in this context that the inquiry here can be seen to affirm that artworks can yield valuable insights and instigate debates that can assist in the recognition of warfare as a fundamentally embodied exercise that can be traced in the corporeal effects that war's violence produces. Moreover, in view of the ever-more significant role of images in the waging of war, it can be seen to affirm that a thinking with and through images represents an endeavour that has never been more timely.

7.2 Strategies of artistic disclosure

Having illustrated throughout the discussions of the artworks that artists can be seen to innovatively connect audiences to the experiences of diverse sets of bodies and that

² Cf. Chapter 1.2 and 1.3, 5-23

they can thus play a role in our understanding of war's human cost, the imaginative ways in which contemporary artists aim to communicate the corporeal experiences of pain and suffering in the 'war on terror' have here been considered as artistic endeavours that can be seen to contribute towards a recovery of corporeal visibility in the public sphere. As has become apparent, the artistic strategies utilized to do so are not only characterized by innovativeness but also by complexity.

In his commentary on the experience of the contemporary Western soldier, Steve McQueen draws attention to the soldier's ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. By means of literally putting a face to the matter of military fatalities, McQueen aims to convey and reiterate the fact that there is an individual life behind every single fatality report. 'I was interested in visualising the soldiers, because soon after I came back from Iraq, those who were losing their lives became just a number',³ McQueen notes and thus his strategy of commemorating each soldier with their own individual postage stamp can be seen to represent a creative attempt at enhancing soldiers' visibility in the public eye.

Created with the permission and co-operation of the soldiers' families, the artist's tribute to contemporary military fatalities rests on public participation, without which the work could undoubtedly not have taken form. The necessity of public participation in the work's realization likewise underwrites the artist's vision to turn the artwork into issued stamps, a conceptualization that also hinges on public involvement as members of the public would have to become actively involved in the work's dissemination. The haphazard encounter with the soldier portrait stamps that would thus be generated would signify an interruption of daily life and produce an unexpected confrontation with contemporary national loss.

Bearing in mind that McQueen had access to the war zone in Iraq due to his commission as an officially appointed war artist through the IWM's Art Commissions Committee, his strategy of turning to commemoration on the home front rather than creating imagery in and of the war zone can moreover be seen to represent an unexpected, unusual and innovative response by the artist that defied expectations.

³ McQueen cited in: Nikkah, op.cit.

It is this creative move of producing atypical imagery that is likewise evident in the artistic exploration of the contemporary soldier's experience in the work of photographers Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin. In their *The Day Nobody Died* photography series and video film the duo, on the one hand, draw attention to the sanitized nature of war reporting and, on the other hand, address the contemporary circumstances and working environment of the soldier at war. Aware of military control and restrictions regarding what they would be able and allowed to document whilst embedded in Afghanistan, the photographers purposefully set out to draw attention to the limits of vision on the front line. To this end they co-opted the military for the production of their work and turned to abstraction as their method of image capture. Forcing viewers to draw on their own mental archives of war imagery and to project content and meaning into the work, Broomberg and Chanarin firmly place the responsibility and 'the burden of imaging'⁴ back on audiences.

Despite the privilege of direct access to the respective war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, both the photographer duo and McQueen thus eschewed the expected, accepted and common representation of the soldiers' experiences, responding instead by conceptualizing creative works that, on the one hand, raise compelling questions regarding soldiers' visibility in the public eye and the ways in which military service and sacrifice are recognized and debated on the home front, and, on the other hand, call for greater acknowledgment of the soldiers' service and sacrifice.

Jeremy Deller, for his *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* project, on the other hand, utilizes an artefact through which he references the killing and injuring of civilians and draws on the expertise of invited guest experts with intimate knowledge of war's violence. Since in deciding to exhibit a car wreck and in bringing this relic of war before audiences Deller can be seen to symbolically lay out 'the bodies of Iraq's killed on the floor of the gallery',⁵ it is apparent that his artistic strategy is clearly aimed at presenting a hard-hitting reminder of the very real suffering experienced by civilians.

⁴ Broomberg, Adam and Oliver Chanarin, 'The Day Nobody Died – Memory of Fire', Presentation at the Brighton Photo Biennial, Brighton, 2008, <http://choppedliver.info/pdf/memoryoffire.pdf>, accessed May 4th 2010

⁵ Jones, 'Jeremy Deller's blown-up car brings the realities of the Iraq war to life', op.cit.

As a symbol of war's devastation, a metaphor for the civilian body, and a concrete piece of evidence of the violence visited on civilians, the car wreck that Deller exhibits functions as a unique conversation starter.

The presence of his guest experts, on the other hand, produces exchanges of information and insights that are unique in terms of their immediacy, openness and unpredictability. In the context of his work, Deller's strategy of taking the car and guest experts on the road is of significance as this move opens up new spaces in which the project is encountered haphazardly. Clearly designed to require audience participation, Deller's conversational project is thus not only fundamentally interactive, but also experimental in nature.

Offering an equally unusual and distinct experience to audiences as Deller, Wafaa Bilal invites audiences to literally engage him via a paintball gun whilst he takes on the role of the civilian under fire for the duration of his month-long interactive performance. As Bilal makes use of the virtual realm of the World Wide Web as the space for the presentation of *Domestic Tension*, he – like Deller – can be seen not only to explore atypical locales for art but also to draw in a broad and diverse viewership.

Innovative in his use of technological means and the video-game resembling design of his work, Bilal incorporates viewers into his performance by firmly positioning them as active participants who must decide whether they will cease the opportunity to aim and shoot at him, and whether – additionally or alternatively – they will engage in conversation with one another and with him. Drawing attention to the experiences of civilians living in the line of fire by means of employing his own body to reference the figure of the civilian, by repositioning his viewers and turning them into shooter-participants, Bilal sheds light on the capabilities of highly technologized warfare and the ways in which soldiers unleash violence remotely.

As Bilal enables a concrete experience for the individual viewers, his interactive performance, like Deller's project, is experimental and materializes through the participation of viewers. In a similar fashion to Deller, Bilal thus shares authorship of the work and allows for high levels of audience engagement. Collapsing spaces and connecting bodies, through their respective works both Deller and Bilal forge situations

in which civilian suffering is rendered real, discernible and comprehensible by means of building encounters and creating opportunities for dialogue. Their respective works are furthermore characterized by the artists' strategies of presenting viewers with choices and of forcing them to take a stance in the encounter with the work.

In contrast, Gregor Schneider's *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells*, in which he references the architecture of the worldwide detention system, offers an unnerving experience in an unfamiliar environment. Akin to Deller and Bilal, Schneider presents his work outside of traditional art spaces, instead utilizing the public space of the beach as the place in which to display his installation. This strategic move of transforming the beach into a temporary art space results in beachgoers encountering the work despite not purposely having sought an art experience.

Free to venture inside the beach cell structure, beachgoers are enabled to explore their physical and psychological reactions to the space that Schneider has constructed for them and are challenged to confront the experience of imprisonment. As Schneider physically constructs the spaces in which suspect bodies are confined and controlled yet neither directly visualizes the bodies nor the violence that materializes within such spaces, the latter – not dissimilar to Broomberg and Chanarin's content-evacuated work – are left for visitors to visualize and to imagine.

At the same time as Schneider's strategy of presenting a disembodied work in effect turns visitors to the installation into substitutes for the bodies that he references, his integration of the visitors can be seen to represent an innovative way of exploring the interplay between bodies and spaces. Shedding light on contemporary spaces that remain largely inaccessible to the public yet constitute significant sites of power and control, Schneider not only skilfully conveys an impression of the effects that the architecture of detention has on incarcerated bodies, but also alludes to the hidden presence of suspect bodies.

Regina José Galindo, in her performance *Confesión*, likewise evokes the absence of suspect bodies from public view, yet, in stark contrast to Schneider, she addresses the experience of the suspect by means of visualizing a violent encounter in graphic detail. Like Bilal, utilizing her own body as a means to bring attention to the

human cost of war, Galindo's exploration of the effects of torture on the body thrust an exemplification of the suspect's experience into full view, rendering it starkly present and hyper-visible, if only momentarily.

Whilst she presents her work in the confines of a gallery space and to an art-seeking audience, Galindo has designed the presentation of her work in a manner that enables her to catch the audience unawares as she kept both the performances' topic and nature undisclosed. As she lends her body to a fleeting yet acute and intense display of violence in the presence of an audience, Galindo – in marked contrast to the other artists – has fashioned her work in a way that leaves little for her audience to imagine. For the audience, the liveness of the performance moreover negates the possibility of spatio-temporal distance from the violence exercised and experienced before their eyes. Additionally, the immediacy of the occurrences is compounded by the audience's inability to interfere in the violent interaction.

Granting them no agency other than the choice to either stay and watch or to leave, Galindo confronts, shocks and incapacitates her audience with her radical performance and relegates the viewers to the role of passive observers. Using and abusing her own body for and in her work, Galindo – like Schneider – can be seen to render the suspect's experience perceptible in a creative commentary that affords a rare insight into the violent conditions faced by bodies that are subjected to detention and interrogation in the early twenty-first century.

In Evelina Rajca's commentary on corporeal experience in the 'war on terror', in contrast to the focus on specific sets of bodies in the artworks of the other artists, the figures of the soldier, the civilian and the suspect are incorporated in an artwork that thematizes the lasting legacy of contemporary war and its violence on surviving bodies. As the figure of the soldier that McQueen and Broomberg and Chanarin concern themselves with, the figure of the civilian as considered in the works of Deller and Bilal, and the figure of the suspect that represents the focus of inquiry in the works of Schneider and Galindo can all be seen to be alluded to in Rajca's work, it becomes evident that she emphasizes general human vulnerability and the capacity to experience suffering and pain.

Drawing attention to the rupture of the body without referring to any set or sets of bodies specifically, Rajca accentuates the universality of the difficulties faced by survivors in their attempts to cope with their physical and psychological war wounds. In order to not only convey the longevity and severity of contemporary 'signature wounds' but also medical efforts at alleviating the pain and suffering that they produce, Rajca has conceptualized *Lockvogel* in a way that raises questions regarding the potential for recovery. Like the other artists, Rajca leaves it up to the viewers to draw their own conclusions regarding the meaning of the work.

Viewers are incorporated into the work through Rajca's strategy of facilitating an interaction between the prosthetic arms and the viewers as she allows viewers to act upon the installation, thus producing reciprocal relations of action and reaction. It is through the encounter and interaction with the installation that viewers can be seen to be enabled to familiarize themselves with an aspect of war that in its devastating dimensions is likely foreign and unknown to them. Thus, the story of violence, rupture and survival that Rajca's prosthetic arms convey can be seen to prompt viewers to consider and acknowledge that the experience of war outlasts war itself and continues to significantly impact on survivors' lives.

7.3 Situating the body and the audience

As illustrated throughout these pages, contemporary artists have evidently employed a diversity of artistic strategies, utilized a variety of artistic media, and have drawn on a range of venues in and through which to present their respective works to diverse audiences. Whilst some exhibit their work in traditional art spaces, others explore more unusual spaces for art, such as the public space of the beach or the virtual realm of the Internet. The latter array of venues produce haphazard encounters, and it is in this context that works of art thus presented are encountered not only by art-seeking audiences, but also by accidental audiences comprised of people from all walks of life.

Some of the works are ephemeral in nature, their volatility resulting in limited opportunities for repeated encounter and engagement with the artwork, whilst others are of a more permanent nature. In the majority of the works, their creator is not in

attendance, i.e. exhibits the work in his or her absence, yet in some cases the artist is present, either when the presentation of the work necessitates the presence such as for the embodied performances of Bilal and Galindo, or in the context of the artist choosing to accompany his work during its exhibition tour as carried out by Deller.

An element of surprise – beyond the unexpected encounter with some of the works outside of the museum-gallery complex – is built into many of the works, albeit of different kinds and to different degrees. Ranging from the indispensability of a surprise factor in Galindo's performance, to the unforeseen difficulties in finding the way through Schneider's beach cells, and to the unanticipated agency of Rajca's prosthetic arms, components of surprise constitute integral aspects of these artworks' designs. Both the unexpectedness of the encounter and the inbuilt surprising aspects that reveal themselves in the engagement with the works undoubtedly assist in the facilitation of audiences' curiosity about the works.

Another factor that helps to generate audience interest in the works – and one that is at the heart of all the artistic strategies – is constituted in the ways in which the artists situate the audience in relation to the works. Specifically, it is the level and manner of audience involvement that is built into the artworks that determine the ways in which audiences can experience the works. As has become evident throughout the discussions, the levels of audience participation vary greatly, ranging from the absolute necessity and indispensability of audience participation in the works of Deller and Bilal – both of which require audience participation not only to materialize but also to take form – to the negation of active participation in the context of Galindo's work.

The manners of involvement that the artists have factored into their works are equally diverse. In some works the input required from audiences is physical, such as in the case of McQueen's soldier portrait stamps that viewers have to pull out of the cabinet in order to be able to view them, in the context of Schneider's beach cells that are explored through viewers' movement within them, in Bilal's performance when viewers take aim and shoot at him, and in the interaction with Rajca's prosthetic arms. In Deller's work, whilst physical input is not required it is permitted as viewers are at liberty to move around and to touch the car wreck that he exhibits.

Audience participation also takes the form of verbal participation as in Deller's and Bilal's conversational works audiences are invited to actively participate by means of engaging in dialogue with Bilal and with Deller's guest experts as well as with one another. It is in the context of these two works in particular that audiences, due to the manners in which they are incorporated into the works, are asked to take a stance vis-à-vis the works' subject matter. In Bilal's work, audience involvement is furthermore characterized by the introduction of a playful element, as is Rajca's work.

In many of the works audiences are moreover charged with the task of drawing on their imagination and of utilizing their interpretative skills: in Schneider's, Deller's, Broomberg and Chanarin's, McQueen's and Rajca's respective works the task is one of imagining the circumstances and experiences of the bodies that are referred to in the works, either because the bodies are not visualized or because the source and nature of the violence they are experiencing is only vaguely referred to in the works. In the context of Broomberg and Chanarin's photo series and video film, in particular, viewers are faced with the task of envisioning that which is alluded to but purposefully abstracted and obscured.

In Galindo's work, in contrast, there is little need to picture before the inner eye the corporeal experience that she thematizes since she visualizes it in raw detail. Here, audience participation is of a particularly passive nature since Galindo merely requires them to observe her whilst she struggles against her tormentor. In fact, the incapacitation of the audience, i.e. their inability to act upon and influence the performance, has intentionally been built into the design of the work. Although the level and manner of audience involvement thus differ considerably, all of the works can be seen to require audiences to bring their own meaning to the encounters with the works and to enable audiences to have a degree of influence over their individual experience of the works. Thus, it is in the relationships between viewers and the works that are facilitated in the encounters and interactions with the works that the works' meaning is established and negotiated.

Just as the ways in which the viewers are situated in relation to the works vary, so do the ways in which the artists have situated the bodies that they are referring to.

Principally a matter of the manner and extent to which the different figures are visualized, the place of the body in the works undoubtedly represents a key consideration in the works' conceptualizations. In the works of McQueen, Bilal, and Galindo, the body is highly visible in works that are starkly embodied: McQueen's portrait stamps directly depict the soldiers that he endeavours to commemorate whilst Bilal and Galindo both put themselves in the place of the figures that they are referring to, i.e. the civilian in the line of fire and the suspect as a subject of torture, respectively.

In the disembodied works of Broomberg and Chanarin, Deller, and Schneider, in contrast, the body is less visible or not at all visible, instead referred to indirectly or, as in the case of Deller's work, substituted through an object. Substitution of the figure is also a central aspect of Rajca's work, as she references the figure of the survivor by means of the prosthetic arms. However, whilst Rajca's work can thus be perceived as being disembodied, it can, conversely, also be considered to be embodied, depending on the individual viewer's notion and perception of corporeality.⁶ In the context of Schneider's installation, viewers can be seen to become the bodies that the work speaks to as visitors to the installation in effect populate the otherwise disembodied space in the suspect bodies' stead. In Bilal's work, on the other hand, viewers take on the role of the source of the violence that Bilal in the place of the civilian is experiencing.

As both the level and manner of audience involvement and the ways in which the body is placed and referred to in the works can be seen to signify core considerations in the artists' strategies for their commentaries on corporeal experience in the 'war on terror', these contemporary artists can be seen to display awareness of a number of challenges that artists face in the visualization of violence and war. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the challenges that artists face are diverse and long-standing, and have long been grappled with by artists.

In particular, awareness of the difficulties of representing corporeal experience of war and violence realistically and mimetically⁷ appears to be exhibited by the artists. Whilst Broomberg and Chanarin, especially, can be seen to demonstrate recognition of

⁶ Cf. Chapter 6.4, 213

⁷ Cf. Chapter 2.3, 47-50

the impossibility of mimetic representation in their content-evacuated work, McQueen, Deller, Schneider, and Rajca, likewise, do not appear to strive for direct visualization of the experience of pain and suffering in mimetic terms, instead referring to it by means of suggesting rather than showing the body in pain.

Bilal and Galindo, on the other hand, evidently venture to illustrate corporeal experience more directly as they both put themselves in the place of the figures that they are referencing, yet they, too, can be seen to recognize that representation inevitably entails abstraction and that they ultimately can merely portray a semblance of the actual experiences that they are staging in their respective performances. Bilal, situating himself in front of a paintball gun, arguably exhibits this awareness as he symbolically and in the context of playful engagement puts himself in the line of fire in his attempt to represent civilian life in a time of war. Galindo, in her visualization of the suspect's experience, abstracts from the reality of torture as she presents her own modified version, has coordinated and scripted the enactment, and subjects herself voluntarily.

With regard to ethical implications that arise in the context of imaging painful corporeal experiences as outlined in Chapter 2, the artists in the ways in which they situate the bodies that they reference appear to largely circumvent such matters as the exploitation of the image subject, voyeuristic viewing, and 'compassion fatigue' in the production and reception of their works.⁸ Considering the problematic of the exploitation of the image subject in terms of aestheticization and commodification of suffering as well as a second wounding of image subjects through documentation as discussed in Chapter 2, it has become apparent that none of the artists other than McQueen and photographer duo Broomberg and Chanarin directly depict the bodies that are referenced in the respective works.

Yet, whilst McQueen utilizes genuine imagery for his soldier portrait stamps, the soldiers are not depicted in the violent experiences that led to their deaths and included in the artwork in the context of their family's consent. Accordingly, even though McQueen utilizes imagery that depicts the subjects that he references, he can be

⁸ Cf. Chapter 2.4, 50-58

seen to evade the problem of exploiting the image subjects by not depicting them in the vulnerable state of dying or as corpses. Broomberg and Chanarin, whilst refraining from visualization of discernible content in their photographs clearly depicting the very soldiers that they reference in the video component of their work, similarly, can be seen to avoid the image subject's exploitation with regard to commodification of suffering or a second wounding by way of documenting and presenting death and dying as the soldiers in the video footage are exclusively depicted whilst alive and well, carrying out mundane tasks during their service in Afghanistan.

With regard to voyeuristic viewing, again, the majority of the artists considered in these pages evidently sidestep the problem of offering the bodies that they reference to a voyeuristic gaze on the part of audiences. Whilst there undoubtedly exists the potential for voyeuristic viewing in the context of Bilal's and Galindo's embodied performances as viewers can, and even must, directly observe the pain and suffering to which both artists voluntarily submit themselves, the voyeuristic gaze that the artists enable is one that they expose themselves to rather than appropriating genuine civilian and suspect bodies in their representations. Thus, even though Bilal's and Galindo's respective performances can be seen to encompass an element of voyeurism their works appear to evade the type of voyeuristic viewing experience characterized by exploitative and objectifying tendencies that they would have enabled if they had presented for view the bodies that they reference rather than themselves.

The problematic of 'compassion fatigue', on the other hand, can be seen to be circumvented across all of the artworks as habituation is unlikely to arise, due to the works' innovativeness and the agency and activity bestowed on audiences that facilitates their engagements with the works. In view of the ways in which the artists have situated their audiences in relation to their respective works, however, it has become clear throughout the discussions that two of the artists in particular could be accused of problematically positioning their viewers. McQueen's choice of utilizing imagery of genuine soldiers for his portrait stamps – even though the images portray them before their deaths – might, especially if the portrait stamps were to be realized as actual stamps issued by Royal Mail and circulating in the public sphere, potentially

upset or offend some members of the public and friends and relatives of the deceased who were against participation or not included in the decision as to whether or not to participate in McQueen's project due to the way in which such stamps would inevitably have to be handled, both by Royal Mail and by the people using them.

Galindo, in rendering the experience of water torture hyper-visible in her direct and drastic performance, on the other hand, exposes her unprepared audience to a visualization of violence that is so disturbing and unsettling that her way of staging her performance and her mode of situating the audience could be deemed unethical. Moreover, the same appears to be applicable to the manner in which Galindo has positioned her collaborator in the context of her performance. This can be seen to be the case since the artist not only tricked the audience into attending and subsequently observing an act of extreme violence which appears to have left some audience members feeling deceived and violated, but also since the artist appears to have exploited and harmed her performance collaborator in the process of their violent interaction on stage. Yet, in order to visualize the experiences that she refers to as realistically as possible, and so as to prevent viewers from refusing to view the performance due to prior knowledge of its content or the bouncer from agreeing to participate, the artist appears to have felt that her clandestine approach, her radical mode of visualization, and her positioning and utilization of both the viewers and the bouncer represented necessary and tenable measures in the realization of her work.

In view of the distinct strategies that the artists considered in these pages have developed and employed in their endeavours to render the corporeal experience of war in the early twenty-first century discernible, it has become clear that the artists have diversely, imaginatively, and at times problematically positioned both the bodies they reference and the audiences in relation to their works. As has been suggested throughout the previous chapters, irrespective of whether the body is directly visualized, merely alluded to, or substituted by objects, the artists or by the viewers themselves, it is always unmistakably made present in all of the works. Specifically, the body's perceptibility, and discernibility of the figures' experiences, it has been proposed, can be seen to materialize in conjunction with the manner in which the

artists have situated the audience. Thus, it is the interdependence and interplay between the placement of the body and the input required from the audience that can be seen to render corporeal experience discernible and to rematerialize audiences' vision. Both the placement of the body and the agency and activity bestowed on the audience are never accidental, but rather can be seen to have been creatively, consciously and purposefully devised.

By means of creatively appropriating the corporeal experiences of the 'war on terror', the artists are thus generating thought-provoking visualizations that can be seen to speak to the circumstances of contemporary warfare and contemporary corporeal experiences even though their representations might not be based on first-hand witnessing or entirely rooted in facts. In order to speak to the body in pain, the majority of the artists discussed in these pages, in embodied and disembodied works alike, have conceptualized works that refrain from graphic visualizations of the pain and suffering produced in the 'war on terror'.

Rather than rendering the body in pain directly visible – in what can be seen to constitute a move away from explicit accounts – these artists strive to relate and connect audiences to corporeal experience by prompting them to 'fill in the blanks' and, to this end, to employ their imagination. By referring to the experience of violence without directly showing it, the artists can be seen to circumvent the problem of potentially producing disengagement and rejection of the work when viewers feel offended, alienated or overwhelmed rather than drawn to and interested in the work.

As the discussion of Galindo's work in Chapter 5 has shown, Galindo's work differs in this regard from the works of the other artists as she appears to explore the route of aiming for direct and graphic representation and does not shy away from provoking, shocking and even harming her audience. Her work can thus be seen to indicate that the struggle over whether abstract and indirect, or literal and direct representations are better able to document the body in pain remains.⁹

Regardless of the approach taken, what has become apparent throughout the discussions of the diverse artistic strategies is that – as artists experiment with different

⁹ Cf. Chapter 2.3, 48

ways and means to communicate contemporary corporeal experience in war and present a wide range of creative interpretations – these artists can be seen to exhibit aptitude for creative inspection. The skilful and innovative ways in which artists such as these strive to inform us about the killing, wounding, scarring and suffering in the ‘war on terror’ bears testament to their creativity, resourcefulness, inventiveness and originality. Although the works address different aspects and facets of the experiences of bodies, they are united and uniform in their endeavour to convey insights into contemporary pain and suffering in war. Bringing form and visibility to extreme human experiences by means of creative imagination and interpretation, these artists thus craft a narrative of bodily violation in the ‘war on terror’ that speaks to and re-affirms the centrality of injuring and killing in war.

7.4 Corporeal experience in sharp focus

As has been indicated throughout these pages, contemporary artists who comment on war and violence by conceptualizing artworks that speak to corporeal experiences of pain and suffering have to be considered as following in the long tradition of artistic representation of war throughout history. Against the background of an historical lens on art on war it has become apparent that contemporary artists such as those discussed in these pages exemplify the fact that war and its human cost evidently continue to capture the imagination of creative practitioners. As the development of art on war as discussed in Chapter 2 underscores, artists have long been attentive and perceptive commentators who involve themselves in the representation of various aspects of war.

The ways in which they have creatively commented on war has throughout history developed towards the utilization of increasingly diverse artistic media and spaces in and through which to present works of art. It is against this background that artists have also long been grappling with difficulties in the representation of war and violence in their endeavours to develop artistic strategies through which to convey the violent circumstances of war. In view of the long history of Western art on war it becomes evident that artists have not only creatively addressed and represented in skilful ways what human beings are capable of doing to one another, but through such

visualizations also contributed to debates about war and shaped perceptions of war and its violence.

Situated in this legacy, contemporary artists who examine the rubble of the 'war on terror' direct our gaze towards the recent past and present. Like their predecessors devoid of the vantage point of hindsight, they inspect a time of war whilst they are situated in its midst. With this in mind, it appears suitable to suggest that contemporary artists can be seen to function akin to the light shed into the destructive chaos of war as symbolized in a flame depicted in Picasso's *Guernica*: in the upper middle of the painting an arm reaching out of a window holds in its hand a torch-like flame, illuminating the atrocious scene and therein dispensing light into a world that is otherwise shrouded in darkness.

The light that contemporary artists are shedding on the 'war on terror', it has been suggested here, has in particular been focused on the corporeal experience of war's violence and therein illuminated both the centrality of the body in war and the scope of contemporary corporeal experiences of pain and suffering. As light enhances and facilitates visibility, positioning the body as the centre of attention signifies a contribution to its discernibility in the larger narrative and perception of war. Arguably, examining a present and unresolved conflict presents a more challenging undertaking than an assessment of the past, through retrospective observation. Yet, in contrast to backward-looking examination, it is contemporary commentary on war and violence that can be seen to hold the potential to contribute to awareness of the violent circumstances of war, specifically of war's disastrous effects on bodies.

In attending to contemporary socio-political realities in a preemptive manner, contemporary artists can thus be seen to intervene in debates on war and violence at a time in which the history and vision of the 'war on terror' are still being negotiated and written. Operating in an information environment characterized by competing actors and contested visions,¹⁰ contemporary artists can then be seen to participate in the visualization of the 'war on terror' through their creative commentary on life and death in extremis.

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter 1.1, 3, 8-9

The vision that is conveyed in and through such contemporary works of art is one in which corporeal experiences of the 'war on terror' can be seen to be rendered less abstract and remote. As through the development of unique artistic strategies the pain and suffering produced in war is candidly scrutinized, contemporary artists can be seen to draw back the curtain on bodily violation in the 'war on terror' and to present compelling reminders not only of the destructiveness of war but also of audiences' detached perception as they, rather than experiencing it directly, experience war via mediation.

Rather than a safe haven, outside of and beyond worldly violence, works such as those considered in this thesis thus challenge audiences to look directly at the carnage of war and to engage with the violence of our time. It is in this context and in view of the fact that – as evidenced in the works that have been discussed here – creative commentary on corporeal experiences of the 'war on terror' has not only been varied in the artistic strategies that have been utilized but also been stemming from artists from around the globe, that the question as to the artists' motivations arises. As artists can be seen to freely choose their topics of inquiry and as they have no obligation to produce art that concerns itself with political themes, the reasons that prompt them to comment on war and violence, that is the motivations that underlie artistic production, can be diverse.

American art critic Peter Plagens, for example, notes that the motivations for addressing violent conflict encompass a variety of rationales: 'plying one's trade, making a public statement, jockeying for a higher place in the critical hierarchy and, of course, simply expressing oneself'.¹¹ The primary rationale informing individual artistic productivity, therefore, might be difficult to discern. In consideration of the works that have been considered in this thesis, however, it would appear that their creators not only prioritize political subject matter over marketability – which is not to say that the two are incompatible – but also over notions regarding *L'art-pour-l'art*.

Whilst they cast a sober eye on the human cost of the 'war on terror' and direct and focus our gaze on the body in pain, these artists do not offer solutions. Yet, that is

¹¹ Plagens, Peter, 'Turning Tragedy Into Art', *Newsweek*, (October 8th 2001), 55

arguably not their task. They can, however, be seen to carve out a critical space in which to think and to reflect on the place of the body in war. In doing so they can be seen to prompt audiences to inspect their vision of contemporary war and its violence. Thus, as the lens on the 'war on terror' in the hands of artists is directly focused on corporeal experiences of pain and suffering in ways that endeavour to connect audiences to the experiences that are referenced in the works, this trend in contemporary art, it has been suggested here, can be seen to trouble our ways of seeing.

Accordingly, although works of art on the 'war on terror' throughout the last decade might not have been 'really game-changing'¹² in the sense that it did not spark a halt to the war endeavour, it can be seen to constitute a critical intervention in contemporary debates on war and violence and an intervention in modes of perception. Such artistic intervention can be seen to represent a direct engagement with contemporary socio-political realities that offers critical perspectives that problematize contemporary corporeal experience in war. Employing a range of artistic strategies to forge a space in which audiences, in and through the encounter with and experience of the works, are made aware of and enabled to perceive corporeal experiences in the 'war on terror', these artists can be seen to offer a window on the war that encourages body-centered ways of seeing and thinking.

In creatively addressing the violation of bodies in the context of contemporary warfare, these artists thus speak to a fundamental reality of war, namely the fact that warfare remains fundamentally embodied and that killing and injuring remain central to its exercise. Therein they can be seen to go some lengths towards taking the body out of the 'blind spot' and to make corporeal experience central to our thinking about war.

¹² Kakutani, Michiko. 'Outdone by Reality', *The New York Times*, September 1st 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/us/sept-11-reckoning/culture.html?_r=1, accessed September 15th 2011

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