

Technologies of violence

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TECNOLOGIES DE LA VIOLÈNCIA



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura

SANTAMÒNICA

TECNOLOGIES DE LA VIOLÈNCIA

Technologies of violence explores the critical relations between art and the contemporary production of violence and the digital technologies, as well as the techniques that power uses to impose itself through violence.

Technology, as a system used to organise, service and control power, finds, in its machines, in Internet and electronic systems, tools for world dominance that, after World War Two and during the Cold War, led to the emergence of a “new era in political security”, according to Ralf Fücks, director of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, in a publication entitled *Hich-Tech-Kriege (High-Tech Wars)*.

Control of the air and cyberspace and “control of terror”, identified by theorists like Peter Sloterdijk, Marc Augé, Jutta Weber, Herfried Münkler, Constanze Kurz and Paul Virilio, is the goal of the great powers, including governments, companies and terrorist groups, which use sophisticated technology to establish their war zones, generate chaos and seize local and global dominance: anonymous, remote controlled killing by electronic operations; advanced development of cameras, drones and sensors; autonomous computer combat systems; satellite surveillance; and preventive security policies, police control, the killing and forced displacement of people.

Technologies of violence meditates on the shape that violence takes in the collective imagination, on the iconography and symbology of the media and entertainment industry, and the different ways in which the war industry produces, consumes and uses images (cartoons, video games, software and so on). Moreover, taking up the ideas of Foucault, Achille Mbembe and Subhabrata Banerjee about biopolitics, “necropolitics” and “necrocapitalism” as a global system of death production, the exhibition also looks at the forms of insubordination that artists have worked on since the 2000s, as well as the so-called GWOT (Global War on Terrorism) and the implosion of the neocapitalist system after the failure of the great systems of ideological “redemption”.

Artists like Peggy Ahwesh, Paolo Pedercini, Eddo Stern and Zhou Xiao Hu work in a field of anti/representation and simulation, using toy artefacts, video games and animated film to appropriate the icons and major characters of war technology – heroines like Lara Croft, presidents and dictators like Bush and Saddam Hussein, the thousands of soldiers trained to kill and war machinery – and disasters, taking into account their intersections with fictional territories. The Vietnam War, cyberspace wars, the occupation of Iraq, or Afghanistan, or Palestine: these are the game industry scenarios that artists use.

Such artistic practices involve appropriating simulations and fictional configurations, as well as countless images from cameras and media screens (TV, Internet, mobile phones, the

social networks), film and space instruments (satellites, drones, surveillance cameras), all to exercise a dramatic, sarcastic critique of power, deconstructing its mythical and ideological configurations of extermination.

Another field of anti/representation and insubordination is that ploughed by such artists as Regina José Galindo, Elnaz Javani, Maja Bajevic, Mariam Ghani, Enric Maurí and Tim Parchikov as they denounce the violence exercised on the subject and the collective, and the mediascapes and fictional scenarios of Alicia Framis, Larissa Sansour, Sean Snyder and Zhou Xiao Hu, who focus on articulations of violence, the images and the media, the territories and the population.

The artworks do not propose the image as a paralysing vehicle of terror; rather, they seek to reveal the ways in which data, images and narratives become “factories and technologies of terror”, produced, distributed and ideologised for consumption. And violence, a technique used to achieve lethal and cognitive dominance over populations.

Piedad Solans, Curator

PEGGY AHWESH

Canonsburg, Pennsylvania (USA), 1954.

Lives in Pittsburgh (USA)

Ahwesh conveys the narrative of war in what this artist calls “the post-image sensibility”. Intrigued by a Taiwanese company that makes short animations to relay newsworthy world events, she downloaded 50 or so from a YouTube channel and re-edited them into five episodes about the 2014 Israeli-Gaza war. Her purpose in retelling these event is, she says: “to not forget the details, to re-enact the trauma and to honour the dead”. The “cutting” effects of animated cartoons and the computer memory create a hypertext of images that inform the viewer beyond the fiction itself. “The images”, says the artist, “are represented to critique the safe distance from violence and the antiseptic nature of the virtual narrative”.

Lessons of war, 2014

Five-channel HD video, colour, sound, 5' 34"



Courtesy: Peggy Ahwesh and Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, New York

***She puppet*, 2001**

Single-channel HD video, colour, sound, 17'



Courtesy: Peggy Ahwesh and Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, New York

Lara Croft, the late-twentieth-century “doll-girl” and fictional female character, is projected through an appropriation of images from the famous video game Tomb Raider. By re-editing the sequences and placing the aesthetic and imagery of the industrial game in the foreground, Ahwesh transforms the fictional narrative into a feminist critique of women’s problematic identity, their role as vulnerable heroines and the dilemma of the relational game, all through the busty figure of Lara Croft, trapped in a hostile world, robotised and increasingly artificial. By depicting repetitive acts of self-destruction and violence, Ahwesh portrays the condition of women in the symbolic field, their image alienated in iconographic consumption.

The voices off read quotations from the writings of Joanna Russ, Sun Ra and Fernando Pessoa.

How do you want to be governed?, 2009
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 10' 40"



Courtesy: Maja Bajevic and Galerie Loïc Chambon, Paris

Like the question “What is art”, it is impossible to answer the question “How do you want to be governed”, because, as the artist herself says, “the question itself is absurd, as is any attempt to answer it, a discourse on authoritarianism whilst questioning and satirising the nature of art (of power) itself”. Examining the discourse of power relations in a socio-political dimension, this time it is the artist who is being torturously questioned and not the one asking the question, making the reversal of the power structures impossible. In this way, the work, with the fake democratic tone of the question, reveals its own absurdity, repressiveness and hierarchical nature. The voice that repeats the same question as the interrogator does so in a disinterested speaker-like voice, as if the bureaucratic nature of the question is accepted in the question itself and the interrogator presumes that there will not be any answer. The question thus becomes a pure execution of power for power’s sake” (Maja Bajevic).

ALICIA FRAMIS

Barcelona, 1967. Lives and works in Amsterdam.

Room to Forget belongs to the series *Forbidden Rooms*, which explores the invisible limits that exist within society. The piece comprises a glass-encased room made for the Maison de la Paix (House of Peace) and intended to erase the memories of soldiers and victims of war. The powder inside is Metyrapone, a drug that erases specific memories, used to eradicate recall of traumatic moments and help the user to forget, blocking out significant memories. The drug is administered to soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after wars, and to victims of traumatic experiences.

The room is an anti-monument, not a place to commemorate memory, but a place to forget. As Framis explains: “These conflicts damage people’s lives because of their increasing fears, insomnia, trauma, isolation and shame... in this installation I want to address not only economic consequences, war situations and conflicts, but also the psychological damage that these conflicts cause”.

***Room to Forget*, 2013**
Installation, glass and Metyrapone,
190 x 190 x 192 cm.



Courtesy: Alicia Framis and Galeria Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid

REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO
Guatemala, 1954. Lives in Guatemala



Courtesy: Regina José Galindo

Tierra [Earth], 2013

Video performance, colour, sound, 30' 33"



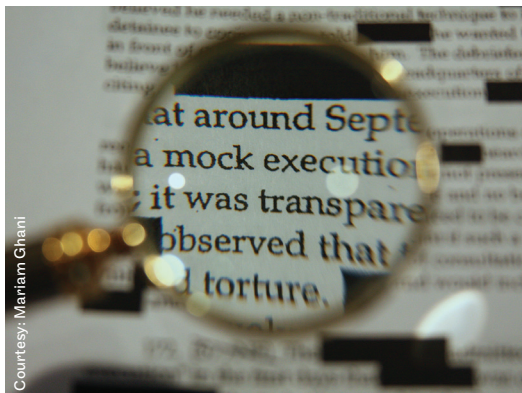
"For 36 years, Guatemala suffered a bloody war. It was a genocide that left more than 200,000 people dead. The army that fought against the insurgents described the indigenous people as internal enemies, claiming that they sympathised with the guerrillas, and it pursued and killed them during several bloody periods during the war. With the intention of taking their land (under the approving look of the country's oligarchy), using as a justification the claim that the indigenous people were enemies of the fatherland, the State practised a *tierra arrasada* ('scorched earth') policy... Many bodies were buried in mass graves that today are part of the long list of evidence that confirms the facts. This testimony describes one of the ways the army dug pits prior to killing people and then tipping the bodies into the pits. It was heard during the genocide trial of Ríos Montt and Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez". (Regina José Galindo)

MARIAM GHANI

New York, 1978. Of Afghan-Lebanese parents,
she now lives and works in New York (USA)

***The Trespassers*, 2011**

Video installation / Video, colour, sound, 1' 45



Courtesy: Mariam Ghani

The Trespassers forma parte de un proyecto de archivos, vídeo, redes digitales y documentación realizado desde 2004 en una obra, *The Index of the Disappeared* post-11-S, en colaboración con Chitra Ganesh. Está basado en documentos desclasificados sobre la lengua, la traducción, los informes, abusos y complicidades en Afganistán, Irak y Guantánamo. El proyecto investiga la guerra, las prisiones militares norteamericanas, la tortura y el papel desempeñado por los traductores nativos afganos en las detenciones, declaraciones e interrogatorios de los prisioneros en las cárceles durante la GWOT (Global War on Terrorism) que se produjo en estos países y en los *black sites* de todo el mundo tras el 11-S.

Una lupa amplifica el texto en inglés de los documentos oficiales, al tiempo que los traductores traducen simultáneamente al dari, al pastún y al árabe. La lectura alude a la libre interpretación, información y manipulación de los textos y declaraciones de los prisioneros, y a los diversos grados de distancia y neutralidad con el material.

***Index of the Disappeared*, 2010-2014**
In cooperation with Chitra Ganesh
Web intervention, Internet / Vinyl texts

As a digital archive, *Index of the Disappeared* foregrounds the difficult histories of immigrant, “Other” and dissenting communities in the US since 9/11, as well as the effects of American military and intelligence service interventions around the world. Through official documents, secondary literature and personal narratives, the Index Archive traces the ways in which censorship and data blackouts are part of a discursive shift to secrecy that allows for disappearances, deportations, renditions and detentions on an unprecedented global scale.



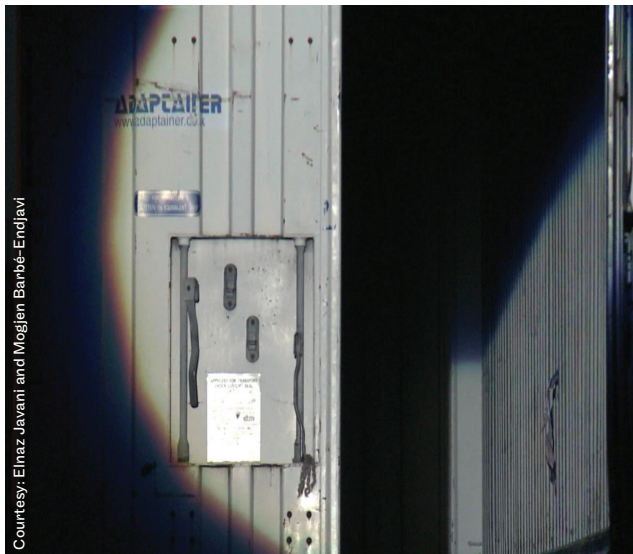
Courtesy: Mariam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh

***Dealing with People*, 2016**

Sound installation

CAC Project, Ses Voltes, Palma de Mallorca, 2013 / Project adapted and produced for Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona

Courtesy: Elnaz Javani and Moglen Barbé-Endjavi



Dealing with People forms part of a public intervention that took place in the Port of Palma de Mallorca in 2013. The piece protests against illegal people trafficking using trucks that take them to cities in Europe and the USA from countries like Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Javani created the intervention in cooperation with the Civil Guard Department in Madrid, which investigated people trafficking in so-called Operation Sofia.

Dealing with People focuses on problematic issues concerned with nationality and the defencelessness of people who have no identity papers or knowledge of the language in foreign countries. It depicts the fear and anguish of being locked into a sealed, dark container, not knowing what is going on beyond this space, and listening to noises and footsteps outside.

ENRIC MAURÍ

El Fou, St. Antoni de Vilamajor, Barcelona, 1957. Lives wherever he is allowed

Llums tremoloses i Sarajevo 2000.
[Tremulous lights and sarajevo 2000]
La fragilitat de la postguerra i els
tractats de pau, 2000–2014 [The fragility
of the postwar and the peace treaties]

Performance, interviews, war archive image
material. Video film, colour, sound, 72'



Llums Tremoloses [Tremulous Lights], which forms part of a project ongoing since 2000, focuses on postwar Sarajevo. The project, which the artist began at a time when Bosnia had ceased to be headline news, has taken different forms over the years.

According to Enric Maurí, “The works provide a glimpse of different points in the conflict, as well as the vacuum, the shortcomings and the absences involved, captured on video and photography cameras, turning these devices into just another organ, with a very intimate, almost mystical personal engagement, like a reparation, through the performances. There is also interest in the places – the streets, the mountains and the scenes of conflict – and in the routes that people and I myself followed. This eloquent nature of the landscape is enriched by the views, opinions and experiences of witnesses who lived through the siege. The people who suffered the war, who felt it and lived it. In short, all of us, anonymous men and women”.

The project, which is formed by material recorded by the artist as well as from various archives, embodies a meditation on conflict and its consequences, as well as calling into question the nature of peace treaties.

TIM PARCHIKOV

Moscow, 1983. Lives in Paris and Moscow

Matchbox, 2006
Video, colour, sound, 1' 30"



Matchbox takes its inspiration from the break-up of the USSR and the political situation in Russia today. Parchikov portrays the defencelessness and vulnerability of the individual against violence and situations in which the power over life and death is held by people who use it as an instrument of control, to ensure the submission or elimination of the “other”. In this raw, crude work, each scene takes place over an extended time and in a compressed space: from the start, the first take, in which the screen is occupied by part of a body, preventing the viewer from seeing what is happening, to the “panorama” of a landscape that shows the final solitude of the body executed and abandoned in the snow at the foot of a wall in a desolate place.

Parchikov produced this work in the 2000s when, after the break-up of the USSR, society hoped for political changes that would to increased freedom and democracy. This was also when the traumas of memories of the Soviet era and Stalinist crimes began to come to light. However, KGB documents were only partially declassified, and the past was never discussed. In such circumstances, the past tends to repeat itself, and *Matchbox*, according to the artist, “does not reconstruct the past, it constructs an imaginary future”.

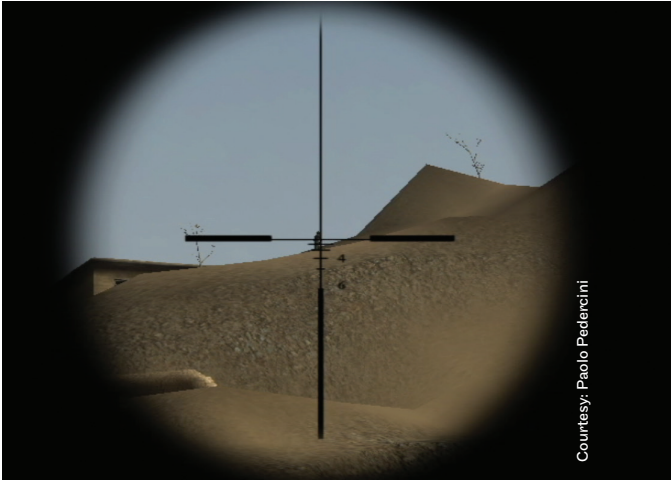


Courtesy: Tim Parchikov and Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid

PAOLO PEDERCINI

Northern Italy, 1981. Lives in Pittsburgh, USA

***Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, 2009**
Machinima video, colour, sound, 6' 49"



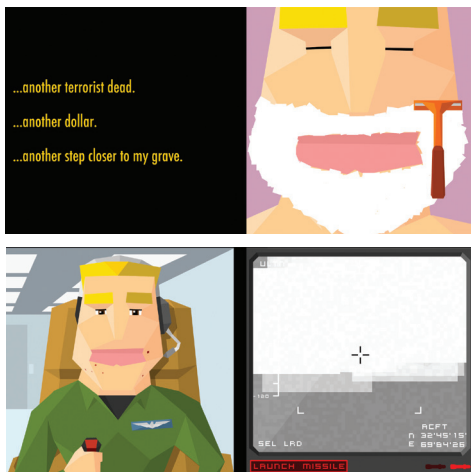
Courtesy: Paolo Pedercini

"Welcome to the Desert of the Real is a rather straightforward appropriation and remix of two sources: footage taken in *America's Army* and text from the "Post-traumatic stress disorder checklist (military version)". The first is the successful first person shooter created by the US Army for recruitment and PR purposes; the latter is a self-diagnosis questionnaire for veterans potentially affected by PTSD. Both elements come from military institutions, but by juxtaposing them I hoped to challenge their order of discourse. *America's Army* is a propagandistic representation of war, because it's an action-packed game that presents an ideal battlefield with no civilian or social fabric, where two symmetrical and clearly distinct teams fight each other in a paintball game fashion. And worst of all, this is presented as a realistic approximation of the military experience. You don't need to be deployed in Iraq to detect the multiple levels of mystification here". (Paolo Pedercini)

Unmanned uses a series of short, split-screen vignettes to combine simple mini-games with clickable conversation options, and takes you through the humdrum existence of a modern drone pilot. The virtual distance of technological weapons enables aseptic forms of terror and disassociation from reality, without the risks of direct contact: you are blowing up a suspected insurgent thousands of miles away from a comfortable seat in front of a monitor. Killing on-screen is a high-precision game executed with the programmed effectiveness of killing the “enemy” in accordance with the motto “Kill the Enemy before He Kills You”.

“Now you get to play the newest kind of soldier: one who remotely drops bombs on foreign soil during the day, and at night goes home to his family in the suburbs. In *Unmanned*, the conflict is internal – the only blood you’ll shed is from shaving cuts. But is there collateral damage in this new way of waging war?” (Jim Munroe)

Unmanned, 2012
Text by Jim Munroe / Sound design by Jesse Stiles
Two-channel narrative video game, colour, sound.



Courtesy: Paolo Pedercini / Mollenindustria

Phone Story, 2011
Video game, smartphone



"Phone Story is an "educational" online game about the social cost of electronic manufacturing, the dark side of your favourite smartphone. Its purpose is to provoke a critical reflection on its own technological platform. Under the shiny surface of our electronic gadgets, behind its polished interface, hides the product of a troubling supply chain that stretches across the globe. *Phone Story* represents this process with four educational games that make the player symbolically complicit in coltan extraction in Congo, outsourced labour in China, e-waste in Pakistan and gadget consumerism in the West.

"Keep *Phone Story* on your device as a reminder of your impact. All of the revenues raised go directly to workers' organisations and other non-profits that are working to stop the horrors represented in the game". (Text: Molleindustria)



LARISSA SANSOUR

East Jerusalem, 1973. Lives and works in Copenhagen

Nation Estate is a sci-fi short film offering a clinically dystopian yet humorous approach to the deadlock in the Middle East. With its glossy mixture of computer generated imagery, live actors and arabesque electronica, the film foregrounds the occupation of Palestine and explores a vertical solution to Palestinian statehood in which the Palestinians finally see the dream of a high-tech, "high-rise" model of life come true in the style of the western capitalist countries.



Courtesy: Larissa Sansour and Galería Sabrina Amrani, Madrid

***Nation Estate*, 2012**
Video, colour, sound, 9' 02" / Poster



SEAN SNYDER

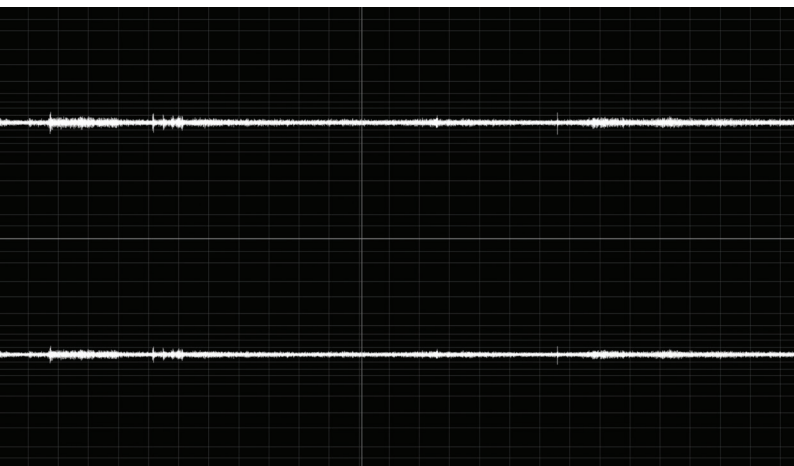
Virginia Beach (USA), 1972. Lives and works in Berlin

Silence (Audition), 2015–2016

Sony KDL-49WD755, HD, video

without sound, 4' 33"

Courtesy: Sean Snyder / Galerie Chantal
Croussel, Paris





Analepsis, 2005
Video, colour, without sound

Courtesy: Sean Snyder / Galerie Chantal Croussel, Paris

Analepsis is a *flashback* or jump cut in narration, which presupposes a return in time, used in film and television. The technique is employed to connect different times and places, altering the chronology of sequences and taking action into the past. In short, it creates special effects and a state of suspense. Snyder captures re-establishing shots and sequence shots originally from satellite news footage, thereby revealing the power of a place to signify more than one thing and highlighting the inherently cinematic quality of television news.

In *Analepsis* we discover an archive of images, a visual text that processes data with a view to war, military, economic and political control through the “eye” of the machine, which penetrates and invades each place, transferring its image onto the screen.

Cloud Sediment (Gstaad), 2015–2016

Video, B/W and colour, sound, 7' 47"

Courtesy: Sean Snyder / Galerie Chantal Croussel, Paris

Snyder explores the visual paradoxes of (im)materiality of information this time focusing on the “Swiss Fort Knox”, the data centre that is supposed to withstand natural disasters, terror and hacker attacks, and even atomic explosions. Shot in Gstaad, Switzerland, the images alternate between snowy Alpine land and air scapes, the fragile apparatus that produces the images and the colour of achromatic post-Cold War bunkers that contain gold from the information age. Geometrically scanning the inorganic landscape, the video reflects digital deterritorialisation and its solid hardware basis, eliciting the opposition between the inside and outside. (Text: Sean Snyder)





***Sheik Attack*, 2000**
Film, colour, sound, 16'45"

Courtesy: Eddo Stern

Sheik Attack is a contemporary non/fiction horror film woven from pop nostalgia, computer war games, the sweat of virtual commandos, the blood of Sheiks and a misremembrance of a long lost Zionist Utopia. In it, the artist uses sequences from computer games created in the mid-1990s to recreate and critique his experience of military service in Israel. To this end, he employed military simulation games produced in the USA, such as *Command and Conquer*, *Soldier and Fortune*. In Stern's view, "A real problem for games and the games industry is that they want to capitalise on political tension and fantasies of war while never being held accountable for a specific point of view since everything is abstracted into fantastical versions of reality".

***Vietnam Romance*, 2003**
 Digital DVD video, colour, sound, 22' 45"



Eddo Stern was a pioneer of what became known as machinima, short form videos created from real-time footage captured from video games. Today, the company Machinima.com in West Hollywood has the second most popular channel on YouTube, but when Stern was doing machinima the term had barely even been coined.

Compiled from sources available on the computer desktop environment – games, graphics and music – *Vietnam Romance* is a remix of the Vietnam war experience with a MIDI soundtrack and computer game clips. The game explores our culture's fascination with the Vietnam War and how the fantasy of war remains in the place of the true story. "The Vietnam War", says Stern, "has been constructed through film, rock music, video games and literature". The piece looks at how history can be constructed completely through the lens of the entertainment industry.

***Vietnam Romance*, 2015**
 Computer Game, colour, sound, 5'



Vietnam Romance is a mediation on the relationship between war and gaming, the video game and war. The piece recreates and interrogates the fictionalised history of the Vietnam War and its culturally commodified remains through a mash-up of cultural artefacts drawn primarily from Hollywood film culture as well as war literature, comic books, popular music, collectable war memorabilia, and adventure tourist packages.

THOMSON & CRAIGHEAD

Jon Thomson (London, 1969) and Alison Craighead (Aberdeen, 1971)
live and work in London

A Short Film About War, 2009
Two-channel video, colour, sound, 9' 39"

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> Location: Hong Kong International Airport
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> user: i'll never grow up
> uploaded on August 2 2008
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> http://www.flickr.com/photos/ddyates/2725301236/
> user: i'll never grow up
> uploaded on August 2 2008
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A Short Film About War is a narrative documentary artwork made entirely from information found on the World Wide Web. In ten minutes, this two-screen gallery installation takes viewers around the world to a variety of war zones as seen through the collective eyes of the online photo sharing community Flickr, and as witnessed by a variety of existing military and civilian bloggers. As the ostensibly documentary “film” plays itself out, a second screen logs the provenance of images, blog fragments and GPS locations of each element comprising the work, so that the same information is simultaneously communicated to the viewer in two parallel formats – on the one hand as a dramatised reportage and on the other as a text log.

As Thomson & Craighead themselves explain, “In offering this tautology, we are attempting to explore and reveal the way in which information changes as it is gathered, edited and then mediated through networked communications technologies or broadcast media, and how that changes and distorts meaning – especially for (the generally wealthy minority of) the world’s users of high speed broadband networks, who have become used to the treacherously persuasive panoptic view that Google Earth (and the World Wide Web) appear to give us”.

Courtesy: the artists and Carroll / Fletcher, London



> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vichassan/23166355/>
> user: Viti Hassan
> uploaded on November 7 2006
> location: Khartoum, Sudan
>



> Location: Kibbutz Beeri, Israel
> 31°25'28.07" N 34°29'27.51" E
>
> <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/02/13/israel-cyber-activists-promote-sderot/>
> BLOGGER: Ayanna Neta "I am fourteen years old and live..."
>
> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/paulsimpson1976/2313724584/>
> user: paul-simpson.org
> uploaded on March 6 2008
> location: Sderot, Ibbin, HaDarom
>
> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/makaya/2735677139/>
> user: makaya
> uploaded on August 6 2008
> location: not known (Israel)
>



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> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/topstechriter/1144223679/in/photostream/>
> user: TopTechWriter.US
> uploaded on August 17 2007
> location: in orbit
>
> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/chatarrapicks/358119965/>
> user: chatanna picks
> uploaded on January 35 2007
> location: International Space Station
>



> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/giginger/75541838/>
> user: giginger
> uploaded: December 20, 2005
> location: Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands
>
>
>
> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/topstechriter/1123890433/>
> user : TopTechWriter.US
> uploaded on August 15 2007
> location: Space shuttle Endeavour in orbit
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> location: Above Baghdad, Iraq (Eye alt: 33246.49km)
> GPS: 32°22'57.88" N 39°15'38.85" E
>
>



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> uploaded on June 8 2007
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> <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glory-ho/2423083559/>
> user: Boudreaux and Andrea
> uploaded on April 18 2008
> location: Damascus, Syria
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>



> uploaded on October 1 2008
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> uploaded on May 17 2007
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ZHOU XIAO HU

Changzhou, Jiangsu (China), 1960. Lives in Shanghai

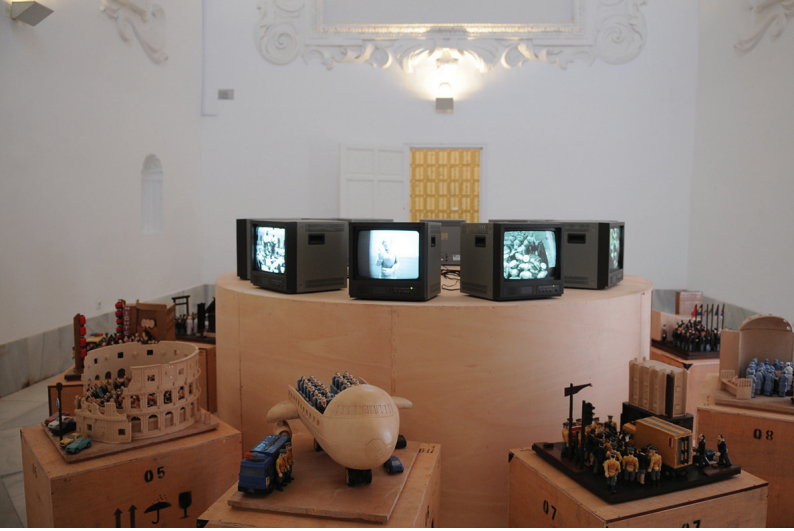
***The Crowd of Bystanders*, 2003–2005**
Installation with 10 terracotta dioramas and 10
black and white animated films, sound.



Zhou Xiao Hu sarcastically explores the power of information and the media's distribution of violent images. Infinite violence is transmitted in a global show that reflects the influence of governments on society and the complicit, voyeuristic and consumerist role played by today's culture.

The Crowd of Bystanders creates a mediascape formed by animated films and terracotta figures and dioramas to reduce global events to flows of the infosphere, revealing the effects of "infoxication", or information intoxication, on the sociocognitive mind, as well as the semantic impossibility of assimilating a violence that is expanded, accelerated and amplified by images.

The piece embodies a mordant critique of violence that is produced and then distributed by media circuits and the control of knowledge in the semiotic capitalism of the videoelectronic age, which generates forms of manipulating society that have never been seen before.



Courtesy: Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, CAAC, Seville

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Muntatge GAMI S.C.P.

Disseny gràfic www.el-local.com

Tècniques i materials en exposició Instal·lacions, vídeos, video-
instal·lacions, arts electròniques, videojocs modificats, animació i
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Agraïments

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Centre de la creativitat

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Entrada lliure

De dimarts a dissabte, d'11 h a 21 h
Diumenges i festius, d'11 h a 17 h
Dilluns tancat

Visites guiades sense inscripció prèvia

Dissabtes a les 18 h i diumenges a les 12 h

Grups

Contactar:
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