Charity Auction of Photographs
9th October 2008

Bloombury Auctions are delighted to announce a Charity Auction of Photographs by some of the world’s greatest photographers. The Magnum Magnum Auction will be held in London to launch and raise funds for the Magnum Photos Foundation. The lots are constituted from a unique portfolio of prints produced for the Magnum Magnum book published by Thames & Hudson. Created to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the agency, this book pairs Magnum photographers together to edit each others work. The sets offered here reflect the original book edits and provide an historic record of Magnum’s anniversary year.

Over 300 photographs by the most revered photographers will be offered, including famous names such as Eve Arnold, René Burri, and Elliott Erwitt alongside outstanding contemporary photographers including Martin Parr and Alec Soth. Lots will include at least six photographs, with estimates from £1000 - £5000.

The remarkable selection of collectable photographs will be available to view at Bloombury Auctions in London on Saturday 4th – Thursday 9th October 2008.

Contact magnum@bloomsburyauctions.com for further information.

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BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL 2008 PREFACE

Brighton Photo Biennial is proud to present its third edition. Curated by Julian Stallabrass, Memory of Fire: the War of Images and Images of War, will run for six weeks from Friday 3 October to Sunday 16 November 2008.

This will be our largest Biennial to date and is set to bring you world-class photography through ten curated exhibitions across the South East, an extensive education programme and events throughout the festival period. BPF 2008 builds upon and expands the previous two events both conceptually and geographically.

The Biennial is dedicated to collaborating with partner venues and visual arts organisations to show to the widest possible audience high quality and international photography in its most expanded form, redefining related platforms including the permeative, moving image, mobile technologies and web-based work; to exhibit recent and newly-commissioned work; and to encourage and showcase local talent by presenting photography, film and online material produced and circulated in time of war, and analyses how images have been shaped by changing social and political conditions from the Vietnam era to the present. The exhibitions include images produced by over thirty-five photojournalists, artists and non-professionals, bringing together historical, contemporary and newly commissioned photographic works.

Stallabrass’s bold curatorial theme brings focus to the geographically expanded network of partners and further reinforces the Biennial as a festival where each edition is defined by a uniquely articulated curatorial concept. The Biennial and its partners are grateful to him for his commitment and for his willingness to work collaboratively in developing the exhibitions programme.

For this third edition, the Biennial extends its geographical boundaries to include venues in Battle, Chichester, Portsmouth and Winchester, whilst consolidating its presence in Brighton with three exhibition venues, a series of participatory and publicly sighted projects, and, for the first time, the new Cultural and Information Hub shared with Brighton Photo Fringe, alongside an extensive education programme. Stallabrass acknowledges that the spread of the Biennial across the South East will mean that many viewers may see only a handful of exhibitions or events so the use of a strong driving curatorial theme and the framing of each element is crucial. This will be achieved by the Biennial free guide, programme, retrospective book and BPF 2008 website.

BPF’s core partners are the University of Brighton, Photoworks and Arts Council England, as well as our partner venues and arts and education organisations in the region. The Biennial is based at the University of Brighton where funds the Biennial both directly and indirectly and continues to be an important source of support. Photoworks, the UK’s leading photographic commissioning and publishing agency in the public sector, is our publishing and production partner. The Biennial is grateful to both organisations for their continued practical support, advice and help. Arts Council England South East is our main core funder and we appreciate their ongoing recognition of the value and significance of the Biennial to the UK photography sector and audiences in general. We appreciate, too, the ongoing support of Brighton & Hove City Council.

The partner venues have worked closely with the Biennial to realise the vision for BPF 2008, accommodating the wishes and aspirations of the Guest Curator, the invited artists and lenders of work. The University of Brighton Gallery is hosting the keynote exhibition, Iraq through the lens of Vietnam, which reappraises the production, distribution and consumption of photographic images during the Vietnam war, exploring their influence on public opinion and subsequent circulation, and how this compares and contrasts with the current conflict in Iraq, with particular reference to the impact of the internet and digital technologies. Fabrica will present the world premiere of a work by the internationally renowned artist Thomas Hirschhorn and Lighthouse will stage the UK premiere of two ambitious multimedia installations by photojournalist Oliver Godbold Kesteren. The University of Brighton Design Archives explores the historic use of photography as part of graphic poster campaign. Further afield, to the east, at Charleston, Photoworks is presenting rarely seen images by Frank Hurley, and the work of Harriet Logan, is explored at the Independent Photographers Gallery De La Warr Pavilion will present a group show of contemporary work by internationally renowned artists Bloomgarden and Chanarin, Simon Norfolk and Paul Seawright. To the west, Pallant House Gallery is presenting an exhibition of the work of the critically acclaimed series Agent Orange by Philip Jones Griffiths, whilst Fotomat at The...
Torture (and its photographic depiction) has become the central factor in Naomi Klein’s examination of the systematic nature of torture. This takes the form of the system of embedding reporters to produce images of the war. In doing so, it will consider the changing development meshed with 24-hour news and television screens, websites and the pages of newspapers and magazines, how few seemed to stick in the mind, and to become the key images that defined the character of the war. A number of photographs had done that for the Vietnam War—notably, Eddie Adams’s 1968 photograph of the summary execution of a guerrilla suspect. Nick Ut’s 1972 photograph of a girl running down a road having been burned by napalm, and Ron Haeberle’s photographs of the massacre at My Lai, and much of the work of Philip Jones Griffiths.

The amateur images taken at Abu Ghraib did threaten for a time to become the signal images of the war, and they still stand as such (along with a vast number of other images of the routine destruction and humiliation that the occupying forces dispense) in the Arabic media. They have no difficulty deciphering such images. Why do we?

The major military innovation of the Iraq War regarding the media was, of course, the embedding of journalists. Under this system, journalists, TV crews and photographers gained relatively unrestricted access to the war at the price of being tied to a particular troop unit for the duration of the embed. The system was devised to grant journalists largely uncensored access to military operations while strongly encouraging them to take a positive view of what they saw. Since many embedded journalists were placed in dangerous circumstances under the protection of the troops, and lived with them for extended periods, this tended to foster a strong identification with their new comrades. They were generally very grateful for the access to spectacular stories, admiring of their protectors, and appreciative of the troops’ various travails. Yet they were also aware of the disadvantages of this privileged view of the war, especially in being tied to particular troops units, which often had little information about the wider circumstances of the war. David Zucchino summarised his seven-week series regarding the media was, of course, the embedding of journalists. Under this system, journalists, TV crews and photographers gained relatively unrestricted access to the war at the price of being tied to a particular troop unit for the duration of the embed. The system was devised to grant journalists largely uncensored access to military operations while strongly encouraging them to take a positive view of what they saw. Since many embedded journalists were placed in dangerous circumstances under the protection of the troops, and lived with them for extended periods, this tended to foster a strong identification with their new comrades. They were generally very grateful for the access to spectacular stories, admiring of their protectors, and appreciative of the troops’ various travails. Yet they were also aware of the disadvantages of this privileged view of the war, especially in being tied to particular troops units, which often had little information about the wider circumstances of the war. David Zucchino summarised his seven-week series of embeds for the LA Times, praising the access the embed system had granted him, but continued:...that same access could be suffocating and blinding. Often I was too close or confined to comprehend the war’s broad sweep. I could not interview survivors of Iraqi civilians killed by US soldiers or
speak to Iraqi fighters trying to kill Americans. I had no idea what ordinary Iraqis were experiencing. I was ignorant of Iraqi government decisions and US command strategy. The embed produced a narrow view of the war, then, and one focused on the experiences of the troops. Despite frequent laments of its deficiencies, it continues to dominate. Embedding fitted the demands of the news organisations in the US and the UK, for spectacular, live or at least up-to-the-minute reports, high on affect and low on analysis, and likely to stiffen patriotic sentiment. As the occupation continued, photography became increasingly constrained, partly because Iraq became extremely dangerous for anyone thought to have any link to the occupation, or even anyone thought to have any money or professional status, and partly because of an evolving system of censorship. In an audio blog, photojournalist Michael Kamber described the situation:

"Today in Iraq there’s so many things we can’t photograph any more. Car bombings and suicide bombings are now off limits, it’s actually illegal to photograph those scenes. We can’t photograph wounded soldiers without their consent. We can’t photograph dead soldiers, coffins of dead soldiers... We can’t photograph battle-damaged vehicles, we can’t photograph hospitals, morgues are off limits now. So pretty much everything that gives evidence that there’s a war going on is almost impossible to photograph."

As the system developed, however, it turned out that soldiers at various levels evolved their own set of rules, which, in concert with the sensitivities of the mass media, produced a highly controlled and sanitised view of the war. This can be seen clearly in the contrast between the work of the embedded photojournalists and those working as ‘unilaterals’ among the Iraqis. In the latter, the experience of Iraqi civilians and resistance fighters is reflected, and the picture of the war is darker, bloodier, and more desperate. In their work, something of the systematic destruction of a deeply damaged but still functioning society can be glimpsed. The US armed forces were not fond of unilaterals, often stopped them from reporting, and were sometimes responsible for their deaths: Terry Lloyd of ITN was assassinated by them, and the Baghdad office of Al Jazeera was bombed in April 2003, killing their correspondent in the city. As the occupation continued, photography became increasingly constrained, partly because Iraq became extremely dangerous for anyone thought to have any link to the occupation, or even anyone thought to have any money or professional status, and partly because of an evolving system of censorship. In an audio blog, photojournalist Michael Kamber described the situation:

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There is, in any case, little desire among the US public to see such things, little motive for the media to show them (indeed, there is a strong disincentive, since they are poison to..."
advertisers), and so the photographic view of the war became bloodless and anonyme.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly in terms of the military management of photography, there is the extent to which the war was staged for the cameras. Most famously, the war opened with the ‘shock and awe’ assault on the Iraqi infrastructure, a bloody firework display intended to terrify the Iraqi Army into surrender, and to broadcast the extent of US military prowess to the world. Reporters, photographers and TV crews in the Palestine Hotel had a ringside view of the bombardment taking place across the river. In this, and in similar staged photo-ops, the media were co-opted as part of the military force. The combination of censorship, both military and civilian, of embedding and military staged events led to a predominant view of the war that was about the courage, resilience, technological prowess and competence of the troops.

The profession of photojournalism has been in long decline since the fall of the illustrated magazines that had made their best photographers stars, and had lavished resources upon them. While the decline is old, and was caused by the rise of TV news, it has been exacerbated by other, newer features, including the extraordinarily wide ownership of digital cameras, particularly phone cameras, and the ease of sending such photographs which has produced the rise of (usually unpaid) ‘citizen-journalists’. Economically pressed news organisations often prefer to provide cameras (but little training) to willing locals rather than fly professionals out to some scene of conflict. Rates paid for the publication of newspaper photographs have been in steep decline.

Nick Davies, in his book Flat Earth News, argues that the news industries, and particularly the newspapers, have been made as purely commercial concerns. While the old press barons ran them for their influence over public opinion and state policy, and took the quality of news seriously, profit is now the public opinion and state policy, and took the barons ran them for their influence over their parents.” These are Nazi tactics, yet they pass with inadequate comment from the democratic press, at least in the nations of the combatants, and with little published photographic representation. One consequence of this debility of the press is that the Coalition’s opponents are easily and casually characterised as unthinking religious fanatics, with whom the Western viewer can have little sympathy or understanding. Some of them, particularly the foreign Al Qaeda fighters, are that, and have amply proved that they have as little regard for the lives of Iraqis as they have for those of the invaders. Their actions are viewed with horror by many in the Arab world. Most of the resistance, however, are not, and as Jonathan Steele argues, their opposition to the occupation of their country emerges from a deep historical awareness of the imperial roles that the US and the UK have long played in the region, confirmed by the brutality of the invasion and the occupation.” A suitable model in thinking of them would be to compare them to the resisters to any occupying force, from the French Resistance to Algerian freedom fighters or the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

Contemporary photojournalism exceeded, as it always has, the bounds of its publication in the mass media, and some photographers (even some of those embedded) evoked sensitive and intelligent responses to the terrible situation in Iraq. We may get some sense of its place in the current variety of war photography by comparing photojournalism with these other types, against the stately, reserved, severely composed ‘aeromatt’ images that dominate the depiction of war in the museum, photojournalism obviously embodies speed and intimacy, both of which are written into its style as well as its content. Just as it was for Larry Burrows, the focus falls above all on the face, and on readable emotion. Against citizen journalism and the ghastly amateur productions of the troops (as at Abu Ghraib), photojournalism embodies professional values; while its aesthetic often encompasses the apparently casual, it bears the sheen of photographic competence, and the visual quality of high-definition digital cameras or fine film and sharp lenses. As against official military photography [which shares the same production values] it has too great a variety to be dismissed as mere propaganda, and does not so readily fall into generic categories. As against the photographs of atrocity, of the bloodied corpses of those blunted by modern weaponry that circulate in certain magazines and websites, published photojournalism is (as we have seen) tempered and restrained, standing in its dignity.

Green all the circumstances laid out here, it is unsurprising that widespread suspicion surrounds such photojournalism. News management by the state and the military has made photojournalists the objects of epistemic vigilance, among the manufactured images that they see in the newspapers and on TV. The ease and speed with which digital photography can be altered (along with a few well-publicised examples of photojournalists doing just that), and awareness of the ease with which meaning can be manipulated by selective framing, produces in many viewers deep distrust. In blogs, the meanings of photographs are debated passionately and often furiously, with political partisans of all sides finding reasons to dismiss any photographic evidence laid before them which challenges their views. Here, at least, photojournalism is thought to matter. The most fundamental public opinion, though, that separates our witnesses from that of the Vietnam era is the lack of an opposition with a cogent world view, that could assemble the evidence—words, pictures and video—into a condemnation of the war that could not be ignored, that would gnaw at us and torture us as it did many in the late 1960s. Yet the sheer intensity of commercial competition to war imagery (from celebrity culture to YouTube to the fictional renderings of the ‘war on terror’ such as 24), the speed of gossip and self-fashioning through trivia, all this make it too easy to forget that bloody subterranean mumur that should stain our whole existence.

A biennial of a few exhibitions and events is, of course, powerless to alter these large forces. It sets out to provide some resources for thinking about the range of war imagery and the role that photojournalism plays in the media and democratic politics. For if, through the actions of our troops and allies abroad, we have come to behave like Nazis, and if that cannot be readily grasped conceptually or in pictures, and if it does not cause a fundamental questioning of our politics, then something about our democracy is broken.

3 Many accounts of the way by embedded photojournalists are gathered in the interviews in Bill Katovsky/ Timothy Carlson, Embeded: The Media War in Iraq, Gifford, Connecticut 2003.
5 The rules for embedding are reproduced in Bill Katovsky/Timothy Carlson, Embeded: The Media War in Iraq, Gifford, Connecticut 2003, pp. 41-177.
7 See also: http://www.battlespaceonline.org
8 See also: http://www.battlespaceonline.org

Procedure

Arja Heddinghaus, Paktya, 12 November 2004. A 1st Division Marine carries a good luck mascot in his backpack as he heads out to the front and pushed into western province of Paktya. © Arja Heddinghaus.
IRAQ THROUGH THE LENS OF VIETNAM

BPP 2008 Keynote Group Exhibition University of Brighton Gallery, Brighton 03.10.08 – 15.11.08

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have reactivated memories of past conflicts, particularly Vietnam, and of the use of photographic images in stoking and opposing the war. This exhibition brings together photographs from all sides of the conflicts, exploring an environment of lens-based images at a time of rapid image transmission: from digital devices, phone cameras, and vast mass media conglomerates, to independent websites and news- and surveys. A sense of tension and terrorism organisations. Exhibiting photographers include Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, Ashley Gilbertson, Philip Jones Griffiths and Don McCullin.

WAR MEMORIAL

Julian Germain

Apex, Portsmouth 04.10.08 – 21.11.08

Since the invention of simple box cameras, those in ministry service have taken pictures of the places they have visited and the things they have done. In this new commission, artist Julian Germain asks those who are or have been in military service to show and talk about their photographs. The evolving exhibition will provide an opportunity to explore the meaning of such images.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Frank Hurley

Charleston Farmhouse, Fie, Nr Lewes 31.08.08 – 02.11.08

Frank Hurley’s First World War pictures have a modern air that runs counter to the usual stock of images that we hold of that time. Frustrated by the inability of his bulky, single-shot camera to adequately represent the events he witnessed, Hurley resorted to the controversial practice of montaging his photographs to create composite scenes. At a time when digital manipulation casts suspicion over the too perfectly realised image, Hurley’s work illuminates the present.

THE SUBLIME IMAGE OF DESTRUCTION

Brockem and Chanarin, Simon Norfolk and Paul Seawright

De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea 03.10.08 – 04.01.09

Among the genres wrought in the recent rise of museum photography has been the battlefield ‘aftermath’ image: art photographers following in the wake of armies and documenting the image of destruction. Ranging from the painterly and lyrical to something quieter and more bleak, these contemplative images stand in contrast to the news-driven work of photojournalism.

DESIGNS FOR SOLIDARITY

Curated by Catherine Moriarty

Design Archives University of Brighton Foyer, Brighton 22.09.08 – 24.11.08

Taking a poster held within the University of Brighton Design Archives as a starting point, this display considers how photography was incorporated in graphic contexts as part of campaigning strategies in opposition to US intervention in Vietnam, and the way such photographs came to be recognised internationally as emblematic of oppression and armed struggle.

THE INCOMMENSURABLE BANNER

Thomas Hirschhorn

Fabrica, Brighton 03.10.08 – 16.11.08

Though an 18 metre long banner comprised of horrific pictures depicting bodies torn apart by modern munitions, in circulation online and in print, Thomas Hirschhorn confronts us with what is excluded from the mainstream mass media and asks us to reflect on the politics of that exclusion. This will be the project’s international premiere.

UNVEILED: VOICES OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Harriet Logan

Independent Photographers Gallery, Battle 03.10.08 – 15.11.08

The effect of war on the lives of women has often been under-represented in a photographic industry that thrives on dramatic images of combat. For this exhibition Harriet Logan explores the effects of war and a repressive regime on the lives of women in Afghanistan living through Taliban rule and its subsequent demise.

PHOTOGRAPHY & REVOLUTION: MEMORY TRAILS THROUGH THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT

Group Exhibition

Winchester Gallery, Winchester 03.10.08 – 03.11.08

Featuring work by a number of photographers including Susan Meiselas, Jonathan Moller and Sebastiano Salgado, this exhibition traces the use of photography by the Latin American left; from the Mexican revolution to the recent wave of radicalism that has swept the continent.

WHY MISTER, WHY? and BAGHDAD CALLING

Geert Van Kestern

Lighthouse, Brighton 03.10.08 – 16.11.08

Drawing upon live online news feeds, video, audio, print, mobile phone images and Van Kestern’s own photographs, these two multimedia projects explore the Iraq war from the point of view of the coalition forces, the occupied population and displaced Iraqi refugees.

AGENT ORANGE

Philip Jones Griffiths

Palant House Gallery, Chichester 30.09.08 – 16.11.08

Philip Jones Griffiths is best known for his 1971 book Vietnam Inc., a remarkable condemnation of the American War. Yet Griffiths continued to go back to Vietnam, recording the horrific long term legacy of the defoliant Agent Orange on the South Vietnamese population.

REPUBLIC OF THE MIND

Philip Cannings

Lighthouse, Brighton 16.10.08 – 11.11.08

Reactivated memories of past conflicts, particularly Vietnam, is what photographer Julian Germain’s commission invites his subjects to show and talk about their photographs. The evolving exhibition will provide an opportunity to explore the meaning of such images.

PHOTOGRAPHY & REVOLUTION: MEMORY TRAILS THROUGH THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester 30.09.08 – 16.11.08

Featuring work by a number of photographers including Susan Meiselas, Jonathan Moller and Sebastiano Salgado, this exhibition traces the use of photography by the Latin American left; from the Mexican revolution to the recent wave of radicalism that has swept the continent.
Throughout history, war has confronted photography with the limits and possibilities of its aesthetic and means. The relationship between war and photography mirrors that crisis of representation synonymous with modern times, the ever-deteriorating link between experience and knowledge, and the destruction of traditional fields of perception. Today, war photography in the museum has turned into a medium of the aftermath. This is because the technological nature of today’s warfare has resulted in a war that is nearly impossible to document as it happens. Surveying sites ruined by war and catastrophe – Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Beirut, Baghdad, Lebanon, Palestine, or Manhattan’s Ground Zero – photographers such as Simon Norfolk, Paul Seawright, Joel Meyerowitz, and Sophie Ristelhueber have developed this strange new genre. Each war, each post-war wastelands of Beirut, or depicting the Lebanese refugee camps and Israel’s everyday militaristic cult of the dead. The surreal landscapes and alien environments charted by these photographers are as abstract, inhuman, and incomprehensible as the wars that caused them.

Many of these sites are synonymous with classic ‘war against terror’ waged by America and its allies against the forces which they perceive as threatening ‘liberty’ as defined by neo-liberal democracies, and their precious economies. Such warfare has now gone beyond even the simulacra and spectacle of the heavily touted ‘Operation Desert Storm.’ It follows a post-Cold War military doctrine of ‘rampid dominance’ based on overwhelming power, dominant manoeuvres, and spectacular displays of force. Defined by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, America’s new mode of warfare attempts to affect the will, perception, and understanding of the adversary to fit or respond to our strategic policy ends by imposing a regime of ‘Shock and Awe.’ Now five years of the war in Iraq have passed – as opposed to the 48 hours originally suggested by the Pentagon – and it is horribly clear that the aim of a rapid domination has failed. Yet this violent military assault is certainly still in full effect, costing thousands of lives and trillions of dollars. A form of terrorism itself, it is designed to impose an overwhelming level of shock and awe, so as to paralyse one’s enemy, to overload their perceptions, rendering them incapable of resistance at both tactical and strategic levels. Ullman’s shock and awe operates in the mass media just as it does in international politics, via an aesthetic of violence. The staging and representation of key events are exploited so as to supersede cognitive assimilation, and are used to provoke a dangerous range of powerful and war-mongering emotions. This is not only a war fought to control territories, but one waged by meaning, in which photography could not be more ideologically loaded, aesthetically volatile and morally precarious.

The work of Seawright, Ristelhueber and Norfolk is not war photography as we know it. Their images portray environments of surreal devastation as epic, highly aestheticized, and often depopulated landscapes. These images could not be further from the black-and-white traditions of the social documentarian, or the often gruesome shots of photojournalism. In many ways, the images by these photographers are closer to the medium of landscape photography than the documentation of war. These photographers produce almost abstract monumental scenes, frozen on slick surfaces, which are undeniably commensurate with the incomprehensibility of capitalism’s pure war, waged against unknowable and unseen ‘terrorists.’ Within this largely depopulated photography, human beings seem to have even less of a place, and a concept of experience seems to be even more atavistic. But if aftermath photography has moved away from the humanitarian benefits of the image from photojournalism’s truth claims. It releases itself then from the exploitative or instrumental context that sees photojournalism manipulated by the largely conservative and nationally biased media organisations that determine its context and reception.

But what does it really mean to make war photography? To depict the ‘military sublime’? The sublime – in representation or under interrogation – has too often been a hiding place for documentary photographers. Meyerowitz has spoken of his recognition that his subject matter required a new definition of the sublime. Norfolk has named this perceiving subject that his photography also seeks to document as the international ‘military sublime.’ Thus, a contemporary version of this past universal category emerges as perfectly analogous to the unhomely, awe-inspiring and horrific nature of today’s globalised, technological warfare.

The radicality in the aesthetic projects of these aftermath photographers lies in their taking beautiful photographs of gruesome subjects, which are necessarily asked to be read against themselves. One could argue that against the blindness of universalism, in a dialectical fashion, photographers like Norfolk, Seawright and Ristelhueber rely upon a process which sublimes the seduction of beauty into the horror of violence. Their work exploits this violent dialectic at the moment of realisation. So that an aesthetics of sublimity serves not to transcend violence but to collapse into it, prompting a strange revelation or reflection upon the real that would otherwise be buried. Their carefully composed nature, often lengthy exposure time and beautifully printed form, contracts starkly, and consequently also offers an ideological alternative to, the cheap current fetishisation which sometimes hides in acts of commodification and the form of spectatorship this promotes. In moving against the shocking televised images that are assumed to have lost their power, Norfolk’s slow-moving photographs force a deeper kind of reflection on important subjects too often lost in the media’s glare. Equally, heightening the aesthetic and artistic status of the photograph enables a withdrawal from the medium’s purely documentary function, and consequently an unbinding of the same perceived meaning over time, perhaps claims. It releases itself then from the exploitative or instrumental context that sees photojournalism manipulated by the largely conservative and nationally biased media organisations that determine its context and reception.

Nor perhaps could Lyotard’s libidinal economy of sublimity foresight ‘make visible the whole of the＂shock and awe＂’ term’s ideological function for the American market that can now exist within the already morally indefensible war, exploiting the military doctrine of ‘shock and awe’ for trite commercial purposes? Can a photography of pictures that pictures this process also police the line between military and market sublimity, while highlighting the sublime benefits of the fetishisation which sometimes hides in acts of aestheticisation? Does this photography make this military sublime more real, more tangible, and more difficult to stomach? Or


But, he conceded, there is an aesthetics of the sublime in politics: Even he, however, could not have imagined the sublime as obscene and grotesque as it is today.

6 Following the United States’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, the term ‘shock and awe’ has been used for a wide range of commercial purposes. The United States Patent and Trademark Office received around 29 trademark applications in 2003 for variations of the term, including for use in video games, but later withdrew the application, stating it was “an exercise of registrable bad judgment.” Other equally disastrous uses of the term include: “newsload, gulf equipment, an investible, kneeing balls, champ,仙境, and baby’s 1st toys.”

7 But, he conceded, there is an aesthetics of the sublime in politics: Even he, however, could not have imagined the sublime as obscene and grotesque as it is today.

5 But, he conceded, there is an aesthetics of the sublime in politics: Even he, however, could not have imagined the sublime as obscene and grotesque as it is today.

While the archaic and idealised form of social documentary has been rejected, perplexingly these photographers restate strong links to the aesthetics of the 19th century. This is true not only in the choice of apparatus – Norfolk uses a large-format 4 x 5 wooden field camera and tripod, and Meyerowitz is known for working with a Deardorff 8 x 10 wooden field camera – but also in terms of the approach, composition and framing of their photography. Norfolk has stressed the importance of the 19th and 18th century European landscape painting of Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin, particularly in terms of their characteristic golden light and the symbolism of ruins. Similarly, Meyerowitz has spoken of his 9/11 images in terms of the influence of Vermersch’s Deft views and Caspar David Friedrich. For Norfolk, this excursion into romanticist aesthetics is justified by the re-emergence of the ruin, and the philosophical and political notions surrounding the sublime, and the vanity of empire in the context of today’s new global empire.

Yet, wedding long-derided and derelict 19th-century aesthetics with a subject matter that in most ways could not be further from such lofty ideals seems to be to attempt an ill-fitting union. Such romanticist aesthetics have been comprehensively critiqued, and today seem obsolete, like an edition which stands still, but on the rotten foundations, propped up by vested interests. 20 In aligning itself with the elitist aesthetics of the Enlightenment, does this photography not risk creating a meta-level of artificiality? Does it not in fact empty wartime of its moral content, portray it instead in terms of a dreamlike landscape, like a furnace, as Ernst Jünger called the aerial images of World War II? 21 Do representations of the military sublime also risk articulating a moral realism that could turn into an iconographic apologia of a philosophy of harmony in the face of total destruction? 22 Doesn’t the dividing line between the beautification of war, and a photographic realism in which the intention to make visible the destructive might of contemporary war is involuntarily consumed by the coherence and consistency of the surface, blue 23

In focusing upon landscapes of the aftermath of war, Norfolk, Seawright and Katelharle are perhaps in danger of displacing violence from the political (carried out by subjects and inflicted upon subjects) to the natural. In this context, photography cannot but objectify and universalize the sublime experience, forcing the beholder of the sublime moment into a position of moral and subjective superiority. The symbolic environment of an empty landscape that pervades this military sublime, like the contemplative sublime of Schiller, is deprived of nearly all bodily substance. Schiller’s sublime necessarily demands the disavowal of the other. Any radicality in the sublime surely lies in the ability of its beholder to produce the image of suffering in himself. The contemplative sublime cannot accommodate flesh, bodies or souls. How then can it produce empathy, or awareness of fellow suffering? 24 The hidden truth of the sublime is that its archaic threat is posed less by natural phenomena than by other human beings. Portraying a depopulated military sublime can only perpetuate the myth that the sublime, and therefore terror, is basically natural, as a result of absolute states and technocrats want us to believe.

For the sociologist – perhaps a closer partner to the photographer than the archaeologist – the category of the sublime is to be avoided because it unites what should be sundered. 25 As Judith Huggins Balfe has suggested, “the sublime is the category understood as a strategy for the re-enchantment of particular aspects of the social world, and thus for status enhancement of both the subject and object of the experience. Like whistling in the dark, the claim of sublimity is a self-fufilling prophecy. 26 It is hard to accept that the humanism of the documentarian doesn’t still have an important place in photography’s representation of war.

There is a humanism in this photography of the aftermath, but perhaps instead of one anchored in the horror of empathy. It emerges in those moments which force the individual beholder to face the limitations of his or her own rationality and perception, while at the same time maintaining the possibility for new and less alienated forms of experience. Most importantly, the success of such work lies exactly in reminding us that the sublime is the peculiar place where aesthetics and ethics merge, and that it is an uncomfortable coalition at the best of times.

16 Ibid., p. 242.
21 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 240.
BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL
EDUCATION
JULIETTE BUSS
EDUCATION CONSULTANT

Brighton Photo Biennial Education continues to deliver a year round programme of artist led activities that encourage people to engage with historical and contemporary photographic practice. Building on the success and the learning from the previous two Biennials, the current programme reflects the organisation's central location within the higher education community, by presenting a series of projects that utilize the wealth of talent and expertise at the University of Brighton, and maximise the extensive skills, resources and opportunities of partnership working.

BPB Education is pleased to again be working with the Mass Observation Archive housed at the University of Sussex, Creative Partnerships and Aimhigher, and excited about being part of major initiatives such as Brighton & Hove City Council’s Celebrating Age Festival and the Museum, Library & Archive Council’s Their Past Your Future 2 programme. We are also thrilled that Engage (the National Association for Gallery Education) have this year decided to hold their international conference Rules of Engagement: Art, Conflict and Gallery Education in Brighton to tie in with the Biennial programme.

Education has a very particular role to play in this Biennial. Julian Stallabrass’s programme looks uncompromisingly at the ethical and political issues that arise when we view images of human suffering, and education events and activities have been crucial in providing opportunities for comment, contribution and participation. Therefore discussion and debate have been key features of BPB Education this year as demonstrated by the Biennial’s increased use of its website as a tool for learning and social networking, allowing participants in BPB education projects to share, exchange and disseminate their learning.

POST UP: THE WAR OF IMAGES
Jubilee Square, Brighton (Project Hub at Lighthouse, 28 Kensington Street, Brighton) Friday 14 November & Saturday 15 November 10am – 4pm
Photographer Anthony Lam will stage a public event in Jubilee Square, a central location in the heart of the city’s cultural quarter. Planned as a rally style event exploring media manipulation and propaganda, the two-day long activity is an outcome of a series of workshops with veterans and year ten school pupils. Using BPB exhibitions, personal experiences, and material from the Mass Observation Archive – a collection founded in the 1930s to record the everyday lives of people in Britain – as inspirational starting points, Lam and the participants will be considering the way in which memory of war and media images affect modern day understanding of conflict. The event itself, which includes a Project Hub space at Lighthouse, where visitors and participants can view and upload text and images live to the BPB website, brings to the public the multitude of views, images and thoughts gathered through the project, and provides an opportunity for comment and participation.

The project is supported through Their Past Your Future 2 (TPYF2) programme funded by the Museums Libraries & Archives Council. The two day event is also part of this year’s Celebrating Age Festival programme.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE COMMUNITY
Running as an elective at the University of Brighton since 2005, Photography in the Community enables second year undergraduates to make links with the BPB. This year, supported by the School of Arts & Communication, video artist Annis Joslin is enabling undergraduates to devise and deliver workshops for A Level students using BPB 2008 as a starting point. Dialogue and debate will be central activities, and students will use photography and video to record their experiences and share them with others via the Biennial website. See the results at www.bpb.org.uk from Wednesday 12 November

ONCE UPON A MOMENT IN TIME
Wednesday 12 November

CHANGING REPRESENTATION
Saturday 1 November – Sunday 16 November
University of Brighton Café
Monday – Saturday 10am – 5pm
Funded by Aimhigher, a campaign that encourages young people to think about the benefits and opportunities of higher education, artist Marysa Dowling has been working with students from Ruxhill High School and Hillcrest School in Hastings to create medium format tableau photographs that investigate the complex relationships that young people have with each other, their families and the wider world.

Images from the project will also be screened at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill as part of the Access All Areas Youth Arts Festival from Thursday 10 October – Sunday 2 November.

These projects have been supported by MLA, Aimhigher, Creative Partnerships, University of Brighton, Mass Observation Archive, Lighthouse, Willingdon School and Brighton & Hove City Council.

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Julian Stallabrass, BPB 2008 Guest Curator
Helen Cadwallader, Executive Director
Rebecca Drew

A New York style gallery in Petworth

20th September Andrew Holloway, Louise Dignard
1st November Andrew Sharley

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