

Lecture 2: Photography as witnessing

Royal Photographic Society looking to the Present, looking to the Past
Series 1, - lecture 2: Photography as witnessing
17/9/20

Witness in conflict -

- Adam Broomberg / Oliver Chanarin - too many images become immune to the effect
- Tim Hetherington - how to escape the generic
 - Pictures can make us act + make us...
 - how we have a memory bank in our head
- Images don't stand alone, political, social, personal
- Which is the right way to tell the story?

- Francisco Goya + the Disasters of War

- ↳ Godfather of War photography - made in 3 stages: witnessing, aftermath, consequences.
- 'once upon a time in Iraq'

① Witness - for whom?
- What is he/she not witnessing?
- Reliability?
- purpose?

First Wars to be seen in the living room: Korean War + Vietnam

- Roger Fenton - photography as the 'truth' as illustrations were classified as fake/untrue
 - ↳ Sontag
- Read Fenton on image manipulation

① Death - whose

Alexander Gardner

- ↳ American Civil War
- ↳ first to show dead

- Felix Burda - images sold for the spring of the Empire
Witness to power
- Richard Drew

② Witnessing aftermath

- ↳ effect of Poetry Brain
↳ is it concerned with property
↳ is it physical / psychological

Effect in time, - Damon肯, Steven Tornatore

- ↳ Christopher DeWitt Matthau - places where soldiers were shot at Dawn

③ The Process of War

- ↳ begin / end
↳ who is involved
↳ decisions made
- ↳ language of war
↳ business of war

- Philip Jones Griffiths - Vietnam War
 - ↳ Military - economy
 - ↳ Rape - victim
- Richard Mosse - Incoming, displacement, movement, migration
 - ↳ Imaging camera, turns war into a spectacle
- Nikita Terryoskin

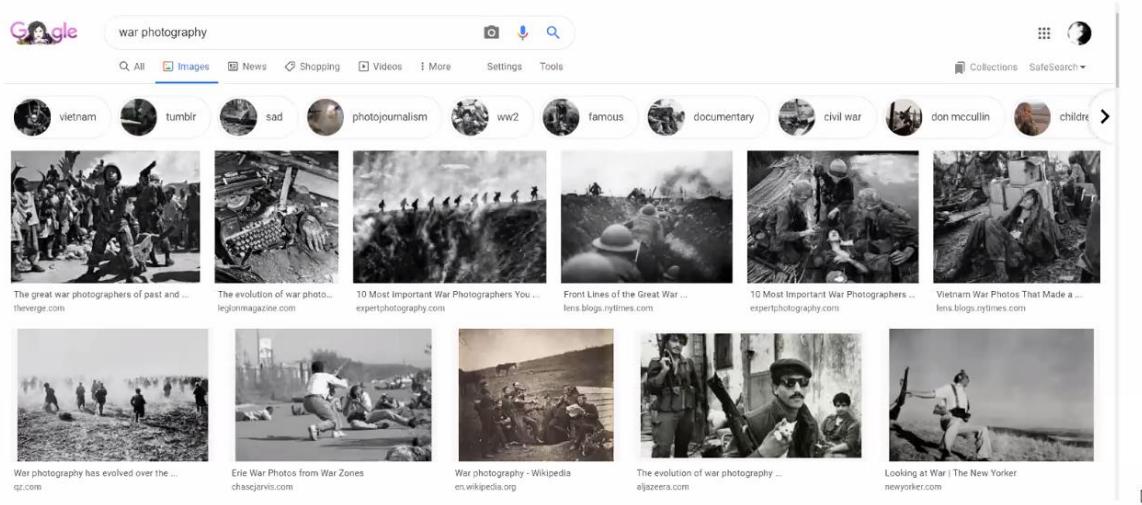
④ Meta-Narratives

- ↳ Do images make a difference?
↳ How are images made
↳ Is there a limit to what we understand through images

<http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text-unconcerned-but-not-indifferent>

<http://www.foto8.com/live/by-any-means-necessary/>

Lecture 2: Photography as Witnessing



A Hierarchy of Representation

1. Witnessing
2. Death
3. Aftermath
4. The Process of War
5. Meta-narratives
6. Personal Stories (and vernacular pictures)

Francisco Goya and The Disasters of War

- Goya lived from 1746 - 1848
- Made from 1810-1820
- Not published till 1863
- First set show incidents from war and result on soldiers and civilians (especially women)
- Second series shows famine
- Third series show consequence of war and rejection of reform by restored monarchy

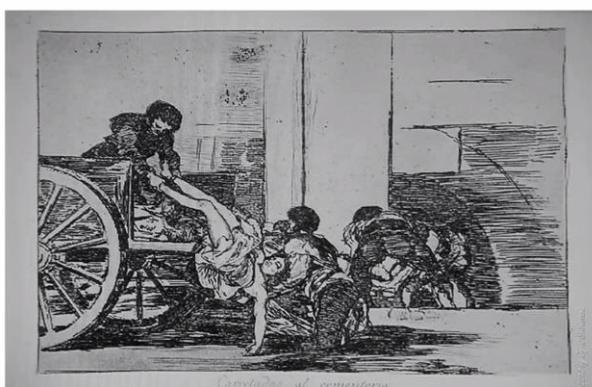


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Esto es peor.



1. Witnessing

Who is the photographer witnessing for?
What is the photographer not witnessing?

Is the witnessing reliable?

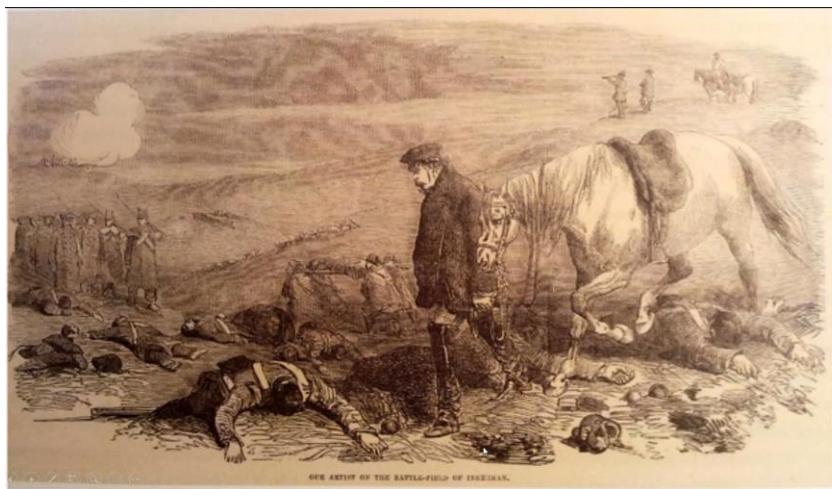
Does it serve any purpose?

Constantine Guys

One of the first people to show a non-combatant reporting on the war.

Picture below in Illustrated London News in 1855

In War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath



The Living Room War

- 'The Living Room War' was a phrase invented by Michael Arlen in 1966
- Described how people consumed television and media images
- What people know about war comes from these images
- Arlen was talking about the Vietnam War
- In War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath, the suggestion is that the Crimean War and the American Civil War were the first Living Room Wars.

Roger Fenton and the Crimea

- Independently wealthy
- Illustrations were questioned, photographs weren't
- Photographs were used as "truth"
- Illustrated London News used photographs to show it was a serious publication
- One third of ordinary soldiers died
- Reporting of this crystallised public opinion against the war
- Fenton self-censored his pictures of the war – made them respectable
- Fenton did not photograph corpses

p. 80-83 War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath



Susan Sontag: Regarding the Pain of Others

↳

Not surprisingly many of the canonical images of early war photography turn out to have been staged, or to have had their subjects tampered with. After reaching the much shelled valley approaching Sebastopol in his horse-drawn darkroom, [Roger] Fenton made two exposures from the same tripod position: in the first version of the celebrated photo he was to call "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" (despite the title, it was not across this landscape, that the Light Brigade made its doomed charge), the cannonballs are thick on the ground to the left of the road, but before taking the second picture – the one that is always reproduced – he oversaw the scattering of the cannonballs on the road itself.

Version 1



Version 2



Errol Morris on Roger Fenton

http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/09/25/which-came-first-the-chicken-or-the-egg-part-one/?_r=0

2. Death

Whose death is being shown?
How and why is death shown?

Who is not shown dead?

Alexander Gardner

- 3,000 photographers covered the American Civil War (100 covered the Crimean)
- New technologies and carte de visites prospered
- Soldiers had pictures made as a means of identification
- Injuries were photographed
- Dead began to be shown (enemy dead)
- Alexander Gardner's images first shown in a gallery

The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter - 1862

- Rearranged bodies
- Dramatised war

"What visions of loved
Ones far away, may have
Hovered above his stony pillow! What familiar
Voices may he not have
Hear'd like visions beneath
The roar of battle, as his
Eyes grew heavy in their long, last sleep."



Audrey Linkman – Photography and Death



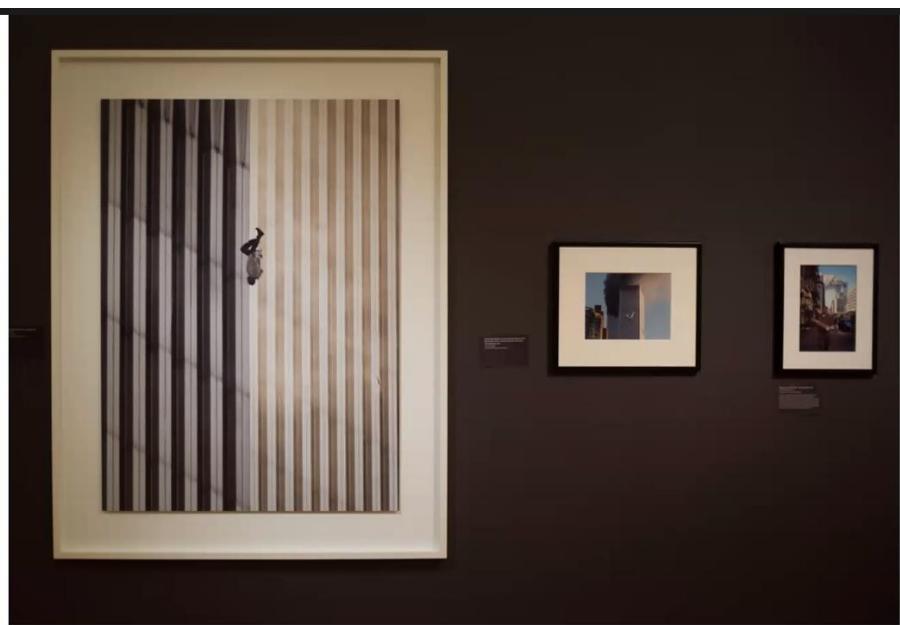
Oscar Gustav Rejlander, 'Sleeping Child', platinum print, c. 1865 Southworth and Hawes, Post-mortem Portrait 1850s



Felix Beato – Chinese dead, Second Opium War 1860



Grief: Dimitri Baltermants, 1942

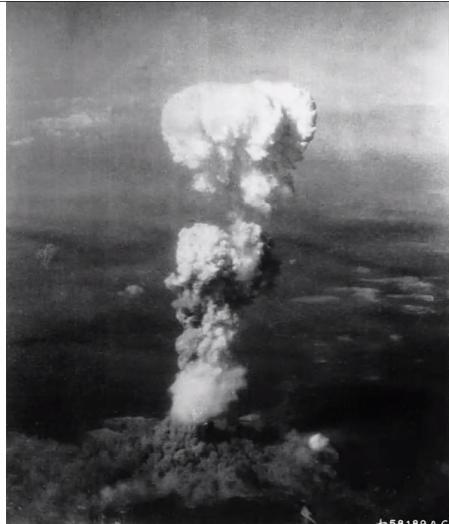


Richard Drew – Falling Man

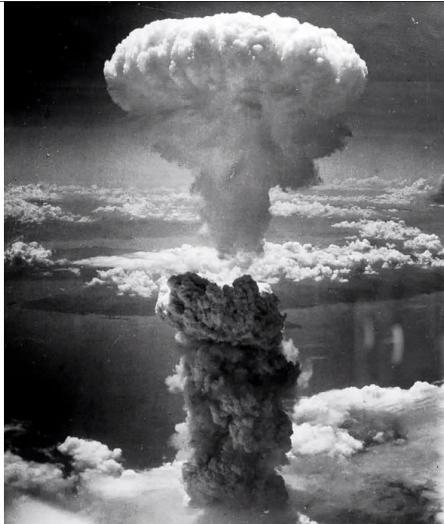
<https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a48031/the-falling-man-tom-junod/>)

3. Aftermath

What is the effect being shown?
Is it concerned with property?
Is it physical?
Is it psychological?



Hiroshima atomic explosion taken from the plane, Necessary Evil, on August 6th 1945



Mushroom cloud above Nagasaki after atomic bombing on August 9th 1945



Hiroshima aftermath – 6th August, 1945

See also

Domon Ken

Shomei Tomatsu 

Kikuji Kawada

Chloe Dewe Matthews: Shot at Dawn (see
Time, Conflict, Photography) *



<http://www.chloedewemathews.com/shot-at-dawn/>

4. The Process of War

Where does war begin and war end?
Who is involved in conflict?
How are decisions made?
What is the language of war?
What is the business of war?

Philip Jones Griffiths – Vietnam Inc.



'Mother and Child Shortly before being killed...'

PROPER TERMINOLOGY DETERMINATION

INCORRECT TERMS

South Vietnam	Republic of Vietnam (RVN)
Democratic Republic of Vietnam	North Vietnam
South Vietnamese Army	Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)
People's Army of North Vietnam	North Vietnamese Army (NVA)
People's Liberation Army	Vietcong (or if appropriate, North Vietnamese Army – (NVA))
Ruff-puff	Regional Forces Popular Forces (RF/PF)
Mercenary	Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) soldier or volunteer
VC tax collectors	VC extortions
Search and destroy	Search and clear
Body count	Enemy deaths or EN killed
U.S. troop withdrawal	Redeployment (or replacement)
Hamburger Hill	Hill 937
Troops used to bait the enemy	Never to be used
Deserter or defector (VC)	Rather or returnee
Free fire zone	Pre-cleared firing area
Retreat	Tactical redeployment
Ambushed	Engaged the enemy on all sides
Booby trap	Automatic ambush
"Hearts and minds of the people"	"Develco community spirit" or equivalent descriptive phrases
Vietnamization	Favorable term for the process of turning over our efforts to the Vietnamese people
Five o'clock follies	MACV daily briefings (or daily press briefings)

CORRECT TERMS

Richard Mosse - Incoming



Nikita Teryoshin

"Nothing Personal - the back office of war"



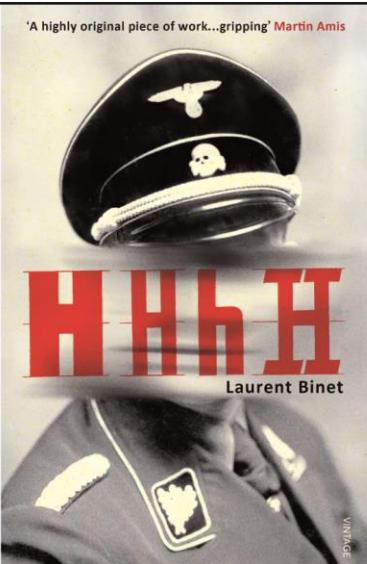
<https://nikitateryoshin.com/>

5. Meta-narratives

Do images make a difference?

How are images made?

Is there a limit to what we understand through images?



HhhH

It's about telling the story of Reynard Heydrich

And the story is the impossibility of telling that story

Because that story has been told (in films, in photographs, in words) so many times

See also Anastasia Taylor-Lind: Postcards from Donetsk



Ben Lowy: Iraq Perspectives



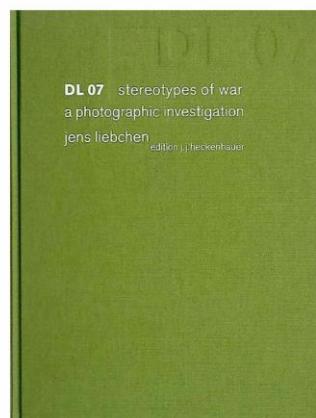
Iraq | Perspectives I: Windows

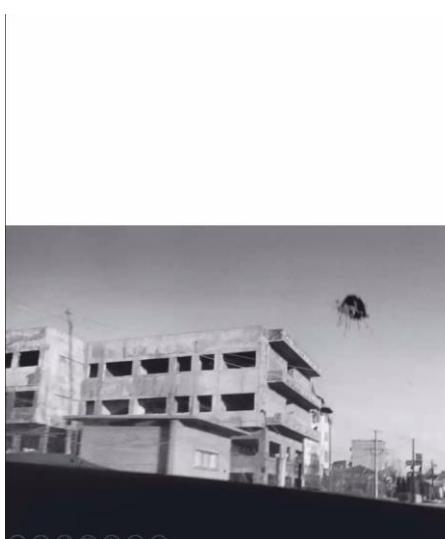
'In July 2005, I was being driven from an assignment—an endeavor that took two cars and four heavily armed Iraqi guards—when my mother called. She asked me if I had the chance to go out with Iraqis, to wander through Baghdad. I told her that this scenario was near to impossible, if not dangerous for someone like me: tall, white, and bald. I explained that I couldn't go anywhere without armed protection; that Iraq was a land of blast walls and barbed wire fences. Her response was one of incredulousness. She had never seen any photographs or news reports illustrating what I described. I made my first image of a concrete blast wall through the window of my armored car that day.'

<http://www.iraqperspectives.com/iraq--perspectives/i--windows/>

Jens Liebchen: DL 07 Stereotypes of War

'Jens Liebchen suggests that we think of war photography as a genre... It is no more authentic than the War Film or the Western. Normally, of course, we choose to see it as truthful...' Ian Jeffrey in the introduction





Takuma Nakahira: For a Language to Come

- Writing in 1973, Nakahira notes the closure of Life Magazine and the fact that photography has been surpassed by 'television and other media'. 'But to be more precise,' he continues, 'the photographic method like that of Life, a form of communication where the reporter as the spokesperson of the masses unilaterally conveys true reality to the masses, has disintegrated as far as photography is concerned.'
- Nakahira believed that possibilities of the photographic image had been exhausted, that you cannot express anything photographically external to the dominant capitalist media culture.

Jean Baudrillard - The Gulf War Did not Take Place



Guy Debord

Guy Debord and the spectacle

'The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images,' and 'All that was once directly lived has become mere representation.'

Photography has lost meaning and is understood only through the means by which it is shown.

Guy Debord – Society of the Spectacle

Broomberg and Chanarin

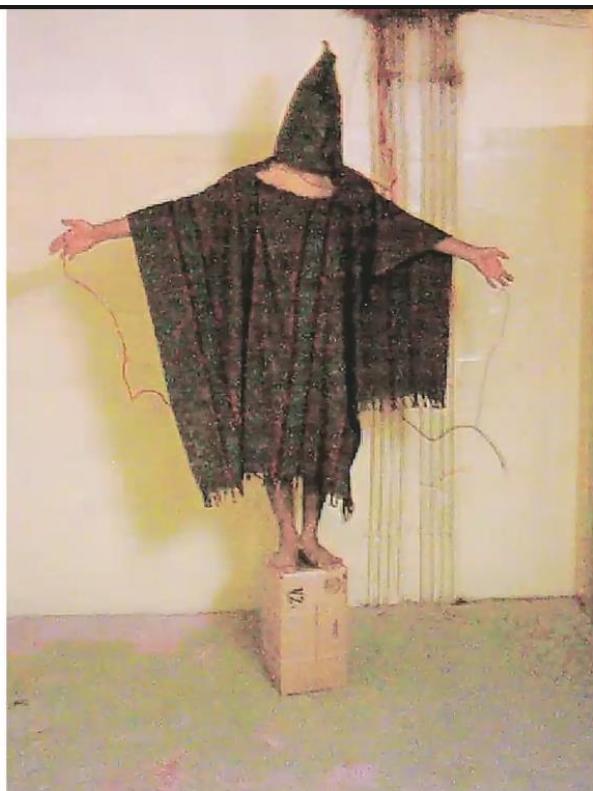


6. Personal Narratives (vernacular images)

How can you tell a personal story?

What images can you use?

What are the difficulties of telling a personal story?



The Hooded Man - Sergeant Ivan Frederick 2003

Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others

'Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us.'

Michał Iwanowski – Clear of People

'My grandfather Tolek, and his brother Wiktor, escaped from Soviet captivity and crossed over 2000 kilometres on their fugitive journey home in 1945.

This is not an unusual story. There are no heroes in it, and there is nothing glorious about the events. You have seen it happen before. And you will see it happen again.

I followed his footsteps for personal reasons. Hoping that if I walked long enough I might find him. Tell him it mattered. Hoping that the landscape might connect me to a time and people long gone.'





Dragana Jurisic

10m ·

...

Dad reminded me that today is the 29th anniversary from the day when my family was burned out of our home and became refugees in our own country
#yuthelostcountry



😢😢😢 You, Paul Lowe, Paola Sinibaldi and 9 others

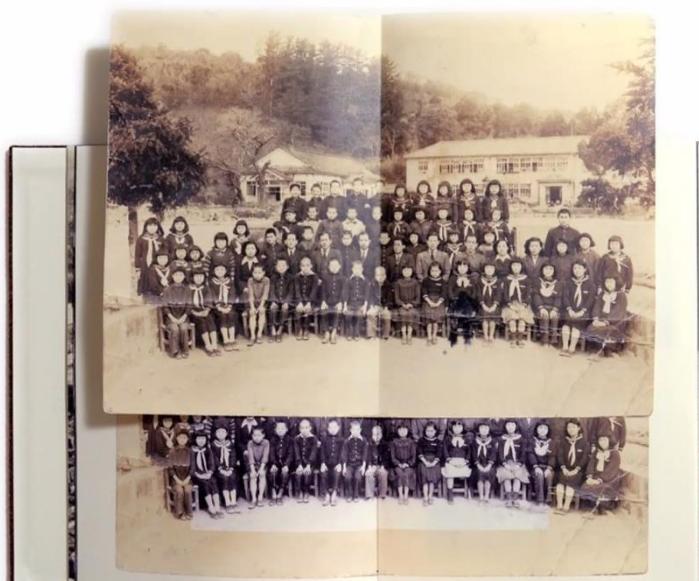
1 comment

😢 Sad

Comment

Share

Kazuma Obara – Silent Histories



Judith Butler Torture and the Ethics of Photography

'For photographs to accuse and possibly invoke a moral response, they must shock,'

Ariella Azoulay; The Civil Contract of Photography (p148)

- 'Photographer: Show me your legs.'
- 'Mrs Abu-Zohir: I won't show you my legs. You're not going to see my legs.'
- 'Photographer to translator: Explain to her that this photo is going to appear in the newspapers, and the entire world is going to see her legs.'
- 'Mrs Abu-Zohir: A photo's a photo. I don't care if the photo is seen, but you're not going to be in the room with me when I expose my legs.'

Azoulay, A., Mazali, R., & Danieli, R. (2014). *The civil contract of photography*. New York: Zone Books

Some reading

Geoffrey Batchen: *Picturing Atrocity*

Mary Warner Marien: *A Cultural History of Photography*

Julian Stallabrass: *Memories of Fire*

Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards and Erina Duganne: *Beautiful Suffering. Photography and the Traffic in Pain*).

Anne Wilkes Tucker: *War/Photography: A History of War and its Aftermath*