

POST UP:

THE WAR OF IMAGES

A RESOURCE PACK FOR TEACHERS
INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF 21ST CENTURY
CONFLICT THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY



MAKE LOVE
STOP WAR

THE MASS OBSERVATION ARCHIVE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL

JULIETTE BUSS



**'A PHOTOGRAPH CAN'T COERCE.
IT WON'T DO THE MORAL WORK
FOR US. BUT IT CAN START US ON
THE WAY'** SUSAN SONTAG

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PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE MORE MEMORABLE THAN MOVING IMAGES, BECAUSE THEY ARE A NEAT SLICE OF TIME, NOT A FLOW.

Susan Sontag,
Regarding the Pain of Others

01 FOREWORD



Artwork by
Post Up participant

Post Up: The War of Images provides a unique opportunity to examine and discuss the complexities of war at a time when current conflicts are so prevalent within our society. This resource challenges us to explore the role of the media in the production and dissemination of images and discuss the range of conditions, motivations and experiences that influence the creation or use of an image. In this way *Post Up: The War of Images* enables us to look at a wide spectrum of key historical conflicts from the 20th and 21st centuries with fresh eyes, challenging us to think about what these images mean for us today.

A resource like this needs no further introduction other than to urge you to use it, to explore the issues it raises with your students, to pass it onto your colleagues.

Eve Pattinson
MLA Project Manager
Their Past Your Future

IMAGES HAVE BEEN
REPROACHED FOR BEING
A WAY OF WATCHING
SUFFERING AT A DISTANCE,
AS IF THERE WERE SOME
OTHER WAY OF WATCHING.
BUT WATCHING UP
CLOSE – WITHOUT THE
MEDIATION OF AN IMAGE –
IS STILL JUST WATCHING.

Susan Sontag,
Regarding the Pain of Others

02 INTRODUCTION

This teaching resource has been produced as one of the outcomes of a project called *Post Up: The War of Images*, and aims to support schools and colleges embarking on work that investigates young peoples' knowledge and understanding of conflict in the 21st Century.

The resource aims to support teachers and enable them to engage students directly and meaningfully with some of the more challenging aspects of war often reflected in the stories they see every day in the media and online. Through the subject areas of History, Politics, Philosophy, Media, Geography, Citizenship, Art & Design, and of course Photography, *Post Up* provides a valuable opportunity to increase students' awareness and understanding of the impact of 21st Century conflict through photography, to explore and analyse media manipulation, and to think about how it affects and reflects our attitudes towards contemporary conflict.

Teachers can identify their own project starting points. However, the resource suggests a number of key themes, underpinned with questions designed to prompt discussion and debate.

A range of supporting material accompanies this pdf including blogs created during BPB 2008 (with contributions from a range of academics, journalists, artists and key thinkers), podcasts of conversations between school students, veterans and members of the public, and documentation of the project itself including students' poetry and artwork. This material can be freely accessed at www.bpb.org.uk

Post Up was a collaboration between the Mass Observation Archive and Brighton Photo Biennial (BPB). Photographer Anthony Lam was appointed to work with veterans and year 9 pupils from Patcham High School in Brighton to increase knowledge and understanding of the impact of contemporary conflict.

Anthony Lam is a photographic artist whose work examines and explores notions and (un)realities of boundaries and borders. A conceptual framework of difference, dislocation and detachment informs his projects and are themes that he actively engages with and pursues. Lam's diverse practice is located within representational and social concerns, addressing issues of identity, culture and place from a personal and socio political viewpoint.

Using the archive's WWII material, BPB exhibitions, and participants' personal experiences as starting points, Lam and the participants considered the way in which memory of war and media images affect modern day understanding of conflict. Through research, conversation, writing, art and photography, the veterans and young people together explored media manipulation (propaganda), and the role of photojournalism. The two groups naturally had very different perspectives, but through the exchange of ideas and opinions, they shared their experiences, and began to understand better their own and others' feelings about war in the 21st Century.

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



BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL

Brighton Photo Biennial is an ambitious celebration of international photographic practice committed to stimulating critical debate on photography in all its forms. Brighton Photo Biennial 2008, entitled, *Memory of Fire: the War of Images and Images of War*, was curated by Julian Stallabrass and explored photographic images of war, their making, use and circulation, and their currency in contemporary society.

Stallabrass presented photography, film and online material produced and circulated in times of war, and explored how images have been shaped by the changing social and political conditions from the early twentieth century to the present.

Ten exhibitions were presented at leading visual arts venues in Brighton and across the South East, and included both historical and contemporary images produced by photojournalists, artists and non-professionals. The Biennial website www.bpb.org.uk provides detailed descriptions (and images) from each of the ten exhibitions.

THE MASS OBSERVATION ARCHIVE

The Mass Observation Archive is a unique internationally renowned institution based at the University of Sussex, which holds all the papers generated by 1930s' social research organisation Mass Observation. Mass Observation carried out a wide range of studies during the period of World War Two and continues to record people's feelings about war in the present day. The material includes diaries, letters, photographs, accounts and artefacts. It is currently working with researchers and University teachers to document and explore the way in which memory of war affects modern day understanding of conflict.

IT IS I SUPPOSE, CLOSE TO A HISTORICAL LAW THAT THE POWERFUL, THE VICTORS, HAVE NO MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES: THEY ARE EXEMPT FROM STERN JUSTICE, REPARATIONS, EVEN SELF-EXAMINATION. THESE ARE THE DUTIES OF THE WEAK, THE DEFEATED

Noam Chomsky,

Foreword to *Vietnam Inc* by Philip Jones Griffiths (revised edition)

03 HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource offers teachers engaging with the theme of war ideas and practical support, suggesting themes to consider, and questions to ask. The **themes** represent an indication of potential learning opportunities, whilst the **questions** are intended as prompts for further discussion. Once an appropriate starting point has been identified, students' lines of enquiry and research may be framed by one of the themes, or a particular set of questions.

It is aimed at teachers of the following 14 – 19 subjects: Art & Design, English, General Studies, Government & Politics, History, Media Studies, Religious Studies, Citizenship, History of Art, Philosophy, and Photography. However, teachers of other subjects and age groups may also find it useful.

The starting points for this project have been the photographs from Brighton Photo Biennial 2008 exhibitions, and material held by the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex. Teachers wishing to use similar starting points can access much of this material at www.bpb.org.uk or contact the Mass Observation Archive directly.

Other appropriate starting points might include a visit to an archive (such as the Mass Observation Archive), or a museum, a trip to an exhibition at a gallery, a specific photograph, a newspaper article, or a meeting with a veteran. Engaging directly with people and places, or first hand experience of artefacts, objects and ephemera enables students to make connections and locate their experiences in the real world.

This pdf document is supported by additional material held on the Biennial website, which includes information about BPB 2008 artists and exhibitions, podcasts of school students, veterans and the public in conversation, and images, poetry and artwork created by school students during the *Post Up* project.

The Biennial website also functions as a platform for ideas and discussion around the theme of photography and conflict. Students can use it as a research tool, and as an opportunity to participate by posting comments and engaging with a wide range of similarly interested people. **Please note** that the website contains images and experiences of conflict, some of which are graphic in their representation of violence and war. Some images may be thought unsuitable for children, and might be distressing to viewers of any age.

PREPARING STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Engaging with graphic images of violence and human suffering may be distressing, or inappropriate for younger students. We strongly advise that parents, colleagues and students are fully briefed. Although not always easy, it would be useful to set up a dialogue with parents prior to the start of the project, and to spend some time discussing students' expectations, therefore anticipating any particularly strong responses.



Ashley Gilbertson, *Specialist William Wimberly watches George W Bush apologize on behalf of the US Military for the torture that took place at Abu Ghraib Prison*
© Ashley Gilbertson

THE QUALITY OF FEELING, INCLUDING MORAL OUTRAGE, THAT PEOPLE CAN MUSTER IN RESPONSE TO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE OPRESSED, THE EXPLOITED, THE STARVING, AND THE MASSACRED ALSO DEPENDS ON THE DEGREE OF THEIR FAMILIARITY WITH THESE IMAGES

Susan Sontag, *On Photography*



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.

04 CURRICULUM LINKS

The pack does not presume to make explicit curriculum links, but the themes outlined are appropriate for embedding within a variety of schemes of work at different levels of study. Engaging with the *Post Up* themes could encourage students to:

- Engage with contemporary photographic practice in its particular context.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the roles of photography and photographers in society and within historical frameworks.
- Understand that there are alternative ways of interpreting different types of information, in order to help understand such concepts as objectivity, neutrality, bias and interpretation.
- Improve critical understanding of the media and media technologies, and foster an ability to analyse the relationship between reality and the world portrayed by the media (how the media represents events, issues, people and places).
- Develop critical awareness and understanding of contemporary conflict and awareness of historical and contemporary contexts.
- Examine and understand different cultural, religious and ethnic identities, ideologies, beliefs and values in society, and develop and justify their own opinions, while empathising with the experiences of others.
- Develop critical awareness, knowledge and understanding of the relationship between political processes, ideas and institutions, and the structures of authority and power.
- Engage in discussion and analytical debate about topical and controversial issues relating to human rights, social justice, responsibility and democracy.
- Consider political, social, moral and ethical issues relating to the representation of war, inequality and discrimination.
- Analyse and reflect on images from different contexts, using appropriate language to express thoughts and ideas.
- Explore and express sophisticated ideas and information clearly, precisely and accurately in speech and writing, making connections between ideas and experiences and challenging conventions.

ONLY BY RECOGNISING HOW THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE NATIONAL INTERSECT WITH ONE ANOTHER CAN ONE UNDERSTAND HOW THESE PHOTOGRAPHS STAND AS MATERIAL EVIDENCE OF THE BRUTAL AND UBIQUITOUS IMPACT OF THE POLITICAL ON THE PERSONAL

Gilane Tawadros (writing about Abu Ghraib) *Strangers and Barbarians: Representing Ourselves and Others*, BPB 2006

Post Up Participants (veterans and school students) were asked to comment on what they feel they have learnt during the project.

The following extracts reveal the variety of thinking, and strength of feeling demonstrated through the project.

I grew up in post war Berlin with the legacy of its horrendous wars, with all their absurdity that led to unbelievable cruelty and destruction, creating 'another reality'. For me this is not – cannot - be the way forward. Acceptance of war as a means of resolving conflict diminishes us all. Striving for peace, co-operation and understanding needs to be our priority.

I have learnt that war is horrible, and about the effects of war.

To work with pupils of 13 – 14 years was great. Hope in the future generations for peace if they are respected and listened to.

I have learnt that it's a lot worse than people think, and that there's war all around.

05 THE POST UP PROJECT

THE AIMS OF POST UP

This artist led intergenerational project aimed to increase participants' awareness and understanding of the impact of 21st Century conflict using the Mass Observation Archive's WWII material, BPB exhibitions, and participants' personal experiences as starting points. Through research, dialogue, writing and photography, the group explored media manipulation (propaganda), and the use and currency of photojournalism, analysing how the media affects our attitudes towards contemporary conflict.

Post Up provided a rare opportunity to engage with original artefacts, and contemporary arts practice, and a 'live' learning experience that supported delivery of more difficult areas of the KS3 Citizenship Curriculum. It also promoted analytical thinking connected to personal experience, and provided a chance for both pupils and veterans to have a voice within the wider community.

The project also sought to increase participants' visual literacy skills, enabling them to identify and articulate opinions and views regarding the portrayal of modern day conflict in the media – including newer phenomenon such as online and citizen journalism.

WHAT HAPPENED

The participants consisted of Year 9 students from Patcham High School and veterans who have experiences of war, particularly World War II. The group worked together for roughly six full day sessions. During this time they visited the Mass Observation Archive where they looked at and discussed some of the material there such as propaganda posters and personal diaries from WWII, visited two Brighton Photo Biennial exhibitions, undertook research and investigation back at school, and staged a two-day public event.

Dialogue and dissemination were central aims of the project, so extensive discussion and debate took place. At the Archive, pupils and veterans looked at examples of archival material and used these as starting points for discussion, culminating in pupils recording interviews/discussions with veterans. At school, they wrote poetry and interviewed each other, made photographic collages, and wrote blogs for the Biennial website describing their experiences. The participants were also asked to plan a two day public event that enabled members of the public to take part, therefore disseminating their learning to a wider audience, and inviting further contribution. As part of this, the group compiled and edited the material they created in the workshops to produce an eight page tabloid size paper. 1000 copies were printed and distributed during the public event.

The two-day event took place in a pedestrianised square in the centre of Brighton. The group set up a large tent and took over the square. Throughout the day they interviewed the public about their views on



I learnt that war was more painful for the people that have lived to tell the story.

I have learned all about war and how dangerous it is. It's interesting hearing other peoples' views.

I have learnt how dangerous it is and how pointless it can be. It's been interesting listening to other peoples' views.

I learnt more on World War II and the current war and have grown stronger feelings about it.

This was a great experience. I have learnt a lot and have enjoyed it.

This project has given me an idea of what effect war has on the world.

I have learnt that other people are affected by it, not just the men fighting in it. How dangerous it can get and also people go to extreme lengths to say they are sorry for it.

conflict, war and peace and confidently engaged in conversation. In pairs they handed out their newspapers and balloons (with their slogan YWarY), managed banner-making workshops, and invited people to write on the peace wall. There was even a Speakers Corner with contributors providing thoughts and debate around the issues of conflict. A variety of people spoke including BPB 2008 curator Julian Stallabrass, academics, and artists, as well as group members reading poems, and voicing their thoughts on war.

The event ended with a noisy, lighthearted parade through the city centre, led by a samba band. Participants and members of the public joined in, holding up their banners and balloons - taking their messages out into the town. At the same time, one of the Biennial venues hosted the *project hub*, a space manned by participants where members of the public could have their say by contributing to the Biennial blog, or being interviewed.

PHOTOGRAPHER ANTHONY LAM REFLECTS ON POST UP

Success!! We did it... our Post Up public event over two days in Jubilee Square and our Hub at the Lighthouse was a fantastic time and resounding success. Many people passing by the Square came to engage and enter into the spirit of our group's efforts. Lots of comments were posted onto our Peace Wall and we accumulated another batch of photo placard artworks made by people of all ages. We also handed out free copies of our special edition newspaper containing artworks and writings by the group.



At eighteen I witnessed the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Reflecting fundamental differences between USA and the Soviet Union. I was terrified and worried that it would escalate into yet another war. It was so very close, very real!

I have learnt all the different outcomes of war. I have enjoyed debating and talking to the war veterans.

I have learnt more about modern conflict and warfare I now have a better understanding of what it feels like for other innocent people in war zones.

I learnt more about what I already knew was going to happen, but I didn't really think it was happening now, which proves what Jesus said in the Bible at Matthew:24:6,7,8. You are going to hear of wars and report of wars for nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress. So it helped prove that what Jesus says is true and Jehovah's day is near!

I'd like to thank all the Post Up group for their brilliant contributions and active engagement with such important issues. Their honesty, openness and ability to engage with challenge was profound. The critical dialogue that the group has shaped and participated within, I am sure will continue...

It has been very interesting and enriching to see how the gap in ages between the school students and adults within the *Post Up* group hasn't hindered genuine collaboration and the sensitive sharing of experiences and views concerning conflicts now and in the past. Over a short period, the group have found much common ground, being constructive, critical and creative. Working together has been quite profound at times as we explored personal reflections on the effects of war on individuals within the group and looked at archive material held at the Mass Observation Archive and brought in by the veterans. The intention of this project has been to open up a dialogue for engagement that bridges generations and builds a platform for debate around issues and images that affect all of us in these times.

...THE HORROR OF WHAT IS SHOWN IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE HORROR THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN. WHERE ONCE PHOTOGRAPHING WAR WAS THE PROVINCE OF PHOTOJOURNALISTS, NOW THE SOLDIERS THEMSELVES ARE ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS – RECORDING THEIR WAR, THEIR FUN, THEIR OBSERVATION OF WHAT THEY FIND PICTURESQUE, THEIR ATROCITIES

Susan Sontag (writing about Abu Ghraib) *The Photographs Are Us*, *The New York Times Magazine*

06 THEMES

These themes present a range of concepts that can be used to provoke lines of enquiry through different subject areas. Particular Biennial exhibitions have been used as example starting points here, and the relevant images and information are accessible at www.bpb.org.uk. However, a vast range of different starting points could also be used.

The suggested themes create an opportunity for students to explore specific issues around the production, use and nature of images of war, and address the central ethical and political questions of our time. Being exposed to and responding to these will inevitably evoke emotional as well as intellectual responses, which makes the experience all the more valuable.

Some questions to ask about any photographic image

These generic questions may help students to articulate their emotional and critical responses when encountering powerful, or disturbing images of war:

- What do you see in this photograph?
- Who created this photograph? And for what purpose?
- What visual qualities have been used to attract and hold your attention?
- What points of view are being communicated?
- Could this photograph be interpreted differently by different people? How?
- What is included, and what is missing from this photograph?
- Does this photograph have an emotional impact?

THE MORE REMOTE OR
EXOTIC THE PLACE, THE
MORE LIKELY WE ARE
TO HAVE FULL FRONTAL
VIEWS OF THE DEAD AND
DYING

Susan Sontag, *Regarding The Pain
of Others*

1. THE ETHICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography plays such a central role in our lives, and has so many uses - artistic expression, scientific enquiry, historical record and personal remembrance. It is the most important visual medium of the last 150 years, and has shaped our world and how we see it.

But what role does photography play in articulating experiences of war and conflict? It records events, documents horrors, and conveys suffering. It can trigger political change, as with the Vietnam War, but it can also exploit its subjects, manipulate opinion, and distort memory.

There is often a gap between the motive and intention of the photographer, and the experience of the viewer. For example, images of human suffering have great political currency, and are used as propaganda by both sides of the conflict to justify actions or condemn those of the other side. How a photograph is 'read' may depend on the viewer's political leaning, or religious beliefs.

What part do photojournalists, publishers and editors play in this? How do they decide what we should see? Does photographing an act of terror without intervening implicate the photographer in some way? What responsibility do photographers have, and what uses do these photographs have anyway?

The public presentation of images of war in galleries for Brighton Photo Biennial 2008 "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" says curator Julian Stallabrass. It also raises important questions, pertinent in the current climate, about why, how and where we contemplate other people's pain.

Questions

- What uses do photographic images of war have?
- What does it mean to look at images of war in a gallery context?
- Can a photographic image of war tell you the whole story?



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

THERE ARE MANY THINGS
THAT CANNOT BE
PHOTOGRAPHED, AND
MANY MORE THAT, FOR ALL
KINDS OF REASONS ARE
NOT PHOTOGRAPHED

Julian Stallabrass, *The Power and
Impotence of Images*



Paul Seawright
Valley, Afghanistan, 2002
From the series *Hidden*. Courtesy Kerlin Gallery

2. CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Photographer Roger Fenton's images of the Crimean War in the 1860s represent one of the earliest attempts to document war through photography. The action of the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s was the first to be thoroughly documented by professional photojournalists. The Vietnam War was the most televised, and the Iraq War the most intensively reported in history, covered twenty-four hours a day through photography, television, newspapers, magazines and the internet.

Bombings and even executions can be viewed on the internet. Saddam Hussein's execution was secretly filmed on a camera phone, and appeared online shortly afterwards. It is reported to be the most watched web video in history. The BBC and CNN posted it on their websites, but others chose not to, preferring to use it to debate what should and shouldn't be published by the press.

We live in an age of cheap technology and phone cameras, where images can be instantly transmitted and published through a vast array of printed and digital media, most significantly, the internet. The professional photojournalist is losing out to citizen journalists – a relatively new phrase that says anybody with a digital camera device, and web access can be a journalist.

The consumers of media have become writers and publishers themselves. Millions of people write blogs, publish their own pictures and videos, or post comments on mainstream media sites. When events happen, pictures taken by ordinary people appear online almost instantly. This was demonstrated clearly with the events of 9/11, and in 2005, when camera phones recorded the London bombings.

Websites, blogs, and online social networking systems play a big part in contributing to the availability of alternative, uncensored (but usually unchecked and unedited) critical debate about events and the media. The media is now something that we participate in, create, and contribute to. The Biennial website demonstrates this, using it as a key platform for promoting debate and dialogue.

Questions

- How has the internet changed how we access news?
- How might the rise of citizen journalism affect the profession of photojournalism?
- What are the opportunities and problems associated with internet news coverage?

WAR HAS NEVER BEEN PURSUED IN SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT OF IMAGE-SATURATION AND EASY AND RAPID IMAGE DISTRIBUTION

Retort (Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*



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.
© Anja Neidringhaus/AP

3. MEDIA MANIPULATION

The media disseminates, reflects, distorts and creates opinion, and plays a crucial role in shaping and defining culture. Historically, governments have long been using the media to influence opinion. Propaganda, which often utilises photography, presents information in a certain way in order to direct the perceptions and behaviour of groups of individuals. Information is omitted, or highlighted in order to place emphasis in certain areas.

There is a long and consistent history of image manipulation and appropriation within anti-imperialist and anti-war campaigns. The Brighton Photo Biennial 2008 exhibition *Designs for Solidarity* at the University of Brighton looks at the incorporation of photographic elements in posters used to oppose the Vietnam War, and the way in which key images have become emblematic of oppression and armed struggle.

When Donald Rumsfeld, US Defence Secretary (2001 – 2006) led the military planning and execution of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, he talked of ‘an image war’ between America and its enemies. The American government learnt from its experiences of the negative media image of war in Vietnam by changing its strategy to focus on image management.

The *Iraq Through the Lens of Vietnam* exhibition at the University of Brighton for Brighton Photo Biennial 2008 explores this, and curator Julian Stallabrass draws extensive comparisons. For example, in Vietnam photojournalists were mainly independent, and therefore free of censorship, whilst in Iraq most are embedded within military units, and subject to increased censorship and control, producing a narrow view of the war. In Iraq the military staged many actions for the cameras. Stallabrass says: “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 the 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”. (Julian Stallabrass, *The Power and Impotence of Images*, BPB 2008 catalogue).

Questions

- Is censorship important?
- How do we know if photographs are telling us what really happened?
- Is photography truthful?
- How important is it to have your own views and opinions?
- What effect does ‘embedding’ photographers have on public understanding of conflict?

TO CATCH A DEATH ACTUALLY HAPPENING AND EMBALM IT FOR ALL TIME IS SOMETHING ONLY CAMERAS CAN DO, AND PICTURES TAKEN BY PHOTOGRAPHERS OUT IN THE FIELD OF THE MOMENT OF (OR JUST BEFORE) DEATH ARE AMONG THE MOST CELEBRATED AND OFTEN REPRODUCED OF WAR PHOTOGRAPHS

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*



ACOE photographer Norris Jones of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). A Missouri community is organizing a drive to collect school supplies for youngsters in and around Fallujah (as those shown above). Major Roger Alsup is a Missouri National Guardsman and principal of T.S. Hill Middle School in Dexter, Missouri, where faculty and students are supporting the drive. Major Alsup was activated for a year with the 35th Engineer Brigade out of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He is one of the project engineers at the Fallujah office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Central District and among his duties is helping refurbish schools in that area. (ACOE photo by Norris Jones)

4. PERSISTENCE OF VISION: THE MEMORY OF IMAGES

BPB 2008 presented an analysis of the collective and individual memory of photographs of conflict, reconsidering and comparing the familiar images of the Vietnam War with photography of current conflicts, investigating their revision, and their rebirth at times of crisis and war.

How do we remember? Extensive research has been done to investigate memory, and the relationship between photography and the brain's capacity to recall still images, and it is generally agreed that the two have a natural affinity.

But what happens when photographs of conflict become well known, or even iconic? How does our memory and perception of those images, and the events they represent, change once they have been widely circulated, and viewed so many times, in so many different contexts? The best known Western photographs from the Vietnam War are an example of this. Many of us are now too young to remember Vietnam, and most of us weren't there, so we recall the event through the images, and not the experience itself.

Many of these images have been re-appropriated, or used in different contexts. For example, Eddie Adams' shocking photograph (Guerilla Dies, 1968) of a Vietnamese official pulling the trigger of a gun at the head of a prisoner is considered one of the War's most iconic images. Said to be responsible for stoking the anti-war movement, it has been framed in a huge variety of contexts, and millions of people have seen it without the slightest idea of the original circumstances of the event. In addition, it has been restaged, and over time, become something else (this is also true of some of the infamous Abu Ghraib images, which now appear online, out of context, as parodies). The image still contributes to current debate about the Vietnam War.

Another example is the photography of the Latin American Left, the Mexican Revolution, and the Cuban Revolution, which sees revolution as social justice, and re-appropriates iconic photographic images, motifs, postures and themes of bravado to draw links with past struggles against imperialist aggression.

Questions

- What do you think of when you think about the Vietnam War?
- What tools do you use to remember the past?
- Can you think of a well known image that is used for something other than its original purpose?

TO ME, DOING ARTWORK
IS USING ART AS A TOOL TO
CONFRONT THE WORLD,
AS A TOOL TO CONFRONT
WITH REALITY I AM LIVING
IN, AND AS A TOOL TO
CONFRONT THE TIME I
AM LIVING IN.

Thomas Hirschhorn

5. REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS

What does it mean to use, make or view images of conflict? What should be photographed, by whom and how? These are difficult questions that face photographers and all of us who look at images of human pain and violence, whether in the newspapers, on television, or at the click of a button. Should we look? Or look away?

Our constant exposure to images of war has an anesthetising, numbing effect. For those of us fortunate enough to have never experienced war, these images are unimaginable, and impossible to truly comprehend. Has the ability of photography to shock and outrage ceased, giving way to hopeless apathy?

Despite the wide range of photographic evidence of conflict, much of what is used by mainstream media often excludes graphic images. There are few dead bodies pictured in the news, (particularly those of Westerners, and specifically of Western soldiers. Non-Western corpses are shown more liberally). We are presented with a censored, strangely sanitised view of the mutilating effects of warfare. In addition, many photojournalists are 'embedded' within military units, this keeps them safer, but provides a restricted and rather limited perspective.

Some of these ethical questions have been addressed by contemporary artists in gallery contexts. Thomas Hirschhorn's *The Incommensurable Banner* tackles this head on. His anti-war installation at Fabrica for BPB 2008 was an 18-metre long banner of the worst of the pictures that circulate online of mutilated bodies. Difficult to look at, these are the images that the media do not show us. Hirschhorn's work questions the reasons why, and forces us to engage directly with what the images tell us. Stallabrass says of Hirschhorn's exhibition: "It is better than suppressing it. I'm not saying it's a comfortable thing to do".

Questions

- Do we need to see what war does to people?
- Who controls what we do and don't get to see, and why?
- Should newspapers print graphic images of war?



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

IF WE LET PEOPLE SEE THAT KIND OF THING, THERE WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE ANY WAR

Pentagon official on why US military censored graphic footage from the Gulf War



Dead bodies on the street, photographed from a car. The maker of the photograph cannot be revealed. Victims are mostly kidnapped and then murdered. Bodies are thrown on the street as warning or terror. Some militia prohibit family members to pick up the dead bodies. Sometimes it proves to be a booby trap

6. THE MILITARY IMAGE-MAKING MACHINE

The military play a significant part in the taking, and controlling of images of war, demonstrated through BPB 2008's *Iraq Through the Lens of Vietnam*, and Julian Germain's BPB exhibition *War Memorial* at Aspex in Portsmouth. For *War Memorial* Germain spent months meeting military personnel, and asking them to talk about their own photographs.

Official military photography can be said to fall into a number of categories. The military gathers photographic and filmic material from all sorts of devices, and employs military photographers to take generic propaganda images of its activities. For example, displays of military hardware and capabilities such as cameras on missiles (new 'smart' bombs were well publicised by the military), soldiers helmets with cameras, soldiers showing kindness to occupied citizens – playing football with children, or giving them chocolate, and heroic images of soldiers standing proud with desert sunsets as backdrops.

Amateur military photography is also abundant. Soldiers themselves take pictures of the places they have visited and the things they have done. Photographic trophy taking has been a feature of war since the earliest days of photography. These sometimes macabre, souvenirs may serve as a tool for soldiers making sense of death and survival, but some have more sinister motives.

The amateur photographs and videos of torture and human rights violations by US soldiers at Iraq's now notorious Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 are a revealing example of this, and of photography's role in documenting war crimes.

Professional photojournalists can either be embedded or unembedded. Embedded photojournalists usually follow a military unit, and therefore receive additional protection, but they are subject to greater censorship, and their experiences are limited to those of the unit they are assigned to. Unembedded photojournalists have greater freedom, but take greater risks. In the Vietnam War, when most worked independently, 135 photojournalists were killed. 217 have died in Iraq.

Questions

- Why do soldiers take photographs?
- What is the purpose of official military photographs?
- Should photojournalists be embedded, or unembedded?

TO SUFFER IS ONE THING; ANOTHER THING IS LIVING WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHED IMAGES OF SUFFERING, WHICH DOES NOT NECESSARILY STRENGTHEN CONSCIENCE AND THE ABILITY TO BE COMPASSIONATE. IT CAN ALSO CORRUPT THEM.

Susan Sontag, *On Photography*



*U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Samuel Bendet
U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Sandoval, from
Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry
Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, juggles a soccer
ball before giving it away to a boy in the Maghdad
district of Kirkuk, Iraq, Sept. 30, 2006.*

7. AFTERMATH PHOTOGRAPHY

Alongside images taken by photojournalists, non-professionals, and the military, BPB 2008 also looked at the place of the art world in the production of images of conflict with *The Sublime Image of Destruction* at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill. These monumental images of destruction, devoid of people, and vivid in their depiction of devastated buildings and landscapes are comparable with landscape paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant states 'We call that sublime which is absolutely great' The term sublime is generally used to describe the vast, awe-inspiring greatness, power and beauty of nature.

Often presenting stately, decorative, and extraordinarily beautiful views of war zone sites after the event, this strange new genre of fine art photography is an artistic response to the impact of conflict. But there is some criticism that these epic, highly aesthetic images of other peoples' suffering circulate within the art world, and are viewed purely within fine art contexts. However, this kind of photography operates totally differently from the hard-hitting documentary shots of photojournalists that focus on human suffering.

In an age where we have become numb to the graphic images we see on a daily basis, these beautiful images of terrible subjects that leave out the gruesome elements - the mutilated bodies and terrified civilians - become more powerful because they let your imagination do the work. Contemplation of the beauty allows you to absorb the horrific reality of the situation.

'Their (aftermath photographers') 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'. Making An Ugly World Beautiful? Morality and Aesthetics in the Aftermath, Sarah James, BPB 2008 catalogue essay

Questions

- Is it right to present images from other peoples suffering as art?
- Can we find beauty in images of war?
- Which has more social value, aftermath photography, or documentary photography?

IN A SOCIETY WHERE THEY (VIETNAMESE WOMEN) ARE TRADITIONALLY REVERED FOR THEIR POISE AND PURITY, WOMEN HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY DEHUMANISED. THEY SIT OUTSIDE AMERICAN BASES WAITING TO ENTER TO SERVE THE SOLDIERS AS EVERYTHING FROM LAUNDRY MAID TO PROSTITUTE

Philip Jones Griffiths, Vietnam Inc



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

8. THE EFFECT OF WAR ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Dramatic images of combat usually dominate media coverage of conflict. The effect of war on women and children is usually under-represented. Women and children become caught in the cross-fire. There is not much space for the female perspective, despite the diverse experiences of women in conflict – as widows, victims of violence or combatants. International humanitarian law dictates that women and children should be granted additional protection. However, children are still orphaned by war, forced to serve as soldiers, held captive or murdered.

The impact of war resonates through generations, and the continuing conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East dominates the wider culture. In Vietnam, decades later, children are still being born affected by the Americans' use of Agent Orange, a defoliant containing dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known to man. *Agent Orange*, a well-known series of photographs by Philip Jones Griffiths draws our attention back to this terrible war nearly forty years later with images of the Vietnamese people living with cancer and the genetic mutations caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

In Afghanistan, which has known continuous warfare for a generation, women have often endured violence, repression and bereavement. Photographer Harriet Logan visited twice, photographing and talking to women during and after the repressive regime of the Taliban. During the Taliban rule, women were not permitted to work outside the home or go to school. Logan worked undercover, and the women that spoke to her took great risks in doing so. Having their photographs taken was particularly dangerous as the Taliban considered photography a form of idolatry.

'At a time when the future of Afghanistan under UN and US occupation remains deeply uncertain, and when in Iraq women are being forced on pain of death out of education and back behind the veil, Logan's images and her subjects' words carry a stark plea to the present'. Julian Stallabrass.

Questions

- Why is the effect of war on women and children under-represented in the media?
- Should women fight?
- Why does international law grant special protection to women and children?

THE QUALITY OF
INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM
IS AN INDEX OF THE
QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY
IN A COUNTRY

Geert Van Kesteren



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

9. DISPLACEMENT THROUGH WAR

The infrastructure of a country is its foundation as a functioning society. Military invasions often target infrastructures immediately, striking roads, destroying essential services such as water, sanitation and electricity, destabilising economies, and causing mass chaos, crisis and confusion.

Displacement, the forced movement of a person away from their home, land and loved ones, is one of the most significant features of 21st Century armed conflict. According to UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) in 2007 there were 67 million refugees, and the global number of people affected by conflict-induced internal displacement increased to 26 million. One in five Iraqis have been displaced, and since 2003 almost 5 million Iraqis have been displaced. Many fled to neighbouring countries.

'Iraqis have no legal work options in most host countries and are increasingly desperate and in need of humanitarian assistance. They face challenges in finding housing, obtaining food, and have trouble accessing host countries' health and education systems'. Refugees International, website statement.

Photojournalist Geert Van Kesteren has documented the everyday life of Iraqi civilians today, and tracked their experiences at the hands of the US Military. In his two series *Baghdad Calling* and *Why Mister Why?* both shown at BPB 2008 Van Kesteren presents amateur photographs taken by Iraqi people themselves using mobile phones, alongside his own photographs. The images reveal the life threatening dangers faced by ordinary people on a daily basis, and the stories of those that have fled Iraq as refugees.

Questions

- What is a refugee?
- What difficulties face people displaced through conflict? How do they compare with those that remain in their home country?
- Do other countries have a responsibility to accommodate people displaced by war?

THE WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN HAVE REACTIVATED MEMORIES OF PAST CONFLICTS, PARTICULARLY VIETNAM, AND THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES IN STOKING AND OPPOSING WAR

Julian Stallabrass



Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, *Baghdad, April 4, 2004. An Iraqi boy celebrates after setting fire to a damaged US vehicle that was attacked earlier by insurgents.*
© Ghaith Abdul-Ahad/Getty Images

07 FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

BOOKS

Vietnam Inc. Philip Jones Griffiths

The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, Naomi Klein

Don McCullin, Don McCullin

Regarding the Pain of Others, Susan Sontag

On Photography, Susan Sontag

The Abu Ghraib Effect, Stephen F. Eisenman

'The Ethics of Seeing: Photographs of Germany at War's End.' Journal article by Siobhan Kattago; *German Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, 2002

Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach, Paul Martin Lester

Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War, John Taylor

Reporting the World: John Pilger's Great Eyewitness Photographers, John Pilger

The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq, Patrick Cockburn

WEBSITES

WWW.MASSOBS.ORG.UK

The website for the Mass Observation Archive includes details on making a visit, and the material it holds, some of which is accessible online.

WWW.BPB.ORG.UK

The BPB website includes biographical information about exhibiting photographers, and is a platform for debate, with contributions invited from artists, academics, and journalists, as well as a blog.

WWW.IWM.ORG.UK

The Imperial War Museum website, includes online learning resources about the media and war. See also the minisite www.iwm.org.uk/90 which marks the 90th anniversary of WW1 and includes an online resource of WW1 photography.

WWW.MAGNUMPHOTOS.COM

One of the world's leading photo agencies, Magnum photographers document people, events, issues and personalities across the world.

WWW.NEWS.BBC.CO.UK

The BBC news website contains useful up to the minute information about events and news stories.

WWW.ICP.ORG

The International Center of Photography website, includes extensive photography from the Vietnam War, and Latin America.

WWW.DIGITALJOURNALIST.ORG

Includes an article by Grazia Neri titled Ethics and Photography

WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG

Advocates for the needs of the world's most vulnerable and under-represented populations. The website provides extensive current information about displacement.

WWW.ICRC.ORG

The International Committee of the Red Cross. Extensive information on displacement, humanitarian law and action.

WWW.BARBICAN.ORG.UK

The Barbican Art Gallery is currently showing photographs by war photographers Robert Capa and Gerda Taro and contemporary war photographers.

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