

T H E
K I N G ' S
P E A C E

**R E A L I S M
A N D
W A R**

Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin

Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia

Nermine Hammam

Eugene Jarecki

Philip Jones Griffiths

Owen Logan

Fred Lonidier

Martha Rosler

Snapcorps with Stuart Platt

Paul Strand & Cesare Zavattini

**FRIDAY 01 AUGUST 2014 TO
SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER 2014
OPEN DAILY: 11AM–6PM. FREE**

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23 Cockburn Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1BP

How does conflict abroad relate to culture and society at home? What does it mean to oppose warmongering? What would a genuine and democratic peace look like? Curated by Owen Logan and Kirsten Lloyd, this exhibition brings together a rich array of artworks, photobooks and archival materials which use realist strategies to offer alternative perspectives on warfare and the civil peace.

Owen Logan's photo-essay *Masquerade: Michael Jackson Alive in Nigeria* (2001-2005) follows the exploits of a costume performer as he travels across the country. The young black soul singer's transformation into the white 'king of pop' is used as an allegory for the conflict-ridden situation in postcolonial Nigeria, a country which has been in a state of ongoing crisis since the civil war of 1967 to 1970. With the author Uzor Maxim Uzoatu, Logan presents a biting satire that critiques the relationship between the Nigerian political elite and foreign business interests. *Masquerade* is shown here in the context of a group exhibition which expands upon its central themes to interrogate the meaning of 'peace' in modern societies. The artworks and materials presented raise important questions about how domestic politics and economics across the globe have been shaped by warfare.

In recent years the 'war on terror' has further eroded the distinction between war and peace. Conventional conflicts between nation states have been replaced with a kind of peace, or 'security', that can also be understood as perpetual warfare. However, a longer view suggests that the distinction between wartime and peacetime has always been artificial. The sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) analysed the formation of the modern state through the monopolisation of physical force under one authority. He argued that the elite's control over internal peace, right down to the terms of 'civilised' behaviour and cultural mores, gave the state a Janus face: internal regulation and pacification went hand in hand with a greater permissiveness when it came to the use of violence against external enemies. This dense socio-political interweaving of international and domestic forces is the starting point for *The King's Peace*.

In *Masquerade* Logan's revitalisation of realist strategies in *Masquerade* has been heavily influenced by Nigeria's performative and satirical culture. Humour, montage and storytelling are used to describe circumstances and capture connections that straight documentary depictions miss. This approach continues throughout *The King's Peace* exhibition with each contributor assembling words and images in ways that question the illusion of reality so easily achieved with cameras.

Rather than capturing the spectacle of combat or the ghostly aftermath of violence these realist photographers and filmmakers have been reluctant to show the human drama of war for fear of making it appear natural or eternal. When shocking battlefield images are used, they are carefully contextualised in order to communicate a more complex message. Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, (2004-2008) is a good example. Splicing images of the Iraq war into scenes of Western home interiors, she makes plain the connections between violence abroad and consumer culture at home. Other works presented focus instead on the 'civil peace': 1968 Argentina, recent labour struggles on the Mexico-US border and, closer to home, creative activism in the Wester Hailes district of Edinburgh. In each case, the photographers do not simply record events but offer interpretations or even attempt to intervene as they unfold, creating new opportunities for participation in political processes. Together they show how realist strategies have evolved since the end of the First World War. Recognising the crucial role that images play in how societies communicate and comprehend conflict, they have articulated the need for a genuine and democratic peace.

An essay exploring the themes of the exhibition in more detail is available in the gallery or as a free download at www.stills.org.

ARCHIVE MATERIAL, THE BIRTH OF REALISM



Workers' Illustrated News, Magazine spreads 1929

The Greatest Show on Earth, Book spreads 1938

Realism, photography and war are historically intertwined. This is not simply because photography allowed people to portray battle more realistically than ever before. One outcome of the First World War was an explosion of mass communication. During the conflict information and propaganda were directed at the poor and images were used to catch the eye. At the time it was noted that even peasant women were becoming keen readers; no doubt they were motivated to find out what was happening to enlisted husbands and sons. The print media was one among many industries boosted by this 'war to end wars'.

After WWI's cessation, illustrated magazines and journals without subscription fees became widely available. In these publications realist strategies were given a new lease of life. Published in 1929, the *Workers' Illustrated News (WIN)* is one example. The page spreads presented here show how the critical analysis of political economy that was circulated by workers' movements such as the Chartists in the 19th century, was radically visualised in the 20th. This was not achieved by finding suitable illustrations, it was done by making them. In its first issue WIN claimed to 'translate the politics of revolutionary class struggle into pictures'. In place of middle class documentary strategies it focused on positive images of class struggle and social movements, replacing photographs of poverty-stricken victims with representations of community. This desire to see things from a working class point of view was part of a broader movement across many countries. WIN was a British counterpart to the German communist magazine *AIZ (Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung / The Workers' Pictorial Newspaper)* which, in 1926, published a call to amateur worker readers to send in photographs showing their own living and working conditions.

AIZ and *WIN* are two of the places in which realism in photography began. In their pages war and peace were not presented as opposites. Instead words and images were used to argue that the dynamics of both were driven by exploitation.

ADAM BROOMBERG & OLIVER CHANARIN (SOUTH AFRICA / ENGLAND)

War Primer 2

2011

Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin's reworking of Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* (*War Primer*) won the 2013 Deutsche Börse photography prize. Originally published in East Germany in 1955, the book did not appear in English until 1998. It contains newspaper and magazine clippings collected by Brecht over the course of 30 years set against his own short verses which operate as captions. Brecht called these combinations of texts and images 'photo-epigrams.' The result was intended to offer both a critique of warfare and prime readers in how to read images, or what Brecht called 'complex seeing'. Though he retained faith in the power of photographs, Brecht felt that their meaning had to be artificially constructed and produced through collaborative interaction with viewers.

War Primer 2 occupies the pages of Brecht's original. In the artists' words, they are attempting to 'enter into a dialogue' with it. Commissioning a team of people to trawl the Internet for images of conflict produced since 9/11, they selected 85 screen grabs from among many thousands. These were then printed and inserted by hand into 100 copies of the book. Broomberg and Chararin are keen to emphasise that they deliberately retained the poor quality of the images, so that the 'marks' of their production and circulation through online soldiers' blogs and activist websites are obvious. These images have migrated from place to place (or from site to site) as code. The artists want to expose the biography - or as Brecht called it, the 'social life' - of the images. By overlaying the new images on top of the old, new relationships are created with Brecht's short texts. At the same time, much of the original fragments can still be seen, encouraging viewers to think about the different ways in which cameras participate in war today.

War Primer 2 exists as a limited edition of 100 copies of the photobook published by MACK and as a free download for viewing on computers and mobile devices. Visit www.stills.org and follow the links.

Courtesy of the artists, Ben Burbridge, Bertien van Manen, David Campamy, James Cocksey and Nick Hackworth.

PHILIP JONES GRIFFITHS (WALES)

Vietnam Inc.

1971

After spending three years in Vietnam travelling the length and breadth of the country during what the Vietnamese refer to as 'the American war', the Magnum photographer Philip Jones Griffiths published an incendiary photobook in 1971. Comprising 250 images plus extended captions and commentary, *Vietnam Inc.* carries an implicit critique of photojournalism's focus on the spectacular event as a means to understand a conflict. In contrast to today's 'embedded' journalists, Jones Griffiths lived with local families, published only a few images and deliberately kept a low profile during his time there. The resulting book has been described as 'one of the most excoriating indictments of US involvement in the Vietnam War ever published'.

Alongside photographs depicting the horrors of warfare it includes others which offer a detailed account of the character and rhythms of local life. His searing texts destabilise straightforward readings and position images within their broader contexts. Jones Griffiths has said that his main priority is to tell a story: '*Vietnam Inc.* was carefully constructed on the peeling-onion principle. The first layer was the emotional response to the image, the next the short caption, then a longer one, and finally the text blocks. My view is that a photograph that does not need a caption is a good photograph, but a caption can enhance its meaning. I avoid simply describing the image. My Fleet Street training emphasised the "five Ws" of journalism - who, what, why, where and when? My favourite, to this day, is "why"?'.

The initial print run of *Vietnam Inc.* sold out in just a few weeks. The book was credited with changing public attitudes in the US and was recently referred to as 'the book that lost a war'.

Thanks to Magnum Photos and Phaidon.

GRUPO DE ARTISTAS DE VANGUARDIA (ARGENTINA)

Archivo Tucumán Arde

1968

In the tumultuous year of 1968, the Argentinean 'Group of Avant-Garde Artists' declared their intention to go beyond the institutions of culture and rethink the role of art within revolutionary processes. Photographers, union members, sociologists, economists, students, artists and filmmakers came together to create a collective response to the US-backed dictator General Onganía's repressive rule and destructive economic policies. Their *Tucumán Arde* (*Tucumán Burns*) project set out to document and publicise the deplorable social conditions in Tucumán, a province located in the north of the country. Waves of privatisation and centralisation had led to the closure of the local sugar mills and a dire social crisis. In alliance with the trade unions, the group tried to establish an information campaign to counter the propaganda disseminated through the state-sanctioned media. In many ways the project was a failure. Their second public exhibition was shut down by the authorities and the group disbanded before the completion of their final report. Most of the artists involved stopped producing art and some took up political militancy.

The Group of Avant-Garde Artists experimented with alternative dissemination models in order to reach a large working class public. For this exhibition, the archive materials associated with *Tucumán Arde* are presented on a structure designed by the Latvian Gustav Klucis (1895-1938) in a very different context. A pioneer of political photomontage and a member of the Constructivist avant-garde, Klucis designed a number of these semi-portable multimedia agitprop kiosks in 1922. Integrating various combinations of loudspeakers, film screens and display units, the kiosks were intended to disperse information on the streets of Moscow in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. This particular structure has been recreated by MA Art History students at Liverpool John Moores University in order to host a selection of documents from the *Tucumán Arde Archive*. In doing so they have drawn a fascinating comparison between two very different historical and political contexts in which mass communication and political participation were central to the activities of artists.

Thanks to Graciela Carnevale, MACBA, TATE Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University.

NERMINE HAMMAM (EGYPT)

Press from the series *Unfolding*

2012

Nermine Hammam's series *Unfolding* was made in response to the recent civil unrest and uprising in Egypt. Produced on an intimate scale, they consist of reproductions of medieval Japanese landscapes interspersed with explicit images of police brutality following the 2011 revolution. Familiar due to their wide circulation through the media, her selected photographic fragments were gathered via public sources before being printed onto rice paper. The provocative combination of beauty and violence makes an unsettling connection between the consumption of high art and the media spectacle of trauma.

Having witnessed lethal violence on the front line in Cairo, Hammam attempted to find a way to communicate and examine her experiences without resorting to graphic photographs. Instead she sought to insert some distance from her subject matter. Influenced by the writer Susan Sontag's (1933-2004) comments on the over-exposure of images of suffering, she carefully hides the 'moments of impact' behind foliage or within painted undergrowth. 'Japanese screens allowed me to play around with these uneasy feelings, and also, perhaps, to understand my role in the industrial production of sudden shock then generalized indifference. The aesthetic distance they provided, that of Japanese good manners and taste, allowed me to gaze at the minute horrors of military rule without feeling robbed of my humanity.' In contrast to some of the other artists and photographers participating in *The King's Peace* exhibition, Hammam retains a commitment to the ambiguity of art, prioritising the power of self-expression over direct activism.

Unfolding consists of 20 individual prints of which one is shown here. Focusing on power relations and the mass media *Press* raises the important question of its ultimate subservience to violence. In this image the pen is *not* mightier than the sword.

Courtesy of Rose Issa Projects.

EUGENE JARECKI (USA)

Why We Fight

2005

Why We Fight won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. An unflinching look at the anatomy of the US war machine, it was inspired by President Dwight Eisenhower's 1961 speech about the threat posed to democracy by the 'military industrial complex'. He warned that the combined power of the military establishment and the growing arms industry must not acquire undue influence over US actions at home or abroad. Jarecki investigates whether Eisenhower's fears over 'destroying from within that which you are trying to protect from without' have come to pass.

The film weaves together archive footage, personal stories and commentary from military personnel, political insiders, journalists and arms industry workers. Each offers answers to the recurring question: why does America fight? Its title has been taken from propaganda films commissioned by the US War Department in the wake of Pearl Harbour which have since been described as 'emotionalised history lessons'. Jarecki says: 'Frank Capra made a series of films during World War II called *Why We Fight* that explored America's reasons for entering the war. Today, with our troops engaged in Iraq and elsewhere for reasons far less clear, I think it's crucial to ask the questions: Why are we doing what we are doing? What is it doing to others? And what is it doing to us?'

Eisenhower maintained that an 'alert and knowledgeable citizenry' was required to curb the unchecked ascendancy of the military industrial complex. Jarecki sees himself as contributing to this project by addressing an 'information asymmetry' whereby those in power preserve their own information advantage at the expense of the public. *Why We Fight* tries to look beyond the heroes or villains of the news headlines to instead examine the underlying systems that drive war in the 21st century.

Courtesy of Axiom Films.

OWEN LOGAN (SCOTLAND)

Masquerade: Michael Jackson Alive in Nigeria

2001-2005

Owen Logan's satirical photo-essay updates the classic 'rake's progress' story. The late Michael Jackson takes up the starring role, this time moving through the rungs of contemporary Nigerian society. A nation of nearly 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria was strategically stitched together by the British Empire for the benefit of imperial trade. In a satire of the country's identity politics, Jackson repeatedly changes his personal characteristics even more dramatically than he did in life. Starting out at the top and ending up very near the bottom of society, his guises move from colonial master to elite playboy to born-again Christian to fatherly patron, with many other incarnations in between. These physical transformations are used as an allegory through which to consider the conflict-ridden situation in postcolonial Nigeria. Since the civil war (1967-1970), the country has been shaped by a mixture of messianic religious leaders, a corrupt elite, foreign funded business interests, international NGOs and a plethora of charitable endeavours. Each contribute drops in an ocean of troubles.

Logan began working in Nigeria during the years of military rule in the 1990s. Subsequent governments have continued to protect the interests of the feudal elites and subordinate civil liberties while undermining education and welfare. However, humour is one of the ways Nigerians speak truth to power. In making *Masquerade* Logan was inspired by people like the Afro Beat singer, Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938-1997) who used his wit to attack the opportunism, corruption and hypocrisy that plagues everyday life there. Beyond headlines about violent acts of official repression in Nigeria, it is this sense of opportunism that really marks the experience of a disempowered and subjugated civil society.

Masquerade takes the form of a book in which Logan's photographs are accompanied by a story written by the author Uzor Maxim Uzoatu. It is a print on demand production and can be purchased either through Stills or through the publisher, Altered Images (hamish@altered-images.com).

FRED LONIDIER (USA)

N.A.F.T.A. #16 A/B "N.A.F.T.A. . . ' Returns to Tijuana," /
"T.L.C. . . ' Regresa a Tijuana,"

2005

With a background in sociology, Fred Lonidier has been producing documentary and conceptual photography since the 1970s. Over the course of his long career he has focused on making work 'for, by and about labour struggles, or, really, class war.' He frequently shows his photo/text installations in alternative spaces including union halls, community spaces and shopping centres, as well as in art galleries and museums. The two images presented here offer a glimpse into his longstanding project *N.A.F.T.A. ... (Not a Fair Trade for All)* (...) which tackles border issues and labour rights in 'maquiladoras,' assembly plants that operate in the free trade zone of Tijuana, Mexico. Employees in these plants are not only paid poorly and forced to work in unhealthy conditions, they are denied their right to form unions - in violation of the country's labour laws. *N.A.F.T.A. ... (Not a Fair Trade for All)* (...) concerns their exploitation and their resistance.

When the artworks were initially shown, at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in 1999, Lonidier leafleted the maquiladoras, inviting the workers to attend the exhibition. Fearing that they would be galvanised to organise, factory owners successfully pressured the University to cancel the show. Four years later in 2003, Lonidier countered by setting up a mobile gallery in a tractor-trailer similar to those used to transport maquiladora products over the border every day. He sited it in politically strategic locations throughout Tijuana, including the maquiladoras themselves. The documentation images have become an integral element of the work itself.

Lonidier is also a union activist. Commenting on artists' growing interest in social issues and intervention he has said: 'Over the last decade and more, many artists have been concerned about a broad array of social issues. Commitment to social commentary and criticism through artworks is viewed as a move beyond the art-for-art's-sake limitations of liberal modernism: the artist as social isolate. But is this move toward the social really all that substantial? I think it depends upon how we come to view the role of the artist. My commitment has long been that the concerns and exhibition of social art be connected in some way to organised efforts towards the same ends; art that intends to challenge the social world has its best chance in tandem with social/political organisations and their allies.'

Thanks to Silberkuppe, Berlin and August Jordan Davies.

MARTHA ROSLER (USA)

House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home,
New Series (2004-2008)

2004/08

Martha Rosler's photomontages renew an earlier series produced between 1967 and 1972 which focused not on imperial violence in Iraq but in Vietnam. Exasperated with the portrayal of the conflict as something that happened in an unimaginable, remote place, Rosler condensed pages from *Life* magazine into single images, using her scalpel to cut together news reporting with lifestyle sections and advertising. Her disturbing montages show a terror-stricken parent carrying a wounded baby through an affluent American home and a housewife pulling back curtains to reveal a battlefield beyond the window. She said: 'I was trying to show that the "here" and the "there" of our world picture, defined by our naturalized accounts as separate or even opposite, were one.' The series was distributed via Women's Movement grassroots publications, and as photocopies at demonstrations.

Rosler's new series reprised many of the same tactics in response to the Iraq war. If the technology behind image production had changed in the intervening three decades, the complicity of the press and the political commitment to imperialism had not. Retaining the feminist commitment that imbues all of her work, this series once again draws an implicit connection between the politics underpinning oppression abroad and at home.

Bertolt Brecht's realist approach has been a major influence on Rosler's work. As well as exposing how images 'work', she prefers to use fragments of source material taken from everyday popular culture. She presents this in ways that attract viewers while, at the same time, disrupting conventional readings. 'I like to provide some kind of critical distance,' she says, 'some kind of critical consciousness, so that when people come away from whatever it is I've done, they have some sense of a new apprehension of our own context, the possibility of a new view, or the wherewithal to make a judgement about meaning and value, and social responsibility.'

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin/Cologne.

SNAPCORPS WITH STUART PLATT (SCOTLAND)

Digging for Diamonds...a Journey back to Fairy Hailes

1994/2014

In the early 1990s the Snapcorps photography group led a project about unemployment called *Hi Ho Giro*. Based in the Wester Hailes district of Edinburgh (here re-imagined as 'Fairy Hailes'), the slide-to-tape video followed the exploits of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs as they negotiated their way through Department of Social Security bureaucracy. The accompanying material presented on large boards gave a sobering edge to their capers, describing in detail the effects of deepening inequality coupled with a declining welfare system.

Snapcorps' account of the 'civil peace' weaves together the machinations of local politics, taxation and benefits systems, the introduction of the National Lottery, and protests against the Major government's 'Criminal Justice and Public Order Act'. Among this Bill's most controversial elements were increased police powers of unsupervised 'stop and search' and sections which effectively outlawed raves, or 'public gatherings around amplified music characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.' Snapcorps responded to this context, using realist strategies to create a humorous and engaging creative intervention that critiqued the status quo.

Working together with four of the original participants, Stuart Platt's new film revisits *Hi Ho Giro* and Fairy Hailes. Among other things they consider how much community art and education practices have changed over the last two decades. Describing Snapcorps as a political education process, they emphasise that the group gave participants an opportunity to articulate their voice through photography - voices that didn't toe the political line in Wester Hailes. The writings of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997) provided inspiration: 'Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.' (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.)

PAUL STRAND (USA) & **CESARE ZAVATTINI** (ITALY)

Un Paese: Portrait of an Italian Village

1955

The photobook *Un Paese* was created by the American photographer Paul Strand (1890–1976) in collaboration with the Italian screenwriter Cesare Zavattini (1902–1989). A portrait of the rural town of Luzzara in northern Italy, it combines depictions of the local inhabitants, landscapes, artefacts and street scenes with Zavattini's introductory essay and distilled, first-person testimonies. Following the trauma of the Second World War, Zavattini embraced 'neo-realism', an approach that paid close attention to everyday life as a way to help recompose a shattered world. In *Un Paese* the townsfolk's words and Strand's extraordinary images are carefully placed together to present an ethnographic microcosm of Italy's post-war political economy.

Widely recognised as one of the 20th century's most significant photographers, Strand first studied with the social documentary photographer Lewis Hine and later became close to Alfred Stieglitz. In 1949, to avoid blacklisting during the McCarthy era, he exiled himself from the United States and relocated to France. From 1950 until his death in 1976, Strand focused his energies on producing photobooks of rural communities he visited and lived with for periods of time. In addition to Luzzara he worked in New England, France, Egypt, the Hebrides, Romania and Ghana. In each case Strand's 'Romantic communist' vision was set against very specific modern day political realities.

Strand spent three months on South Uist in 1954, this time collaborating with the writer Basil Davidson to produce *Tir a'Mhurain* (Gaelic for Land of the Bendy Grass). The Edinburgh-based geographer Fraser MacDonald points out that the decision to build a test site for Britain and America's first nuclear missile on the island provides a crucial backdrop to the book: 'For Strand, the range was an important political cause, not merely of local interest, but one that represented everything he struggled against: an aggressive capitalist modernity.' However, his hopes that the book could make a positive intervention into Cold War politics by helping the islanders to protest the decision did not come to pass: the book was not published until 1962, well after the range had been constructed. Photographs from *Tir a'Mhurain* were displayed in *Paul Strand: The Hebridean Photographs*, one of Stills' first exhibitions.

Courtesy of Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive.

The King's Peace is part of Edinburgh Art Festival 2014 and GENERATION: a major, nationwide exhibition programme showcasing some of the best and most significant artists to have emerged from Scotland over the last 25 years. It shows the generation of ideas, of experiences, and of world-class art on an unparalleled scale by over 100 artists in more than 60 venues.

Stills' contribution to the GENERATION programme centres on the work of Owen Logan. As well as presenting his photo-essay *Masquerade* for the first time in Scotland, Logan has been invited to expand upon its themes by co-curating *The King's Peace* exhibition.

Owen Logan is a photographer and writer based in Edinburgh and Toloun. He is also a contributing editor to the independent arts magazine *Variant* and a research fellow in the field of socio-economics at the University of Aberdeen. Over the course of the past 25 years Logan has exhibited widely both in Scotland (Third Eye Centre 1989, Stills 1989, CCA 1993, ECA 2000, Peacock Visual Arts 2008, Stills 2013) and internationally (The Photographers Gallery London 1994, State Museum, Munich, 1994, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria 1998, The British Council, Kaduna, Nigeria, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford 1999, Museo de Etnografia y Folklore, MUSEF, La Paz, Bolivia 2009). During this time he has also produced a series of photobooks published by Polygon, Cornerhouse and The British Council. His work is held in the collections of The National Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria, The British Council, The National Galleries of Scotland, The Scottish Parliament and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In 2006 he was awarded a British Academy Larger Research Grant to examine the theory and practice of photography in the context of informing social change.

GENERATION is delivered as a partnership between the National Galleries of Scotland, Glasgow Life and Creative Scotland and is part of Culture 2014, the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme. Full listings and details of artists involved can be found at www.generationartscotland.org



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