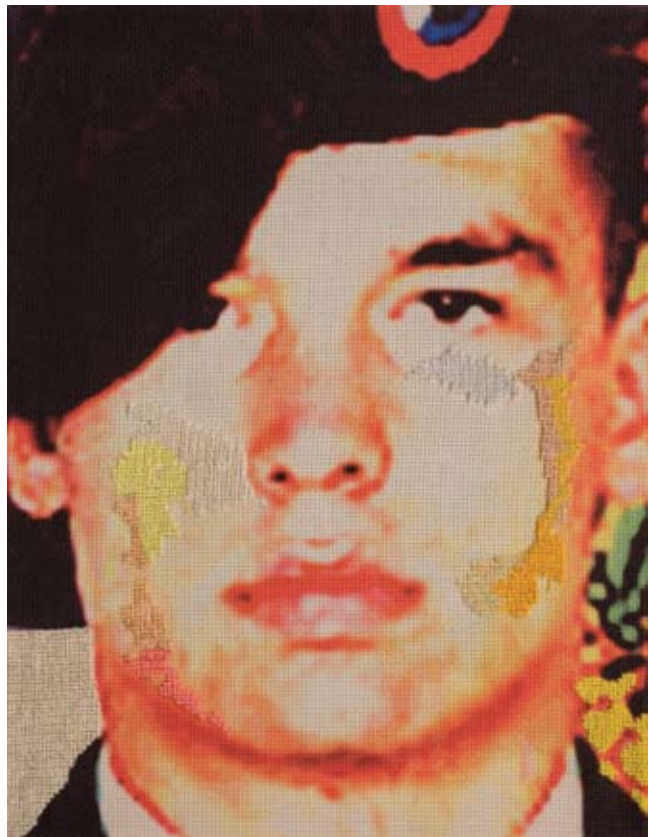


Bringing The War Home

Farhad Ahrarnia, Sama Alshaibi, Lisa Barnard,
Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, Edmund
Clark, Kay May, Asef Ali Mohammad, Christopher
Sims and Peter van Agtmael



An Impressions Gallery
Touring Exhibition

Curated by Pippa Oldfield

Bringing the War Home

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'an important statement in response to our times... thoughtfully produced, and carefully curated'

David Campbell, *Source Magazine*

Challenging the conventions of traditional war photography, this international exhibition draws together powerful photographic responses that connect both directly and indirectly with conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The exhibition rejects the assumption that war photography depicts dramatic moments of combat captured by heroic male photojournalists, instead offering new approaches and techniques. These include the viewpoints of women, non-combatants, and Iraqis and Afghans; amateur and non-official imagery such as soldiers' graffiti and personal digital photos; and work reflecting the far-reaching effects of war away from the battle zone.

Featuring work by nine artists or collaborative partnerships, *Bringing the War Home* encompasses an array of techniques and presentation styles, including video, digital scans, and camera-less processes, alongside more conventional photographic prints. The artists come from a range of cultural backgrounds and include both emerging and mid-career artists.

Many of the works in the show have been specially developed for their first exhibition presentation.



US Soldier III from *US Soldiers Series*
(2006 - 2008) © Farhad Ahrarnia, courtesy
Rose Issa Projects

Farhad Ahrarnia

US Soldiers Series (2006 - 2008)

Iranian born Ahrarnia works between the UK and Iran; his practice is primarily concerned with the relationship between photography, film, woven and embroidered textiles.

In Farsi, the language spoken widely in Iran, as well as in Afghanistan and to some extent Iraq, the expression *cheshm dookhtan* (literally 'eye sewing') denotes the act of looking intently. Unpicking this saying, Ahrarnia explores both Foucault's association of looking with power, and the history of hidden codes stitched into textile products as a means of personalising and perhaps subverting them.

Ahrarnia collected photographs of young American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, mainly via the internet, which he digitally manipulated before printing onto cotton aida (needlepoint) fabric and slowly hand-embroidering. The brutality enacted by the needle, sometimes deliberately left buried in the canvas, ensures the violence enacted upon these young men is not forgotten.



Razor Wire from *Between Two Rivers*
(2008 - 2009) © Sama Alshaibi, courtesy
Selma Feriani Gallery

Sama Alshaibi

Between Two Rivers (2008 - 2009)

Alshaibi, a US citizen of Iraqi and Palestinian parentage, transposes the violence suffered in Iraq (the country of her birthplace), to her own body. In her series of performed self-portraits, she physically alters her appearance to incorporate scars, welts, branding, and other marks. The series was partly inspired by traditional Iraqi practices of tribal scarification, and partly by the contemporary ploy of hoax kidnappers operating in Iraq who defraud families of the victims of suicide bombers, claiming to hold their missing loved ones hostage.

Alshaibi's images are rich in cultural references: *Inside the Fertile Crescent* re-imagines the original site of Iraq, settled by ancient nomadic people between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, as a brand on her cheek. In a deliberate attempt to reject the conventional photojournalistic representations of pain, Alshaibi states that 'rather than being sensationalistic or exploiting the suffering of my people...I use my own body... I believe it to be more just'.



Untitled (No.8) from Care Packages Series 1
(2004) © Lisa Barnard



Anne from Blue Star Moms
(2004) © Lisa Barnard

Lisa Barnard

Blue Star Moms (2004)

Care Packages Series 1 (2004)

Barnard explores the relationship of mothers to their children, and the communicative and connecting routes between home and frontline.

Blue Star Moms (2004) examines the experiences of the San Francisco Bay members of the US nationwide organisation Blue Star Moms. Barnard's carefully composed portraits depict the Moms with photographs of their children in military uniform, or official Blue Star flags (decorated with a star to represent each son or daughter serving), as proud and poignant reminders of their absence.

Care Packages Series 1 (2004) documents the Moms' initiative to insert 'a little bit of home' into the battle zone, via donations of consumables. Barnard's photographs reveal these mundane and poignant items, from single-use cameras to beef jerky, packed in self-seal plastic bags for protection during transit. One image, depicting make up remover, nail files, and pink razors, brings home the presence of women in the arena of conflict.



The Repatriation II, June 16, 2008 (detail)
from *The Day Nobody Died*
(2008) © Broomberg & Chanarin



Film Still from The Day Nobody Died
(2008) © Broomberg & Chanarin

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin
The Day Nobody Died (2008)

Embedded with British troops in Afghanistan, Broomberg and Chanarin chose to reject the camera, instead employing an unwieldy roll of photographic paper in a lightproof box, and a Snatch Land Rover (used for transporting troops) as a makeshift darkroom. Each day, in response to events such as a suicide attack or the repatriation of a deceased soldier, which would ordinarily be documented by a photojournalist, they opened the vehicle's doors at the appropriate location and exposed a section of the paper to the sun for 20 seconds. The resulting 6m long photographs are physically overwhelming and non-figurative, inviting the viewer to contemplate and meditate.

This serenity is disturbed both by the specificity of the captions, which remind the viewer of the often horrific events represented, and the knowledge that these prints are actual objects brought home from the site of conflict.



Untitled from *Letters to Omar*
 (2009 - 2010) © Edmund Clark

Edmund Clark

Letters to Omar (2009 - 2010)

Letters to Omar forms part of a larger project examining the workings of Guantánamo Bay US naval base and detention camp, and reflects Clark's ongoing interest in the hidden workings of systems of incarceration. Clark gained unprecedented access to an archive of partially censored correspondence sent between 2005 and 2007 to Omar Deghayes, a Libyan refugee and UK resident accused of al-Qaeda membership and association with the Taliban, who was later released without charge.

Whilst including expected communications from friends, family and legal representatives, the bulk of the archive consists of letters and cards from well-wishers and strangers from around the globe, all of which were scanned, numbered, and frequently redacted by US military censors. In an echo of this bureaucratic system of selection and control, Clark scanned a portion of this material, revealing both a transnational network of communication and empathy, and a popular aesthetic of anti-conflict images: sunsets and roses; puppies and the Yorkshire Dales.



Untitled from The Hawthorn Tree
(2008 - 2009) © Kay May



Untitled from The Hawthorn Tree
(2008 - 2009) © Kay May

Kay May

The Hawthorn Tree (2008 - 2009)

May's work represents her experience as a Royal Marine's mother. In this multi-stranded project, she brings together her own photographs and diary entries made in England; texts from official MoD communiqués and newspaper reports, and amateur digital images made at her request by her son, Freddy, during his seven months in Afghanistan. Her approach plays on the binary opposites that structure war photography, colliding the military sphere with the domestic; professional with amateur; and masculine with feminine. Communication and collaboration with her son enables intimate insights into the psychological and emotional effects of participation in war, for both those in the battle zone and those remaining at home.



"The US has made my life even harder. They have failed to fulfill their promises, and now they've appointed new warlords, the Northern Alliance, who are worse than the Taliban. The current situation is almost as if Taliban were still running the country. Afghan women have always faced security risks and I face danger every day but I'm not giving up on my job."

*Habiba, 31, Newscaster from
Stories from Kabul
(2009) © Asef Ali Mohammad*

Asef Ali Mohammad
Stories from Kabul (2009)

Born in Pakistan to Afghan parents, Mohammad moved to the UK in 2002. Travelling to his ancestral homeland of Afghanistan for the first time, Mohammad met and photographed Kabul residents from a range of professions and backgrounds: beauticians and police officers, newscasters and security guards. Responding to the context of the American presence in Afghanistan, he invited them to answer the simple question 'how has America influenced your life'. The resulting portraits, *Stories from Kabul (2009)*, are shown alongside their complex and contradictory responses, demonstrating that conflict can engender personal and economic opportunity as well as devastation.



Mosque with Golden Dome, Fort Irwin, California (2006) © Christopher Sims



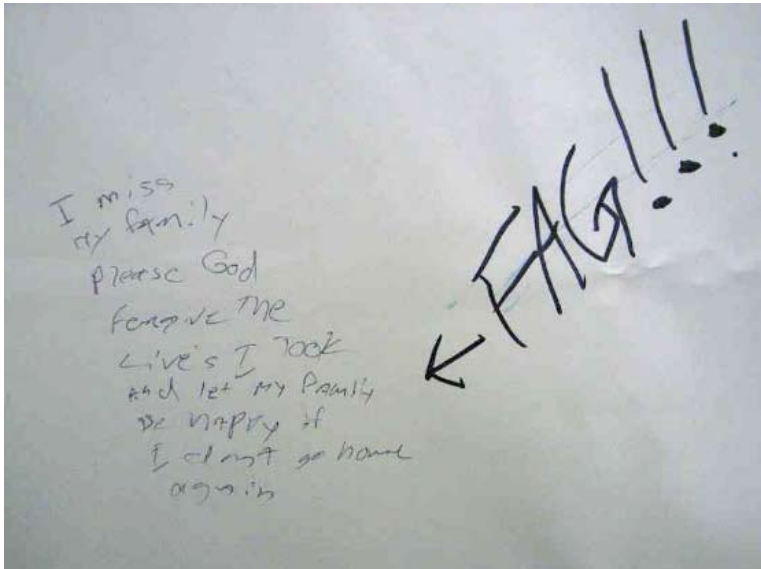
Villager with Stomach Wound, Fort Polk, Louisiana, 2005 © Christopher Sims

Christopher Sims

Theatre of War: The Pretend Villages of Iraq and Afghanistan (2005 - 2006)

Sims' images are concerned with performances of conflict and its relocation from 'over there' to 'over here'. *Theatre of War: The Pretend Villages of Iraq and Afghanistan* (2005 - 2006) depicts fake settlements constructed by the US military to serve as training grounds for soldiers prior to deployment.

Taking the viewer backstage on the 'war on terror', Sims reveals how it is reframed in the American imagination as a dramatic entertainment with actors and audience. In these fictitious lands of 'Talatha' and 'Braggistan', scriptwriters dramatise training scenarios such as a suicide bomber detonating herself outside a mosque. The only blood spilled here is fake: participants wear electronic sensors that monitor hits, transforming combat into a paintball-type game without consequences. Sims himself is sometimes obliged to play a part, acting as a photojournalist for the fictitious 'International News Network', whilst recent immigrants from Iraq and Afghanistan are employed to play a 'version' of the lives they left behind.



Untitled from 2nd Tour Hope I Don't Die
 (2006) © Peter van Agtmael

Peter van Agtmael

Untitled Series (Graffiti) from 2nd Tour Hope I Don't Die (2006)

Taken as part of a wider series of photographs produced in Iraq, van Agtmael's deadpan photographs record graffiti made by and for US soldiers in the toilets of an army airstrip in Kuwait, one of the transit points for Iraq. This private discourse is by turns crude, philosophical, and darkly humorous, revealing the religious, political, and sexual preoccupations of its anonymous authors.

Van Agtmael is affiliated with Magnum, the influential photojournalism agency formed in 1947 and historically associated with both the notion of 'the decisive moment' and with heroic combat photography, exemplified by the approaches of two of its co-founders, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Capa respectively. Van Agtmael deliberately denies these two principles in his decision to photograph the static and distinctly unheroic environment of an army toilet block. His rejection of conventional approaches demonstrates the changing nature of conflict photography, even within the sector of professional photojournalism.

Installation Images



List of works

Farhad Ahrarnia

5 x Colour digital photographs on cotton aida fabric, hand embroidered, framed in white box frames with anti-reflective glass, 58.42 x 76.2cm / 23 x 30"

Sama Alshaibi

5 x Black & white photographs, archival window mounts, black wooden frames, glazed, 60 x 50cm / 23.6 x 19.7"

Lisa Barnard

3 x Colour photographs mounted on aluminium, 101.6 x 86.4cm / 40 x 34"
5 x Colour photographs in perspex box frames, 60 x 60cm / 23.6 x 23.6"

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

1 x Colour photograph mounted on aluminium 600 x 76cm / 236.2 x 29.9"
1 x DVD, 23min, to be shown on monitor with sound

Edmund Clark

5 x Bespoke tables with vitrine tops, 70 x 200cm / 27.6 x 78.7" each, to display 96 x A4 colour digital scanned prints

Kay May

Collage installation comprising:

12 x Colour and black & white photographs mounted on aluminium, 40 x 40cm / 15.7 x 15.7"

50 x Digital camera prints, 10 x 18cm / 3.9 x 7.1"

Diary entries in vinyl lettering

Asef Ali Mohammad

6 x Colour photographs, archival window mounts, oak frames, glazed (anti-reflective glass), 60 x 50cm / 23.6 x 19.7"

Christopher Sims

5 x Colour photographs mounted on aluminium, 38.1 x 38.1cm / 15 x 15"

1 x Colour photographs mounted on aluminium, 38.1 x 48.3cm / 15 x 19"

4 x Colour photographs mounted on aluminium, 76.2 x 76.2cm / 30 x 30"

Peter van Agtmael

12 x Colour poster-style digital photographs with adhesive backing to apply directly to wall, 30 x 40cm

Equipment

Venue will need to provide a monitor with built-in sound and DVD player (Impressions may be able to supply these; please ask). Venue to provide their own technician. Technical advice and touring handbook supplied.

Interpretation and Education

Text supplied for venue to produce information sheet.

Artist information folder.

Suggested selection of books for visitors to read (venue to arrange with own library).

Text for introduction panel and captions (venue to produce own vinyl lettering).

Support from Impressions' Education & Learning Manager to help plan related activities.

Space required

Approximately 50 - 80 linear metres. Impressions can provide advice on editing and installing the exhibition to suit your space.

Publication

Full colour 52pp publication *Bringing The War Home*. Foreward by Hilary Roberts, Senior Curator of Photographs, Imperial War Museum, London. Essay by Pippa Oldfield, Curator. Published by Impressions Gallery.

Transport

Hiring venues are responsible for onward transport if the exhibition is on consecutive tour, otherwise two-way transport is payable.

Insurance

Venues are responsible for insurance in transit and in situ; replacement value £40,000.

Fees

Hire fee for mainland UK venues £3,000+vat. For overseas venues, please enquire directly.

Pippa Oldfield (Curator)

Pippa Oldfield is Head of Programme at Impressions Gallery, Bradford. She curated *The Factory of Dreams: Inside Mexico's Soap Operas* (2005), and co-curated *Once More, With Feeling: Recent Photography From Colombia* (2007). Both were accompanied by publications and toured nationally. She is a Doctoral Fellow at Durham University, undertaking research into women, war and photography in the Americas.

Impressions Gallery

Established in 1972 in York, Impressions was one of the first specialist photography galleries in Europe. Now based in a new purpose built space in Bradford, Impressions is widely considered a leading international exhibition space for photography. Impressions supports and promotes innovative and creative work that extends the boundaries of current photographic practice.

Contact

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