



MEMORY OF FIRE

THE WAR OF IMAGES AND IMAGES OF WAR
CURATED BY JULIAN STALLABRASS

03.10.08 > 16.11.08

BPB.ORG.UK

**BRIGHTON
PHOTO
BIENNIAL
2008**

photoworks





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9th October 2008

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Villagers collecting scrap from a crashed spacecraft, surrounded by thousands of white butterflies. Altai Territory. RUSSIA. 2000.
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IRAQ THROUGH THE LENS OF VIETNAM
BPB Keynote exhibition
University of Brighton Gallery, Brighton
03.10.08 – 15.11.08

WAR MEMORIAL
Julian Germain
Aspex, Portsmouth
04.10.08 – 23.11.08

PHOTOGRAPHING THE FIRST WORLD WAR
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THE SUBLIME IMAGE OF DESTRUCTION
Broomberg and Chanarin, Simon Norfolk and Paul Seawright
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Curated by Catherine Moriarty
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PHOTOGRAPHY & REVOLUTION: MEMORY TRAILS THROUGH THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT
Group Exhibition
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Geert Van Kesteren, *August 4, 2003, (near) Tikrit, Iraq* © Geert van Kesteren

Brighton Photo Biennial is delighted to present its third edition. Curated by Julian Stallabrass, *Memory of Fire: the War of Images and Images of War* will run for six weeks from Friday 3 October to Sunday 16 November 2008.

This will be our largest Biennial to date and is set to bring you world-class photography through ten curated exhibitions across the South East, an extensive education programme and events throughout the festival period. BPB 2008 builds upon and expands the previous two events both conceptually and geographically.

The Biennial is dedicated to collaborating with partner venues and visual arts organisations to show to the widest possible audience high quality and international photography in its most expanded form, referencing related platforms including the performative, moving image, mobile technologies and web-based work; exhibit recent and newly-commissioned work; and encourage and showcase local talent by working closely with Brighton Photo Fringe.

Our Guest Curator, Julian Stallabrass, is a thought provoking writer and critic who lectures in modern and contemporary art at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, and has written extensively on the contemporary

art world, including books on Internet art and young British art. He is also a photographer who has exhibited and published internationally.

For BPB 2008 *Memory of Fire: the War of Images and Images of War*, Stallabrass explores photographic images of war, their making, use and circulation, and their currency in contemporary society. Over the past year, he has been working with galleries and visual arts organisations in and around Brighton & Hove and across the South East to develop an exciting series of exhibitions, projects, publications and events. He has curated a programme of exhibitions presenting photography, film and online material produced and circulated in time of war, and analyses how images have been shaped by changing social and political conditions from the Vietnam era to the present. The exhibitions include images produced by over thirty-five photojournalists, artists and non-professionals, bringing together historical, contemporary and newly commissioned photographic works.

Stallabrass's bold curatorial theme brings focus to the geographically expanded network of partners and further reinforces the Biennial as a festival where each edition is defined by a uniquely articulated curatorial concept. The Biennial and its partners are grateful to him for his commitment and the rigour with which he has defined and approached this ambitious project, and for his willingness to work collaboratively in developing the exhibitions programme.

For this third edition, the Biennial extends its geographical boundaries to include venues in Battle, Chichester, Portsmouth and Winchester whilst consolidating its presence in Brighton with three exhibition venues, a series of participatory and publicly sited projects, and, for the first time, the new Cultural and Information Hub shared with Brighton Photo Fringe, alongside an extensive events programme. Stallabrass acknowledges that the spread of the Biennial across the South East will mean that many viewers may see only a handful of exhibitions or events. So the use of a strong driving curatorial theme and the framing of each element is crucial. This will be achieved by the Biennial free guide, programme, retrospective book and BPB 2008 website.

BPB's core partners are the University of Brighton, Photoworks and Arts Council England as well as our partner venues and arts and education organisations in the region. The Biennial is based at the University of Brighton who fund the Biennial both directly and indirectly, and continues to be an important source of support. Photoworks, the UK's leading photographic commissioning and publishing agency in the public sector, is both publishing and production partner with the Biennial. The Biennial is grateful to both organisations for their continued practical support, advice and help. Arts Council England South East is our main core funder and we appreciate their ongoing recognition of the value and significance of the Biennial to the UK photography sector and audiences in general. We appreciate, too, the ongoing support from Brighton & Hove City Council.

The partner venues have worked closely with the Biennial to realise the vision for BPB 2008, accommodating the wishes and aspirations of the Guest Curator, the invited artists and lenders of work. The University of Brighton Gallery is hosting the keynote exhibition, *Iraq through the lens of Vietnam*, which reappraises the production, distribution and consumption of photographic images during the Vietnam war, exploring their influence on public opinion and subsequent circulation, and how this compares and contrasts with the current conflict in Iraq, with particular reference to the impact of the internet and digital technologies. Fabrica will present the world premiere of a work by the internationally renowned artist Thomas Hirschhorn and Lighthouse will stage the UK premiere of two ambitious multimedia installations by photojournalist Geert Van Kesteren. The University of Brighton Design Archives explores the historic use of photography as part of graphic poster campaigns. Further afield, to the east, at Charleston, Photoworks is presenting rarely seen images by Frank Hurley, and the work of Harriet Logan is explored at the Independent Photographers Gallery. De La Warr Pavilion will present a group show of contemporary work by internationally renowned artists, Broomberg and Chanarin, Simon Norfolk and Paul Seawright. To the west, Pallant House Gallery is presenting the first ever exhibition of the critically acclaimed series, *Agent Orange*, by Philip Jones Griffiths, whilst Fotonet at The Winchester Gallery has co-

Frank Hurley, *Supporting troops of the 1st Australian Division walking on a duckboard track near Hoooge in the Ypres Sector, Menin Road Area, Ypres, Belgium, 5 October 1917*. Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales



Harriet Logan, 1997. *A young girl learning to read in Latifa's illegal home school in Kabul. Every day these children risked beating from the Taliban in order to get an education.* © Harriet Logan

curated a group show of photographers including work by Susan Meiselas, Jonathan Moller, Roberto Salas, Sebástiao Salgado and Antonio Turok. The artist Julian Germain has been commissioned by Aspex to produce a participation led exhibition comprising photography produced by active and former serving military personnel based in Portsmouth and beyond.

Education activities are an important part of the Biennial's programme and BPB 2008 will focus on participation, collaboration, dialogue and debate. Alongside the BPB 2008 Education Programme of artist led projects, each venue will offer a diverse programme of talks, events and learning opportunities for school/education groups.

The Biennial continues to work in conjunction with Brighton Photo Fringe, as independent organisations in close partnership. Each organisation complements the role and scope of the other to create a partnership based on mutual understanding and trust. The continued development of the Biennial and Brighton Photo Fringe has been made possible through the ongoing support of volunteers and student internships whose contribution is deeply appreciated.

BPB 2008 reaches the vast online community through a new website that functions as a platform for ideas and discussion around the theme of photography and conflict. Users from around the world are invited to actively participate in the Biennial by posting comments and uploading images. This enhanced website, characterised by the principles of social networking, is a crucial feature providing coherence, encouraging public participation and celebrating the democratisation of photography as a form of expression brought about by the digital and online revolution.

The bold curatorial theme and 2008 website, coupled with the geographical and conceptual widening of the Biennial, enables us to reach the widest possible audience and create exciting opportunities for participation and engagement. Through these developments and the BPB Education Programme, the Biennial acknowledges the role of photography in everyone's lives.

Brighton Photo Biennial continues to act as a dynamic and vibrant organisation serving as a catalyst for partnerships and as a focus for the unique cultural context and photographic community of Brighton & Hove and the South East.

Abu Ghraib, 1.53am, 20 October 2003. Detainee is handcuffed in the nude to a bed and has a pair of panties covering his face.



This is one of the torturers at Abu Ghraib, reflecting on how she is haunted by what she did:

On the rare occasion that I forget to take my medicine, I usually have nightmares. When that guy was screaming in the shower, I hear that in the middle of the night. It'll wake me up, freak me out. It's always going to be there. The way he was screaming, it was just a death scream. He was screaming at the top of his lungs constantly. And you're right in the next room. It's like it's vibrating your whole body, it's so loud. I don't think I'll ever get that out of my head.¹

There are many things that cannot be photographed, and many more that, for all kinds of reasons, are not photographed. But Lynnndie England's statement, in which the trauma of another is buttressed between a consideration of her own, points to the silence and stillness of those notorious

images, to all that they do not show, but which they gesture towards.

Torture (and its photographic depiction) has become central to the way in which our current wars are waged and viewed, and by extension to the very image of the neoliberal system. Torture is the central factor in Naomi Klein's examination of the system in her book, *The Shock Doctrine*. This takes head on the conservative association between democracy and free markets, which pretends that there is a perfect correlation between the two, so that communism and an utter lack of freedom sit at one end of the spectrum, and the untrammelled free market and perfect personal freedom at the other. What Klein shows, remorselessly and in graphic detail, is a different association—long familiar in the 'developing' world: that the imposition of free markets is so unpopular and drives so many people into penury that it can only be done against democracy, and that terror and torture are its inevitable companions.²

Yet the kind of photography that galvanised the anti-war movement around the world at the time of Vietnam seems to have lost its power. While in the Vietnam era, torture (from the electrodes of the CIA cell to the graduated increase of pain that was supposed to break an entire nation) was the secret of state policy, and was revealed in part through photography; now torture is the overt policy but its effects remain often unrepresented, or when they are, they pass with little comment or effect. This essay will examine the reasons why.

In doing so, it will consider the changing relationships between military strategy, the conduct of war, the media, and its technology. All are intimately connected, and all have been undergoing deep transformations. To take one example, the satellite phone first became small and cheap enough to be used widely in reporting the Iraq War, and that development meshed with 24-hour news and the system of embedding reporters to produce a focus on an intense, spectacular, but oddly bloodless and narrow view of the war.

The Iraq War was the most intensively reported in history, involving more than double the journalists as at the height of media interest during the Vietnam War. Yet it is curious, out of the resulting cascade of

images that minute-by-minute filled television screens, websites and the pages of newspapers and magazines, how few seemed to stick in the mind, and to become the key images that defined the character of the war. A number of photographs had done that for the Vietnam War—notably, Eddie Adams' 1968 photograph of the summary execution of a guerrilla suspect, Nick Ut's 1971 photograph of a girl running down a road having been burned by napalm, and Ron Haeberle's photographs of the massacre at My Lai, and much of the work of Philip Jones Griffiths.

The amateur images taken at Abu Ghraib did threaten for a time to become the signal images of the war, and they still stand as such (along with a vast number of other images of the routine destruction and humiliation that the occupying forces dispense) in the Arabic media. They have no difficulty deciphering such images. Why do we?

The major military innovation of the Iraq War regarding the media was, of course, the embedding of journalists. Under this system, journalists, TV crews and photographers gained relatively unrestricted access to the war at the price of being tied to a particular troop unit for the duration of the embed. The system was devised to grant journalists largely uncensored access to military operations while strongly encouraging them to take a positive view of what they saw. Since many embedded journalists were placed in dangerous circumstances under the protection of the troops, and lived with them for extended periods, this tended to foster a strong identification with their new comrades. They were generally very grateful for the access to spectacular stories, admiring of their protectors, and appreciative of the troops' various travails.³

Yet they were also aware of the disadvantages of this privileged view of the war, especially in being tied to particular troops units, which often had little information about the wider circumstances of the war. David Zucchino summarised his seven-week series of embeds for the *LA Times*, praising the access the embed system had granted him, but continues:

...that same access could be suffocating and blinding. Often I was too close or confined to comprehend the war's broad sweep. I could not interview survivors of



Philip Jones Griffiths, South Vietnam, Quin Hon. US Soldiers with a group of captured Vietcong suspects, 1967. © Philip Jones Griffiths/Magnum Photos.



Ashley Gilbertson, *Army policy is to leave dead Iraqis for other Iraqis to recover and bury. The body of the Madhi Army fighter was an object of curiosity for GIs, one of whom takes a snapshot with his digital camera.* © Ashley Gilbertson



Ashley Gilbertson, *Fallujah, 2004. Marines run past a mosque American jets destroyed after insurgents used it to attack them.*

Iraqi civilians killed by US soldiers or speak to Iraqi fighters trying to kill Americans. ... I had no idea what ordinary Iraqis were experiencing. I was ignorant of Iraqi government decisions and US command strategy.⁴

The embed produced a narrow view of the war, then, and one focused on the experiences of the troops. Despite frequent laments of its deficiencies, it continues to dominate. Embedding fitted the demands of the news organisations in the US and the UK, for spectacular, live or at least up-to-the-minute reports, high on affect and low on analysis, and likely to stiffen patriotic sentiment.

The embeds were largely uncensored—though understandably they were not allowed to report troop locations and other sensitive information that might have been of use to the Iraqi armed forces, and they were not allowed to show US casualties until their families had been informed.⁵ As the system developed, however, it turned out that soldiers at various levels evolved their own set of rules, which, in concert with the sensibilities of the mass media, produced a highly controlled and sanitised view of the war. This can be seen clearly in the contrast between the work of the embedded photojournalists and those working as ‘unilaterals’ among the Iraqis. In the latter, the experience of Iraqi civilians and resistance fighters is reflected, and the picture of the war is darker, bloodier, and more desperate. In their work, something of the systematic destruction of a deeply damaged but still functioning society can be glimpsed. The US armed forces were not fond of unilaterals, often stopped them from reporting, and were sometimes responsible for their deaths: Terry Lloyd of ITN was assassinated by them, and the Baghdad office of Al-Jazeera was bombed in April 2003, killing their correspondent in the city.⁶

As the occupation continued, photography became increasingly constrained, partly because Iraq became extremely dangerous for anyone thought to have any link to the occupation, or even anyone thought to have any money or professional status, and partly because of an evolving system of censorship. In an audio blog, photojournalist Michael Kamber described the situation:

Today in Iraq there’s so many things we can’t photograph any more. Car bombings and suicide bombings are now off limits, it’s actually illegal to photograph those scenes. We can’t photograph wounded soldiers without their consent. We can’t photograph dead soldiers, coffins of dead soldiers... We can’t photograph battle-damaged vehicles, we can’t photograph hospitals, morgues are off limits now. So pretty much everything that gives evidence that there’s a war going on is almost impossible to photograph.⁷

There is, in any case, little desire among the US public to see such things, little motive for



Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, *Najaf, 9 August 2004. A fighter for the Madhi Army walks the streets of the old city.*

the media to show them (indeed, there is a strong disincentive, since they are poison to advertisers), and so the photographic view of the war became bloodless and anodyne.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly in terms of the military management of photography, there is the extent to which the war was staged for the cameras. Most famously, the war opened with the ‘shock and awe’ assault on the Iraqi infrastructure, a bloody firework display intended to terrify the Iraqi Army into surrender, and to broadcast the extent of US military prowess to the world. Reporters, photographers and TV crews in the Palestine Hotel had a ringside view of the bombardment taking place across the river. In this, and in similar staged photo-ops, the media were co-opted as part of the military force. The combination of censorship, both military and civilian, of embedding and military staged events led to a predominant view of the war that was about the courage, resilience, technological prowess and competence of the troops.

The profession of photojournalism has been in long decline since the fall of the illustrated magazines that had made their best photographers stars, and had lavished resources upon them. While the decline is old, and was caused by the rise of TV news, it has been exacerbated by other, newer features, including the extraordinarily wide ownership of digital cameras, particularly phone cameras, and the ease of sending such photographs which has produced the rise of (usually unpaid) ‘citizen-journalists’.

Economically pressed news organisations often prefer to provide cameras (but little training) to willing locals rather than fly professionals out to some scene of conflict. Rates paid for the publication of newspaper photographs have been in steep decline.

Nick Davies, in his book *Flat Earth News*, argues that the news industries, and particularly the newspapers, have been remade as purely commercial concerns.⁸ While the old press barons ran them for their influence over public opinion and state policy, and took the quality of news seriously, profit is now the prime motive. As a result, stories are covered with remarkable rapidity, and most proceed unchecked to publication. Papers tend to reproduce with little change the material handed down from the press agencies (which are subject to the same pressures) and PR agencies, including those



Anja Neidringhaus, *Fallujah*, 14 November 2004. A 1st Division Marine carries a good luck mascot in his backpack as his unit pushed into western neighbourhoods of Fallujah.

of the military. As a result, it is the received opinion that it is the quickest and easiest to convey, and cliché reigns. These pressures affect the context in which photojournalism is seen, its captioning and the stories that surround it. The photographs take their place in a press that has become degraded in public opinion, and is (often rightly) thought of as unreliable, gullible, mendacious and venal.

Davies argues that the fate of the news media under this set of priorities is disastrous for readers and for society itself.⁹ Once again, this is an area where the operation of unrestrained capitalism works against the interests of democracy. With our current wars, it allows, without sufficient

public examination or debate, the exercise of brutal and totalitarian methods against those who are unfortunate enough to live in areas of strategic importance under inconvenient dictators. The US has engaged in kidnapping, murder, and torture of those it has chosen as its opponents. Gulags, both secret and publicised, are set up across the globe. Children are seized and held to extort information from their parents.¹⁰ These are Nazi tactics, yet they pass with inadequate comment from the democratic press, at least in the nations of the combatants, and with little published photographic representation.

One consequence of this debility of the press is that the Coalition’s opponents are easily and casually characterised as unthinking religious fanatics, with whom the Western viewer can have little sympathy or understanding. Some of them, particularly the foreign Al Qaeda fighters, are that, and have amply proved that they have as little regard for the lives of Iraqis as they have for those of the invaders. Their actions are viewed with horror by many in the Arab world. Most of the resistance, however, are not, and as Jonathan Steele argues, their opposition to the occupation of their country emerges from a deep historical awareness of the imperial roles that the US and the UK have long played in the region, confirmed by the brutality of the invasion and the occupation.¹¹ A suitable model in thinking of them would be to compare them to the resisters to any occupying force, from the French Resistance to Algerian freedom fighters or the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

Contemporary photojournalism exceeded, as it always has, the bounds of its publication in the mass media, and some photographers (even some of those embedded) evolved sensitive and intelligent responses to the terrible situation in Iraq. We may get some sense of its place in the current variety of war photography by comparing photojournalism with these other types; against the stately, reserved, severely composed ‘aftermath’ images that dominate the depiction of war in the museum, photojournalism obviously embodies speed and intimacy, both of which are written into its style as well as its content. Just as it was for Larry Burrows, the focus falls above all on the face, and on readable emotion. Against citizen journalism and the ghastly amateur productions of the troops (as at Abu Ghraib),

photojournalism embodies professional values; while its aesthetic often encompasses the apparently casual, it bears the sheen of photographic competence, and the visual quality of high-definition digital cameras or fine film and sharp lenses. As against official military photography (which shares the same production values) it has too great a variety to be dismissed as mere propaganda, and does not so readily fall into generic categories. As against the photographs of atrocity, of the bloodied corpses of those blasted by modern weaponry that circulate in certain magazines and websites, published photojournalism is (as we have seen) tempered and restrained, standing on its dignity.

Given all the circumstances laid out here, it is unsurprising that widespread suspicion surrounds such photojournalism. News management by the state and the military has made people rightly sceptical of the manufactured images that they see in the newspapers and on TV. The ease and speed with which digital photography can be altered (along with a few well-publicised examples of photojournalists doing just that), and awareness of the extent to which meaning can be manipulated by selective framing, produces in many viewers deep distrust. In blogs, the meanings of photographs are debated passionately and often furiously, with political partisans of all sides finding reasons to dismiss any photographic evidence laid before them which challenges their views. Here, at least, photojournalism is thought to matter. The most fundamental factor, though, that separates our world from that of the Vietnam era is the lack of an opposition with a cogent world view, that could assemble the evidence—words, pictures and video—into a condemnation of the war that could not be ignored, that would gnaw at us and torture us as it did many in the late 1960s. Yet the sheer intensity of commercial competition to war imagery (from celebrity culture to YouTube to the fictional renderings of the ‘war on terror’ such as *24*), the speed of gossip and self-fashioning through trivia, all this make it too easy to forget that bloody subterranean murmur that should stain our whole existence.

A biennial of a few exhibitions and events is, of course, powerless to alter these large forces. It sets out to provide some resources for thinking about the range of war imagery

and the role that photojournalism plays in the media and democratic politics. For if, through the actions of our troops and allies abroad, we have come to behave like Nazis, and if that cannot be readily grasped conceptually or in pictures, and if it does not cause a fundamental questioning of our politics, then something about our democracy is broken.

1 Lynndie England, as cited in Philip Gourevitch/ Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure: A War Story*, Picador, London 2008, p. 276.
2 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Allen Lane, London 2007.
3 Many accounts of the war by embedded journalists are gathered in the interviews in Bill Katovsky/ Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media War in Iraq*, The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut 2003.
4 *L.A. Times*, May 2, 2003, cited in Bill Katovsky/ Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media War in Iraq*, The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut 2003, p. 142.
5 The rules for embedding are reproduced in Bill Katovsky/ Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media War in Iraq*, The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut 2003, pp. 401-17.
6 Terry Lloyd was shot in the head by US forces in Basra in 2003; in October 2006, an Oxfordshire coroner’s court ruled that he had been unlawfully killed.
7 Podcast on Battlespace project: <http://www.daylightmagazine.org/podcast/june2008> See also: <http://www.battlespaceonline.org/> Accessed 10 August 2008.
8 Nick Davies, *Flat Earth News*, Chatto & Windus, London 2008.
9 Davies, *Flat Earth News*, pp. 396-7.
10 Morris & Gourevitch, *Standard Operating Procedure*, p. 115.
11 Jonathan Steele, *Defeat: Why They Lost Iraq*, I.B. Tauris, London 2008, ch. 11.



IRAQ THROUGH THE LENS OF VIETNAM

BPB 2008 Keynote Group Exhibition
University of Brighton Gallery, Brighton
03.10.08 – 15.11.08

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have reactivated memories of past conflicts, particularly Vietnam, and of the use of photographic images in stoking and opposing the war. This exhibition brings together photographs from all sides of the conflicts, exploring an environment of lens-based images at a time of rapid image transmission: from digital devices, phone cameras, and of vast mass media conglomerates, to independent websites and news-savvy resistance and terrorist organisations. Exhibiting photographers include Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, Ashley Gilbertson, Philip Jones Griffiths and Don McCullin.

WAR MEMORIAL

Julian Germain

Aspex, Portsmouth

04.10.08 – 23.11.08

Since the invention of simple box cameras, those in military service have taken pictures of the places they have visited and the things they have done. In this new commission, artist Julian Germain asks those who are or have been in military service to show and talk about their photographs. The evolving exhibition will provide an opportunity to explore the meaning of such images.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Frank Hurley

Charleston Farmhouse, Firle, Nr Lewes

31.08.08 – 02.11.08

Frank Hurley's First World War pictures have a modern air that runs counter to the usual stock of images that we hold of that time. Frustrated by the inability of his bulky, single-shot camera to adequately represent the events he witnessed, Hurley resorted to the controversial practice of montaging his photographs to create composite scenes. At a time when digital manipulation casts suspicion over the too perfectly realised image, Hurley's work illuminates the present.

THE SUBLIME IMAGE OF DESTRUCTION

Broomberg and Chanarin, Simon Norfolk and Paul Seawright

De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea

03.10.08 – 04.01.09

Among the genres wrought in the recent rise of museum photography has been the battlefield 'aftermath' image: art photographers following in the wake of armies and documenting the image of destruction. Ranging from the painterly and lyrical to something quieter and more bleak, these contemplative images stand in contrast to the news-driven work of photojournalism.

DESIGNS FOR SOLIDARITY

Curated by Catherine Moriarty

Design Archives

University of Brighton Foyer, Brighton

22.09.08 – 24.11.08

Taking a poster held within the University of Brighton Design Archives as a starting point, this display considers how photography was incorporated in graphic contexts as part of campaigning strategies in opposition to US intervention in Vietnam, and the way such photographs came to be recognised internationally as emblematic of oppression and armed struggle.

THE INCOMMENSURABLE BANNER

Thomas Hirschhorn

Fabrica, Brighton

03.10.08 – 16.11.08

Through an 18-metre long banner comprised of horrific pictures depicting bodies torn apart by modern munitions, in circulation online and in print, Thomas Hirschhorn confronts us with what is excluded from the mainstream mass media and asks us to reflect on the politics of that exclusion. This will be the projects international premiere.

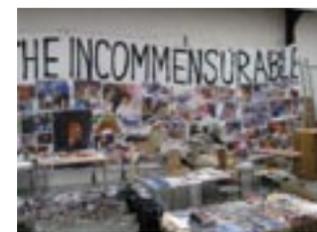
UNVEILED: VOICES OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Harriet Logan

Independent Photographers Gallery, Battle

03.10.08 – 15.11.08

The effect of war on the lives of women has often been under-represented in a photographic industry that thrives on dramatic images of combat. For this exhibition Harriet Logan explores the effects of war and a repressive regime on the lives of women in Afghanistan living through Taliban rule and its subsequent demise.



WHY MISTER, WHY? and BAGHDAD CALLING

Geert van Kesteren

Lighthouse, Brighton

03.10.08 – 16.11.08

Drawing upon live online newsfeeds, video, audio, print, mobile phone images and van Kesteren's own photographs, these two multi-media projects explore the Iraq war from the point of view of the coalition forces, the occupied population and displaced Iraqi refugees.

AGENT ORANGE

Philip Jones Griffiths

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

30.09.08 – 16.11.08

Philip Jones Griffiths is best known for his 1971 book *Vietnam Inc.*, a remarkable condemnation of the 'American War'. Yet Griffiths continued to go back to Vietnam, recording the horrific long term legacy of the defoliant Agent Orange on the South Vietnamese population.

PHOTOGRAPHY & REVOLUTION: MEMORY TRAILS THROUGH THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT

Group Exhibition

Winchester Gallery, Winchester

03.10.08 – 07.11.08

Featuring work by a number of photographers including Susan Meiselas, Jonathan Moller, Roberto Salas and Sebastião Salgado, this exhibition traces the use of photography by the Latin American left, from the Mexican revolution to the recent wave of radicalism that has swept the continent.



Images: from top
Details from *War Memorial* by Julian Germain, 2008. Photographs © Steve Armon / Tricia Cane

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Bailey August 22, 2006 – Spc. Antoine Davis, from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division patrols Tal Afar, as an Iraqi child walks alongside. This photo appeared on www.army.mil © U.S Army

Frank Hurley
Looking out from the entrance of a captured Pill-Box on to the shell ravaged battlefield 1917/1918
© Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales

Poster designed by Félix Beltrán
Poster published to mark the 11th anniversary of the Liberation of South Vietnam by the OCLAE (Latin American and

Caribbean Students' Association), 1971
© International Council of Graphic Design Associations Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives

Simon Norfolk
Street corner where five boys were killed. US soldiers came to destroy an Iraqi tank that had been left behind. They threw in an incendiary grenade and

left. People came to watch the burning tank and when its ammunition exploded, five were killed. Street 60, Mechanical City, Dora, Baghdad 19-27 April 2003
© Simon Norfolk

Images: from top
A mobile phone photograph of exiled Iraqi civilians: a Muslim family celebrates Christmas at home. Image collected by Geert Van Kesteren

Harriet Logan
Fahrida lost her leg during a mujahideen mortar attack in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 1997
© Harriet Logan

Anonymous photographer
FMLN Special Forces training to avoid land mines, El Salvador, 1987
© Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen, El Salvador

Thomas Hirschhorn, *The Incommensurable Banner* (studio view), 2007
© Thomas Hirschhorn

Philip Jones Griffiths
Quynh Lan, 11 years old, at her home in A Luoi, Vietnam. Her father was sprayed many times with Agent Orange.
© Philip Jones Griffiths / Magnum Photos

Throughout history, war has confronted photography with the limits and possibilities of its aesthetic and means. The relationship between war and photography mirrors that crisis of representation synonymous with modern times, the ever-deteriorating link between experience and knowledge, and the destruction of traditional fields of perception. Today, war photography in the museum has turned into a medium of the aftermath. This is because the technological nature of today's warfare has resulted in a war that is nearly impossible to document as it happens. Surveying sites ruined by war and catastrophe – Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Beirut, Baghdad, Lebanon, Palestine, or Manhattan's Ground Zero – photographers such as Simon Norfolk, Paul Seawright, Joel Meyerowitz and Sophie Ristelhueber have developed this strange new genre. Each works in saturated or subdued colour, often on a monumental scale and with thrilling precision, capturing the surfaces of the destroyed city of Baghdad, the snow-covered sites of Serbian mass graves, the barren post-war wastelands of Beirut, or depicting the Lebanese refugee camps and Israel's everyday militaristic cult of the dead. The surreal landscapes and alien environments charted by these photographers are as abstract, inhuman, and incomprehensible as the wars that caused them.

Many of these sites are synonymous with the 'war against terror' waged by America and its allies against the forces which they perceive as threatening 'liberty' as defined by neo-liberal democracies, and their precious economies. Such warfare has now gone beyond even the simulacra and spectacle of the heavily televised 'Operation Desert Storm.' It follows a post-Cold War military doctrine of 'rapid dominance' based on overwhelming power, dominant manoeuvres, and spectacular displays of

force. Defined by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, America's new mode of warfare attempts 'to affect the will, perception, and understanding of the adversary to fit or respond to our strategic policy ends through imposing a regime of 'Shock and Awe.'¹ Now five years of the war in Iraq have passed – as opposed to the 48 hours originally suggested by the Pentagon – and it is horribly clear that the aim of a rapid domination has failed. Yet this violent military assault is certainly of a horrific magnitude, costing thousands of lives and trillions of dollars. A form of terrorism itself, it is designed to impose an overwhelming level of shock and awe, so as to paralyse one's enemy, to overload their perceptions, rendering them incapable of resistance at both tactical and strategic levels. Ullman's shock and awe operates in the mass media just as it does in international politics, via an aesthetic of violence. The staging and representation of key events are exploited so as to supersede cognitive assimilation, and are used to provoke a dangerous range of powerful and war-mongering emotions.² This is not only a war fought to control territories, but one waged over meaning, in which photography could not be any more ideologically loaded, aesthetically volatile and morally precarious.

The work of Seawright, Ristelhueber and Norfolk is not war photography as we know it. Their images portray environments of surreal devastation as epic, highly aestheticised, and often depopulated landscapes. These images could not be further from the black-and-white traditions of the social documentarian, or the often gruesome shots of photojournalism. In many ways, the images by these photographers are closer to the medium of landscape photography than they are to the documentation of war. These photographers produce almost abstract monumental scenes, frozen on slick surfaces, which are undeniably commensurate with the incomprehensibility of capitalism's pure war, waged against unknowable and abstract 'terrors'. Within this largely depopulated photography, 'human beings seem to have even less of a place, and a concept of experience seems to be ever more atavistic.'³ But if aftermath photography has moved away from the humanistic tenets of the documentarian, what aesthetic and what experience does this monumental, beautiful photography of destruction and surveillance call upon? Photographing



Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *Chicago 4*, 2006
© Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin.



Simon Norfolk, *The bombed, burned and looted Ministry of Planning, Baghdad 19-27 April 2003*. © Simon Norfolk.

6 Following the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, the term 'Shock and Awe' has been used for a wide range of commercial purposes. The United States Patent and Trademark Office received around 29 trademark applications in 2003 for exclusive use of the term. Sony registered the trademark for use in a video game title, but later withdrew the application, stating it was "an exercise of regrettable bad judgment."⁶ Other equally distasteful uses of the term include fireworks, golf equipment, an insecticide, bowling balls, shampoo, condoms, and baby's cot toys.

Ground Zero, Meyerowitz has spoken of his recognition that his subject matter required a new definition of the sublime. Norfolk has named this perplexing subject that his photography also seeks to document as the international 'military sublime'. Thus, a contemporary version of this past universal category emerges as perfectly analogous to the unfathomable, awe-inspiring and horrific nature of today's globalised, technologised warfare.

The radicality in the aesthetic projects of these aftermath photographers lies in their taking beautiful photographs of gruesome subjects, which are necessarily asked to be read against themselves. One

could argue that against the blindness of universalism, in a dialectical fashion, photographers like Norfolk, Seawright and Ristelhueber rely upon a process which sublimates the seduction of beauty into the horror of violence. Their work exploits this violent dialectic at the moment of realisation. So that an aesthetics of sublimity serves not to transcend violence but to collapse into it, prompting a strange revelation or reflection upon the real that would otherwise be buried. Their carefully composed nature, often lengthy exposure time and beautifully printed form, contrasts starkly, and consequently also offers an ideological alternative to, the cheap current of 24-hour live coverage endlessly relayed to our living rooms via the world's news agencies, and the form of spectatorship this promotes.⁴ In moving against the shocking televised images that are assumed to have lost their power, these careful, slow photographs force a deeper kind of reflection on important subjects too often lost in the media's glare. Equally, heightening the aesthetic and artistic status of the photograph enables a withdrawal from the medium's purely documentary function, and consequently an unburdening of the image from photojournalism's truth claims. It releases itself then from the exploitative or instrumental context that sees photojournalism manipulated by the largely conservative and nationally biased media organisations that determine its context and reception.

But what does it really mean to make war beautiful, to depict the 'military sublime'? The sublime – in representation or under interrogation – has too often been a hiding place for postmodernists. In his "Postscript to Terror and the Sublime," Jean Francois Lyotard declared that there could be no politics of the sublime, only terror.⁵ But, he conceded, there is an aesthetics of the sublime in politics. Even he, however, could not have imagined the sublime as orchestrated by the Bush administration. Nor perhaps could Lyotard's libidinal economy have accounted for an American market that can reincorporate and ruthlessly rebrand an already morally indefensible war, exploiting the military doctrine of 'shock and awe' for trite commercial purposes.⁶ Can a photography that pictures this process also police the line between military and market sublimity, while resisting the commodification and fetishisation which

1 Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock And Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, National Defense University, Washington, 1996, p.xxiv.

2 See Roland Bleiker and Martin Leet, 'From the Sublime to the Subliminal: Fear, Awe and Wonder in International Politics', *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, August 2006, pp. 713-737.

3 Bernd Hüppauf, 'Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation', *New German Critique*, No. 59, Spring 1993, p. 75.

4 See François Debrix, 'The Sublime Spectatorship of War: The Erasure of the Event in America's Politics of Terror and Aesthetics of Violence', *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, August 2006, pp. 767-791.

5 See Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982-85*, Trans. ed., Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas, Afterward by Wlad Godzich, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 71.

sometimes hides in acts of aestheticisation? Does this photography make this military sublime more real, more tangible, and more difficult to stomach? Or does it actually make it dangerously unreal, strangely theatrical, detached, inhuman and perilously close to those universal abstractions mobilised in international politics and neo-liberal culture?

It is impossible to argue that these photographers have not, to some extent, engaged in the representation of warfare's beauty. Norfolk has spoken of the



Paul Seawright, *Valley*, 2002

'astonishing creation' at the heart of war's unspeakable destruction, of the 'strange beauty' found in 'the way a motor shell tears a "splash" into tarmac as it cuts down a Sarajevo bakery queue; the graceful turn of a falling anti-missile flare...'⁷ It is hard to know what that post-Auschwitz philosopher and aesthete Theodor Adorno would have made of this photographic aestheticisation of destruction. If he argued that form transfigures and stylises horror; sentimentalising it, he also believed that 'perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream.'⁸ For Adorno the Holocaust was too profound a violence to allow aestheticisation; an anti-sublime of unthinkable proportions. If Auschwitz occurred again today,

would it be absorbed into the military sublime, photographed by a large-format camera, in colour, minute detail, and on a monumental scale? The beautiful, detached photographic imagination of these 'aftermath photographers' is arguably more at ease with supercomputers than it is with mutilation, death, displacement and genocide.

If documentary photography is no longer a medium capable of representing today's technological warfare, the paradox that



Simon Norfolk, *The North gate of Baghdad, the scene of fierce fighting during the invasion, 19-27 April 2003*. © Simon Norfolk

lies within these representations of the technologised military sublime is that it is not upon a contemporary sublime that photographers such as Norfolk are drawing. While the archaic and idealised form of social documentary has been rejected, perplexingly these photographers restate strong links to the aesthetics of the 19th century. This is true not only in the choice of apparatus – Norfolk uses a large-format 4 x 5 wooden field camera and tripod, and Meyerowitz is known for working with a Deardorff 8 x 10 wooden field camera – but also in terms of the approach, composition and framing of their photography. Norfolk has stressed the importance of the 17th and 18th century European landscape painting of Claude Lorraine and Nicolas Poussin, particularly in terms of their characteristic golden light and the symbolism of ruins. Similarly, Meyerowitz has spoken of his 9/11 images in terms of the influence of Vermeer's Delft views and Casper David Friedrich. For Norfolk, this excursion into romanticist aesthetics is justified by the re-emergence of the ruin, and the philosophical and political notions surrounding the

sublime, and the vanity of empire in the context of today's new global empire.

Yet, wedding long-derided and derelict 19th century aesthetics with a subject matter that in most ways could not be further from such lofty ideals seems to be to attempt an ill-fitting union. Such romanticist aesthetics have been comprehensively critiqued, and today seem obsolete, like 'an edifice which stands still, but on rotten foundations, propped up by vested interests.'⁹ In aligning itself with the elitist aesthetics of the Enlightenment, does this photography not risk creating a meta-level of artificiality? Does it not in fact empty warfare of its moral content, picturing it instead in terms of a 'dreamlike landscape, like a furnace,' as Ernst Jünger called the aerial images of World War I?¹⁰ Do representations of the military sublime also risk articulating a moral realism that could turn into 'an iconographic apologia of a philosophy of harmony in the face of total destruction?'¹¹ Doesn't the dividing line between the beautification of war, and a photographic realism in which the intention to make visible the destructive might of contemporary warfare is involuntarily consumed by the coherence and consistency of the surface, blur?¹²

In focusing upon landscapes of the aftermath of war, Norfolk, Seawright and Ristelhueber are perhaps in danger of displacing violence from the political (carried out by subjects and inflicted upon subjects) to the natural. In this context, photography cannot but objectify and universalize the sublime experience, forcing the beholder of the sublime moment into a position of moral and subjective superiority. The symbolic environment of an empty landscape that pervades this military sublime, like the contemplative sublime of Schiller, is deprived of nearly all bodily substance. Schiller's sublime necessarily demands the disavowal of the other.¹³ Any radicality in the sublime surely lies in the ability of its beholder to produce the image of the suffering in himself. The contemplative sublime cannot accommodate flesh, bodies or selves. How then can it produce empathy, or awareness of fellow suffering? The hidden truth of the sublime is that its archaic threat is posed less by natural phenomena than by other human beings. Picturing a depopulated military sublime can only perpetuate the myth that the sublime, and therefore terror, is inhuman, something neo-liberal states and technocrats want us to believe.

In the face of such epic political, cultural and military destruction, which has rehabilitated the category of the sublime, what is the status of such photographic representations of this sublime? Unity is clearly related to the maintenance of order that the West is presently trying to posit against the 'terror' and rupture of the Islamic other. So, is the harmony and unity associated with the sublime and constituted in the perfectly composed, beautifully printed image, not itself morally dubious? While it is clear that this photography is embedded in the subjective and political, the question remains: does a war photography that seeks to represent the inhuman, abstract and even horrifically beautiful world of this contemporary military sublime offer any resistance to it? Kant argued that the dynamically sublime is experienced when we recognise our helplessness before, for example, the terrible physical power of nature, but nonetheless discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind. For a truly terrible sublime to operate in photography it requires a collective subjectivity still capable of imagining disaster. Can we read a critique of the limits of humanism into this work, akin to the materialist challenges to the limits of aesthetic humanism? Perhaps this photography, which seeks to represent the inhuman military sublime, acknowledges that humanism itself and its Enlightenment project must be seen as culminating in genocide and Holocaust; as being complicit with, or even leading to, barbarism. So that the human is from the outset the institution of its double – the inhuman. Today the tradition of aesthetic humanism has been superseded by multiculturalism. Global capitalism nurtures and replaces derelict humanism with violent cultural, military and economic imperialism, anchored in the mass media and the corporate world. If the unilateralism and exceptionalism of the Bush administration's own construction of a military sublime prefers not to provide a space for the suffering individual, or human experience – favouring instead abstract universalisms – should a photography bent on a more critical representation of this sublime refuse to be complacent, or compliant, with this prohibition? Like the category of the sublime Adorno critiqued and reinstated in a post-Auschwitz world, a political sublime must surely be one of negation and shudder, one that restates the body and inter-subjectivity as central

to aesthetic experience. Yet those who argue for the need to reinstate the world of aesthetics into a cultural theory that has too readily debunked it suggest that the central challenge of such a move is to understand the tension between the aesthetic and humane.¹⁴

For the sociologist – perhaps a closer partner to the photographer than the archaeologist – the category of the sublime is to be avoided because it unites what should be sundered.¹⁵ As Judith Huggins Balfe has suggested, 'the usage of the term is understood as a strategy for the re-enchancement of particular aspects of the social world, and thus for status enhancement of both the subject and object of the experience. Like whistling in the dark, the claim of sublimity is a self-fulfilling prophecy.'¹⁶ It is hard to accept that the humanism of the documentarian doesn't still have an important place in photography's representation of war. There is a humanism in this photography of the aftermath, but perhaps instead of one anchored in the horror of empathy, it emerges in those moments which force the individual beholder to face the limitations of his or her own rationality and perception, while at the same time maintaining the possibility for new and less alienated forms of experience. Most importantly, the success of such work lies exactly in reminding us that the sublime is the peculiar place where aesthetics and ethics merge, and that it is an uncomfortable coalition at the best of times.

⁷ See Simon Norfolk's text, 'Refuge: The First Safe Place', www.simonnorfolk.com.

⁸ See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans., E. B. Ashton, Continuum, New York, 1973, p.362.

⁹ Jonathan Dollimore, 'Art in time of war: towards a contemporary aesthetic', in John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas, eds., *The New Aestheticism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003, p. 40.

¹⁰ Hüppauf, *New German Critique*, 1993, p. 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See Charles H. Hinnant, 'Schiller and the Political Sublime: Two Perspectives', *Criticism*, Vol. 44, No. 2, Spring 2002, pp.121-38.

¹⁴ Dollimore, 'Art in time of war', pp. 36-50.

¹⁵ See Judith Huggins Balfe, 'Sociology and the Sublime', *New Literary History*, Vol. 16, No.2, Winter 1985, p. 239.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 242.



Brighton Photo Biennial Education continues to deliver a year round programme of artist led activities that encourage people to engage with historical and contemporary photographic practice. Building on the success and the learning from the previous two Biennials, the current programme reflects the organisation's central location within the higher education community, by presenting a series of projects that utilize the wealth of talent and expertise at the University of Brighton, and maximise the extensive skills, resources and opportunities of partnership working.

BPB Education is pleased to again be working with the Mass Observation Archive housed at the University of Sussex, Creative Partnerships and Aimhigher, and excited about being part of major initiatives such as Brighton & Hove City Council's *Celebrating Age* Festival and the Museum, Library & Archive Council's *Their Past Your Future 2* programme. We are also thrilled that Engage (the National Association for Gallery Education) have this year decided to hold their international conference *Rules of Engagement: Art, Conflict and Gallery Education* in Brighton to tie in with the Biennial programme.

Education has a very particular role to play in this Biennial. Julian Stallabrass's programme looks uncompromisingly at the ethical and political issues that arise when we view images of human suffering, and education events and activities have been crucial in providing opportunities for comment, contribution and participation. Therefore discussion and debate have been key features of BPB Education this year as demonstrated by the Biennial's increased use of its website as a tool for learning and social networking, allowing participants in BPB education projects to share, exchange and disseminate their learning.

POST UP: THE WAR OF IMAGES
Jubilee Square, Brighton (Project Hub at Lighthouse, 28 Kensington Street, Brighton)
Friday 14 November & Saturday 15 November
10am – 4pm

Photographer Anthony Lam will stage a public event in Jubilee Square, a central location in the heart of the city's cultural quarter. Planned as a rally style event exploring media manipulation and propaganda, the two-day long activity is an outcome of a series of workshops with veterans and year ten school pupils. Using BPB exhibitions, personal experiences, and material from the Mass Observation Archive – a collection founded in the 1930s to record the everyday lives of people in Britain – as inspirational starting points, Lam and the participants will be considering the way in which memory of war and media images affect modern day understanding of conflict. The event itself, which includes a Project Hub space at Lighthouse, where visitors and participants can view and upload text and images live to the BPB website, brings to the public the multitude of views, images and thoughts gathered through the project, and provides an opportunity for comment and participation.

The project is supported through *Their Past Your Future 2 (TPYF2)* programme funded by the Museums Libraries & Archives Council. The two day event is also part of this year's *Celebrating Age Festival* programme.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE COMMUNITY

Running as an elective at the University of Brighton since 2005, *Photography in the Community* enables second year undergraduates to make links with the BPB since 2005. This year, supported by the School of Arts & Communication, video artist Annis Joslin is enabling undergraduates to devise and deliver workshops for A Level students using BPB 2008 as a starting point. Dialogue and debate will be central activities, and students will use photography and video to record their experiences and share them with others via the Biennial website.

See the results at www.bpb.org.uk from **Wednesday 12 November**

ONCE UPON A MOMENT IN TIME
Friday 3 October – Sunday 16 November
University of Brighton, Gallery Foyer
Monday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm

Funded by Creative Partnerships, Hastings and East Sussex, video artist Annis Joslin and photographic artist Lisa Barnard worked with pupils from Stafford Junior School in Eastbourne in the run up to BPB 2008 to investigate some of the issues caused by conflict, particularly displacement and evacuation. Literacy was a key focus for the project, and pupils worked together to produce a powerful series of video works and photographs.

CHANGING REPRESENTATION

Saturday 1 November – Sunday 16 November
University of Brighton Café
Monday – Saturday 10am – 5pm

Funded by Aimhigher, a campaign that encourages young people to think about the benefits and opportunities of higher education, artist Marysa Dowling has been working with students from Bexhill High School and Hillcrest School in Hastings to create medium format tableaux photographs that investigate the complex relationships that young people have with each other, their families and the wider world.

Images from the project will also be screened at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill as part of the Access All Areas Youth Arts Festival from Thursday 30 October – Sunday 2 November.

These projects have been supported by MLA, Aimhigher, Creative Partnerships, University of Brighton, Mass Observation Archive, Lighthouse, Willenden School and Brighton & Hove City Council.

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Brighton Photo Biennial 2008 Artists
Confirmed artists at the time of going to press:

Ghaith Abdul-Ahad; Eddie Adams; Kael Alford; Helmy al-Azawi; Thorne Anderson; Broomberg and Chanarin; Jacob Bailey; Larry Burrows; Dong Cong Tinh; Steven Curtis; Terry Fincher; Sean Flynn; Julian Germain; Ashley Gilbertson; Ronald S. Haerberle; Thomas Hirschhorn; Frank Hurley; Bilal Hussein; Philip Jones Griffiths; Karim Kadim; Geert Van Kesteren; David Leeson; Harriet Logan; Benjamin Lowy; Don McCullin; Susan Meisalas; Khalid Mohammed; Jonathan Moller; Muhammed Muheisen; Anja Niedringhaus; Simon Norfolk; Wissam al-Okaili; Tim Page; Franco Pagetti; Patrick Robert; Sebastiao Salgado; Paul Seawright; Stephanie Sinclair; Luis Sinco; Sean Smith; Mattias Souto; Andrew Stern; Bruno Stevens; Chu Chi Thanh; and Nick Ut

U.S. Army photographers and personnel including: Spc. Lee Davis, Air Force Staff Sgt. John K. Mullins, cpl. Charles A. Graner Jr, Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick II.

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