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**The Representation of the Violated Body and its Spectatorship:  
the Negative Approach (1970s to 2016)**

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A PhD thesis awarded by the University of Westminster.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF THE  
VIOLATED BODY AND ITS  
SPECTATORSHIP: THE NEGATIVE  
APPROACH (1970s to 2016)

V I T A U P E N I E C E

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2022

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Declaration</i> .....	3
<i>Abstract</i> .....	4
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	5
<i>List of Images</i> .....	6
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Argument</i> .....	15
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	19
<i>Methodology</i> .....	19
<i>Contribution to the field of knowledge</i> .....	22
<i>Structure</i> .....	22
<i>Literature review</i> .....	24
<b>CHAPTER 1. SELF-INFLICTED CENSORSHIP: INTENTIONAL ABSENCE OF THE DEPICTION OF THE VIOLATED/VULNERABLE BODY AND GHOSTS</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<i>The vulnerable/violated body in focus</i> .....	52
1.1. MARTHA ROSLER. CHALLENGING THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER AND THEIR USES IN THE ART SYSTEM ..	59
1.2. BETTINA LOCKEMANN AND ELISABETH NEUDÖRFL: ATROCITY COMMEMORATION AND RESISTANCE TO EXPECTATIONS .....	74
1.3. ADAM BROOMBERG AND OLIVER CHANARIN. THE STRATEGY OF DISCLOSURE .....	80
<b>CHAPTER 2. CENSORED IMAGES - EXPOSING CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL OF THE DEPICTIONS OF VIOLATED BODIES</b> .....	<b>96</b>
<i>Historical background</i> .....	97
2.1. ALFREDO JAAR. <i>LAMENT OF THE IMAGES</i> (2002, v.1) .....	100
2.2. ALFREDO JAAR. <i>LAMENT OF THE IMAGES</i> (2009).....	106
2.3. ALFREDO JAAR. <i>MAY 1, 2011</i> (2011) .....	128
<b>CHAPTER 3. EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION AND DISAPPEARED BODIES: EXPOSING INFRASTRUCTURES</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<i>Historical background</i> .....	138
3.1. TREVOR PAGLEN. BLACK WORLD AND PRODUCTION OF SPACE.....	147
3.2. EDMUND CLARK. THE APPEARANCE OF DISAPPEARANCE .....	170
3.3. THE TECTONIC CHANGES - REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGES VERSUS OPERATIONAL IMAGES .....	205
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>216</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>227</b>

## Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the Centre for Research and Education in Art and Media CREAM at the School of Media, Arts & Design, University of Westminster, in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is entirely the author's own work, except where noted, and has not been previously submitted for this or any other awards.

## Abstract

This study explores the representation of the violated body and its spectatorship, focusing on the 'negative' approach in the period from the 1970's up to 2016. This thesis argues that any censorship either the state/military/media or self-inflicted ('forced' and emphasised absence) has a potential to provide important cause and vital stimulus to rethink and reformulate traditional assumptions about the photographs of the violated body and their function in society. The research and analysis of the case studies demonstrated that visibility is a complex and unstable system of permissions and prohibitions. That it is a shifting process, where some bodies are brought into the frame and others are left and kept outside, and/or brought back into the frame to make them socially and politically visible and significant. The findings demonstrated that photographic depictions of the violated body are regarded as important, relevant and necessary. It was repeatedly shown that their status as evidence - for instance for journalists/media, US army and government personnel, European officials, and artists, was essential. Nevertheless, it was also highlighted that worst things were not documented or their depiction and evidence was destroyed, or there were atrocities that could not be documented photographically. Moreover, it was argued that Western democracies have developed stealth torture after the WW2, with an aim to avoid detection, therefore often there would be no visible sign to document and show as the evidence. Thus, the context of seeming abundance and importance attributed to the photographic image of violence, prompted me to focus on the 'negative' approach and explore artworks where the image of the vulnerable/violated body is withheld either by artists themselves or it has been censored by the state, military and the media.

At the end of my thesis I consider issues raised by Paglen's (and Crawford's) research on machine vision and AI and Zuboff's research on surveillance capitalism that I find essential to the field of violence representation and particularly for the 'negative' approach. Their findings reveal tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action and indicate a need for a further study on the representation of the violated body and its spectatorship in the digital realm.

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## List of Images

1. Martha Rosler, *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974/1975
2. Martha Rosler, from the series *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974/5
3. Posed photograph of members of Homeward Bound Community Services at *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, 1989 (photographer unknown)
4. Posed photograph of members of Homeward Bound Community Services at *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, 1989 (photographer unknown)
5. Alcina Horstman, Members of Homeward Bound Community Services at the City Hall Vigil, Summer 1988, 1988
6. Cover of Michael D. Zettler's book *The Bowery* (New York and London: Drake Publishers, 1975)
7. Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudoerfl, Güterbahnhof Grunewald, Deportationsbahnhof, from the series *Plan*, 1999
8. Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudoerfl, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Referat IV B-4 (Eichmann), Kurfürstenstraße 115-116, from the series *Plan*, 1999
9. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
10. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
11. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, The Fixer's Execution, June 7, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
12. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, The Brother's Suicide, June 7, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
13. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, The Day of One Hundred Dead, June 8, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
14. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
15. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
16. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
17. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008
18. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

19. Alfredo Jaar, *Lament of the Images*, v.1., 2002
20. Alfredo Jaar and David Levi Strauss, *Lament of the images*, 2009
21. Alfredo Jaar and David Levi Strauss, *Lament of the Images*, 2009
22. Alfredo Jaar, *May 1, 2011*, 2011
23. Trevor Paglen, *Open Hangar, Cactus Flats, NV, Distance ~ 18 miles, 10:04 a.m.*, 2007
24. Trevor Paglen, *The Salt Pit, Northeast of Kabul, Afghanistan*, 2006
25. Trevor Paglen, *Black Site, Kabul, Afghanistan*, 2006
26. Contents page from the CIA Inspector General, *Special Review: Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities (September 2001 - October 2003)*, dated 7 May 2004. Declassified in redacted form in August 2009. NP, p.17.
27. Edmund Clark, *Redacted image of a complex of buildings where a pilot identified as having flown rendition flights lives*. NP, p.141 and p.155.
28. Edmund Clark, *The site of the former Bagram Theater Internment Facility at Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul, Afghanistan*. NP, p.161 and p.189.
29. Edmund Clark, *Room 11, Skopski Merak hotel, Skopje, Macedonia*. NP, p.259 and p.281.
30. The collection of images Clark showed during his 2019 talk at the *ImageMatters* Symposium.
31. Edmund Clark, Image from the series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.
32. Edmund Clark, Image from the series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.
33. Edmund Clark, *Orange Screen*, 2017
34. Edmund Clark, Image from Clark's series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.
35. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.271.
36. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.273.
37. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.275.
38. Kronos Quartet & Trevor Paglen, screenshot from *Sight Machine*, 2019.

## Introduction

*Violence is vulgar.* Fritz Lang, filmmaker<sup>1</sup>

*Death has the tendency to encourage a depressing view of war.* Donald Rumsfeld, former U.S. Secretary of Defense (2001-2006)

*Blood talks.* Carne Ross, former British diplomat, the founder and director of a diplomatic advisory group Independent Diplomat (2004-2020)<sup>2</sup>

My interest about the images of violence was ignited with an observation that such images become more and more prevalent and common in the surrounding secular culture of Western democracies.<sup>3</sup> I was curious about the aims of such images - how and why the image of violence was used? I was interested in what were the issues discussed in relation to the depictions of violated bodies? How and what terms were used to talk about these images? Further research opened a rich and complicated history and confronted me with questions about the intended function of these images of violence. What is the spectator supposed to or could do with them? I will present this material in more detail later on in the literature review. I will now proceed with a discussion of some of the principal ideas that have driven this thesis and will set out my arguments and methodology, together with an

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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Lang in Friedkin, W., (1975). Conversation with Fritz Lang. *imdb.com* [online] Available from: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or0j1mY\\_rug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or0j1mY_rug)> [Accessed 18 Mar 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Ross, C., (2015). A Talk at UCLA Law School. *independentdiplomat.org* [online] Available from: <<https://independentdiplomat.org/carne-ross-talk-at-ucla-law-school/>> [Accessed 19 Mar 2021].

<sup>3</sup> Critics mainly point to the increase of the visual violence and this increase itself is often experienced as violent - as "bombardment." **Susan Sontag** in the Oxford Amnesty International Lecture in 2001 said that, 'It is true that there is an increasing level of violence and sadism in the acceptable images of mass culture: films, TV, video games. Imagery that would have been unbearable, unwatchable 40 years ago is watched without flinching by teenagers in rich countries. Indeed, violence is entertaining rather than shocking to many people in most modern cultures. But this does not mean that the images earmarked as 'real' are watched with the same detachment.' Sontag, S., (2001). War and Photography. In: Owen, N., (ed.) *Human rights, human wrongs: The Oxford Amnesty lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.266. **Jean-Luc Nancy** points out two assertions that 'have become very familiar to us. The first is that images are violent: we often speak of being "bombarded by advertising," and advertising evokes, in the first place, a stream of images. The second is that images of violence, of ceaseless violence breaking out all over the world, are omnipresent and, simultaneously or by turns, indecent, shocking, necessary, heartrending.' Nancy, J-L., (2005). Image and Violence. In: *The ground of the image*. Translated by Jeff Fort. Ashland, Ohio: Fordham University Press; London: Eurospan, p.15. **Slavoj Žižek** writes that 'we find ourselves bombarded with mediatic images of violence.' Žižek, S., (2009). *Violence*. London: Profile Books, p.7.

explanation of the contribution that it makes to our understanding of those issues. Finally, I conclude with a summary on the structure of the thesis.

I chose to look at violence depicted in photography for two reasons. I was interested in the assumptions held about the functions of such images and how the depiction of atrocities influences public opinion and shapes political action. The observation that since the 1970's there has been increasing criticism given to both, documentary photography and the spectator, which is what Fred Ritchin refers to as 'the perceived insufficiency of the documenting of a social ill as a stimulus for social change in a world increasingly submerged by and knowledgeable of a complexity of problems' has determined the scope of my research.<sup>45</sup> I have selected case studies starting from the 1970's up to 2015 that consider violence and its representational issues. Therefore, to explore these issues I follow changes and developments in the image of atrocity itself as it is pursued by artists and photographers and consider changes in the practice of spectatorship.

The developments surrounding photographic images demonstrate that image has long since ceased to be a transparent encapsulation of the event and that it has been transformed. There are new expanding expectations of both the photographic image and the spectator. Next to the traditional photojournalism like that exercised by American photographer James Nachtwey, there are additional approaches. On the one hand, the image is seen as the tip of an iceberg of the accumulation of a huge amount of information that surrounds the image. As a result, the artist's job involves locating, re-contextualising and presenting it to reveal it, for example *Spirit is a Bone* (2015) by Oliver Chanarin and Adam Broomberg.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, artwork is compiled and assembled from many other appropriated images or collaged in one image thus creating a condensed image. This strategy has been used by many artists, for example Martha Rosler<sup>7</sup> and Thomas Hirschhorn.<sup>8</sup> These artworks often are accompanied by the artists' statements, essays,

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<sup>4</sup> Ritchin, F., (1989). What is Magnum? In: *In Our Time: The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers*. Compiled by William Manchester; essays by Jean Lacouture and Fred Ritchin. London: American Federation of Arts in association with Deutsch, p.435.

<sup>5</sup> Sharon Sliwinski observes in her book that explores relationship between human rights and spectatorship that, 'By the time of Arendt's death in the 1970s, the spectator has become a figure of much critical derision. Innumerable books and papers sought to criticize the spectator as separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act.' Sliwinski, S., (2011). *Human Rights in Camera*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p.28.

<sup>6</sup> The representational strategies explored by Chanarin and Broomberg and described in the interview - Coignet, R., (2016). *Conversations 2*. Paris: The Eyes Publishing, pp.40-54.

<sup>7</sup> *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series* (2004-2008).

<sup>8</sup> *Ur-Collage* (2008) and other collage works.

research and interviews or published in a book format. These representational strategies demand and favour specific viewing conditions, such as 'slow looking'<sup>9</sup> and prepared spectator.

There can be observed relevant changes in the photographic discourse that surrounds the photographic depiction of atrocity. Possibly the most relevant piece of writing that set strongly the initial scene in the 1970s and determined many of the terms in photographic discourse was Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977).<sup>10</sup> However, the developments I pay most attention to are attempts to re-evaluate and reformulate what the photographic image of atrocity is and what the spectator could do with it (that often are in dialogue or disagreement with Sontag's ideas). Many writers and art critics, in order to reformulate spectatorship, have developed new theoretical approaches, described in such terms as 'slow looking',<sup>11</sup> 'empathic vision',<sup>12</sup> 'carnal knowledge',<sup>13</sup> 'to watch' the photograph,<sup>14</sup> 'seeing in the dark'.<sup>15</sup> I look at these responses developed by writers and artists such as Rebecca Solnit, Trevor Paglen, Thomas Hirschhorn, Ariella Azoulay, David L. Strauss, Susie Linfield, Eyal Weizman, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites and others closer in the literature review. These authors have reformulated and developed approaches to spectatorship. By taking into account the context of atrocity depictions, especially censored ones, they consider the spectatorship that requires educated eyes to see and knowledge that is not strictly visible. Consequently, pointing to the fact that atrocities exist in spite of invisibility and emphasising the importance of the spectator's field of knowledge and already existing mental images in the process of interpretation.

Related to both developments (of the photographic image and its spectatorship) is the change that can be observed in the way stories are told about these events. Writers and

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<sup>9</sup> Bal, M., (2007). The Pain of Images. In: Reinhardt, M., Edwards, H., Dugganne, E., (eds.) *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*. Williamstown, MA; Chicago: Williams College Museum of Art in association with the University of Chicago Press.

<sup>10</sup> Sontag, S., (2002). *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books. Her thinking has been very influential and still plays an important role as her statements continue to reverberate around in the photographic discourse.

<sup>11</sup> Bal, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Bennett, J., (2005). *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, And Contemporary Art*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Sobchack, V., (2004). *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

<sup>14</sup> Azoulay, A., (2008). *The civil contract of photography*. New York; London: Zone.

<sup>15</sup> Solnit, R., (2014). The Visibility Wars. *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press; pp.298-310; Weizman, E., (2015). Strikeout: The Material Infrastructure of the Secret. In: *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* / Black, C. and Clark, E. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., pp.285-288.

artists such as Azoulay, Solnit, Linfield, Paglen and others, retell existing stories differently, with different emphasis, and from new perspectives. They tell stories of human suffering that have been hidden, or are invisible otherwise, thus changing the existing discourse that has been mainly managed by governments and the media. They tell stories not only about human suffering, but also about solidarity and cooperation in the time of disaster.

Initially, the thesis was divided into two parts because in the period that I was analysing two strategies emerged in the way that artists and photographers tried to convey the realities of war and other socially sanctioned violence to the public.<sup>16</sup> The first part I called a 'negative' approach. It was devoted to withheld atrocity images and highlighted that there are two kinds of withheld images. First there are artworks where artists (despite the availability) consciously chose not to show any atrocity and its victims, and second - works where artists expose the censorship of atrocity and its images. For instance, Martha Rosler in *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974-75) addresses representation of homeless alcoholics living in the Bowery area of New York and intentionally avoids photographing them.<sup>17</sup> Also Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfel in their artist book *Plan* (1999) use unusual strategy to commemorate the Holocaust in Germany. They resisted traditional expectations and avoided use of existing images of the Holocaust victims and instead mapped the infrastructure of the atrocity throughout the contemporary city of Berlin. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin expose the censorship they are subjected to while embedded with the British Army by deciding 'to not show

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<sup>16</sup> I follow René Girard's theory on human violence, where he argues that war and other rituals of sacrifice belong to the same category of socially sanctioned violence. Its function is to redirect reoccurring communal strife to more socially acceptable targets, such as the sacrificial victim or the foreign enemy, and as a result to keep violence outside the community. Girard, R., (2005). *Violence and the Sacred*. London, New York: Continuum. See also Ehrenreich, B., (2011). *Blood Rites: The Origins and History of the Passions of War*. London: Granta, pp.28-30. Ehrenreich also utilises Girard's theory. Note: for shortness I often use term 'atrocity' or 'violence' instead of 'socially sanctioned violence.'

<sup>17</sup> Rosler's work devoted to homeless alcoholic people living on streets might seem an odd choice for a case study, nevertheless according to Girard's theory the choosing of the victim has unifying factors - 'beings who are either outside or on the fringes of society: prisoners of war, slaves, pharmakos. [...] What we are dealing with, therefore, are exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants. Their status as foreigners or enemies, their servile condition, [...] prevents these future victims from fully integrating themselves into the community.' Girard, 2005, p.12. Consequently, homeless people living on the margins of society are potential pharmakos. Moreover, Girard argues that the pharmakos 'has a dual connotation. On the one hand he is a weebegone figure, an object of scorn who is also weighted down with guilt; a butt for all sorts of gibes, insults, and of course, outbursts of violence. On the other hand, we find him surrounded by a quasi-religious aura of veneration; he has become a sort of cult object.' Girard, 2005, p.100. The characteristics ascribed to the pharmakos in my view coincide with the characteristics of the homeless alcoholic people living on streets whose representation Rosler addresses in her artwork/book and accompanying essay.

## Introduction

anything'<sup>18</sup> in *The day nobody died* (2008). Then, there are three artworks made by Alfredo Jaar that expose the censorship of the images from the war on terror. Lastly, there are two collaborative projects devoted to the exposure of the extraordinary rendition programme that involves disappearing and torturing people: Trevor Paglen's and A. C. Thompson's book *Torture Taxi* (2006) and Edmund Clark's and Crofton Black's *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* (2015). They bring to light the infrastructure of the dark world of covert military actions that are an essential part of the contemporary war on terror.

The second part was what I called a 'positive' approach, which dealt with artworks that depict atrocity by representing actual victims of violence. I intended to look at the work made by artists and photojournalists that was exhibited in art galleries, such as Luc Delahaye's *Taliban Soldier* (2001); Nachtwey's *The Sacrifice* (2006-2007; 2010); Susan Meiselas's *Cuesta del Plomo* (1978). Also the work made by Taryn Simon in collaboration with American movie director Brian de Palma - recreation of the atrocity scene for his movie 'Redacted' and resulting in Simon's work *Zarah/Farah* (2008, 2009, 2011); Harri Palviranta's series *Battered* (2007); collages made by Hirschhorn such as *Incommensurable Banner* (2007) and *Pixel-Collage* (2016); Mark Wallinger's *State Britain* (2006), Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-1972) and *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series* (2004-2008); and Broomberg's and Chanarin's *War Primer 2* (2013).

Rosler's and also Broomberg's & Chanarin's work appeared in both parts, and it further highlighted changing attitudes and arguments about the representation and exhibition of the images of the violated body in art context. There were themes of ethics and aesthetics that I intended to explore, for instance issues of beauty in the representation of violence and why 'non-art' work becomes art and is exhibited in the gallery space. There were photojournalists exhibiting their documentary war photographs in art galleries. Also, Rosler in the early 1980's exhibited her work that previously was considered 'non-art' work (anti-Vietnam protest posters - *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-1972)). Nevertheless, I decided to not pursue both parts and all intended themes as my research had grown too big for this thesis. But more importantly, late in my research I came across two relevant themes/research results that prompted me to focus only on the 'negative' approach.

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<sup>18</sup> Stallabrass, J. (ed.), (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and The War of Images*. Photoworks, p.134.

The first was research published by Darius Rejali where he argued that Western democracies developed 'clean torture' after the Second World War.<sup>19</sup> He reports on the techniques of torture that were developed specifically to evade detection.<sup>20</sup> That stealth torture and other 'undetectable' abuses have been developed in Western democratic states because of the primacy of seeing and transparency demanded by democratic societies. That stealth or 'clean' (torture) techniques begin in British, American, and French contexts and spread outward to other places.<sup>21</sup> As Rejali points out, 'Dictators generally have no interest in violence that leaves no marks; intimidation can require that they leave bloody traces of their power in every public square.'<sup>22</sup> Importantly, he argues that 'historically, public monitoring and stealth torture have an unnerving affinity' and shows that free elections and monitoring agencies 'have been followed by electric prods and electroshockers, tortures by water and ice, drugs of sinister variety, sonic devices - and also by methods that are less technical, but no less sophisticated or painful; the modern democratic torturer knows how to beat a suspect senseless without leaving a mark.'<sup>23</sup> Rejali explores the implications of the violence that leaves no marks on human body. His research sheds light on our contemporary conditions that are rarely discussed.<sup>24</sup>

The second was research published by Trevor Paglen on digital images and AI (Artificial Intelligence).<sup>25</sup> In his 2016 essay 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)' Paglen argues that the advent of digital images has enormous implications. The fact that digital images are fundamentally machine-readable, regardless of a human subject, 'allows for the automation of vision on an enormous scale and, along with it, the exercise of power on dramatically larger and smaller scales than have ever been possible.'<sup>26</sup> Also, that visual

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<sup>19</sup> Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.xviii.

<sup>21</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.xvii.

<sup>22</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.2.

<sup>23</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.3.

<sup>24</sup> Notably, in the 2020 report UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment Prof. Nils Melzer addresses many kinds of contemporary tortures that leave no marks. Melzer, N., (2020). Advance Unedited Version: Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of punishment. <https://www.ohchr.org>, 14 Feb [online] Available from: <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Torture/SRTorture/Pages/SRTortureIndex.aspx>> [Accessed 22 Feb 2020]. I discuss this subject in more detail in the third chapter.

<sup>25</sup> Paglen, T., (2016). Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You). *The New Inquiry*. [online] Available from: <<https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>> [Accessed 27 July 2020]; further explorations are published in the collaborative essay - Crawford, K. and Paglen, T., (2019). Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets, *The AI Now Institute*, September 19, [online] Available from: <<https://www.excavating.ai/>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>26</sup> Paglen, 2016.

## Introduction

culture has become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible. That the classical or human visual culture has become a special case of vision, an exception to the rule (and with it also the way of image making and sharing) and points out the tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action. Two particular issues highlighted by Paglen that are intrinsic to digital images are the absence of an ambiguity (and fluidity) of the meaning in the machine world and its operational mode. These observations raise questions about how this invisible exercise of power affects who is/can be heard, whose stories are/will be told in this new and extremely vast and invisible landscape of invisible images.<sup>27</sup>

Rejali's and Paglen's research opened new perspectives that I see as relevant for the subject I explore - the representation of the violated body and its spectatorship. Rejali reports on the techniques of torture that are developed specifically to evade detection. Stealth torture does not leave marks. There is nothing to see afterwards, nothing to photograph. Paglen observes that images no longer represent things, but actively intervene in our everyday life, 'their functions changing from representation and mediation, to activations, operations, and enforcement. Invisible images are actively watching us, poking and prodding, guiding our movements, inflicting pain and inducing pleasure,' but, as he points out, 'all of this is hard to see.'<sup>28</sup> They reveal that there are additional invisibilities (control processes) at play that go beyond the self-inflicted withdrawal and forced censorship of the atrocity depiction and information that is exercised on the level of access. These control processes create additional challenges for the spectator that I want to pay attention to where possible. I am interested in practising civic spectatorship as elaborated by Azoulay and Hariman and Lucaites and to contribute to the public sphere by discussing and making sense of the representations of socially sanctioned violence. Also, by including the term spectatorship in my thesis title, I want to emphasise the plurality of the photograph or the frame that replaces absented image (the photographer/artist, the photographed person, and the spectator) and its performative aspect.<sup>29</sup>

Rejali's and Paglen's observations emphasised the importance to explore the 'negative' approach especially in times of seeming abundance of the images of violence because these additional invisibilities are control processes that are an essential part of our

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<sup>27</sup> I discuss Paglen's research in more detail at the end of the third chapter.

<sup>28</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Azoulay, 2008, pp.93-97; Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J.L., (2016). *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

## Introduction

contemporary western democratic condition and they are rarely discussed. As a result, I decided to explore the 'negative'<sup>30</sup> approach and consider different control processes at play that affect representation of the violated body and respective challenges that the spectator faces. I pay attention to censorship of the image of the violated body that is self-inflicted, forced and difficult to account for. Why make someone invisible? How to read/understand censored atrocity photographs? How to learn to see (and show) the invisible violated body? The representational strategies that have been developed and surrounding discourses on ethical, aesthetical and political issues help elaborate on representation of violence and its spectatorial practice. They shed light on issues deemed sensitive or problematic at the time, and also reconfigure existing cultural taboos.<sup>31</sup>

## Argument

My argument is that substantive gaps exist within the field of discourse through which atrocity images are articulated and that such gaps are evidenced in a number of statements made by critics including Sontag, Strauss and others. Sontag for example has observed that images of suffering lose their power with repeated viewing, become banal, less real and anaesthetise the spectator. They reinforce alienation and make one less able to react in real life.<sup>32</sup> Spectators who cannot alleviate suffering are voyeurs, 'whether we like it or not.'<sup>33</sup> Whereas, Strauss has noticed change in the politics of images that has eroded their effectiveness and their power to elicit action.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Strauss and Jaar, have announced that images of atrocity have lost the power that they once had in us.<sup>35</sup> While Elaine Scarry has argued that the population has lost any part in military decisions (and therefore even dissent has become irrelevant (or almost irrelevant) and that civilians

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<sup>30</sup> The term 'negative approach' has been used before and has designated the opposite of how I use this term. American photographer and curator Edward Steichen (1879-1973) used term 'negative approach' to describe visual strategy of showing 'war in all its grimness': "Although I had presented war in all its grimness in three exhibitions, I had failed to accomplish my mission. I had not incited people into taking open and united action against war itself [...]. I came to the conclusion that I had been working from a negative approach, that what was needed was a positive statement on what a wonderful thing life was." (Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography*. New York: Doubleday, 1963.), cited in Azoulay, A., (2016). *Photography Is Not Served: "The Family of Man" and the Human Condition*. In: Balsom, E. and Peleg, H., (eds.) *Documentary Across Disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, p.112.

<sup>31</sup> Tait, S., (2008). Pornographies of Violence? Internet Spectatorship on Body Horror. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. 25:1, 91-111.

<sup>32</sup> Sontag, 2002, pp.19-21.

<sup>33</sup> Sontag, S., (2002). Looking at War: Photography's view of devastation and death. *The New Yorker*, December 9.

<sup>34</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2003). *Between the eyes : essays on photography and politics*. New York : Aperture, p.81.

<sup>35</sup> Strauss, 2003, p.93. Haupt, G. and Binder, P., (2002). Alfredo Jaar: Interview, Details. *Universes in Universe*. [online] Available from: <<http://universes-in-universe.de/car/documenta/11/frid/e-jaar-2.htm>> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

are infantilised and marginalised.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Linfield and Strauss have claimed that there is the intrinsic failure at the heart of the photograph of suffering.<sup>37</sup> In addition, in the writings of the above mentioned authors and many others, such as Rosler and John Taylor,<sup>38</sup> one observes the absence of mention and interrogation of the assumed inherent political capability that is ascribed to the spectator. These statements highlight that the political self<sup>39</sup> and its expected role in Western democracies, namely, a person's ability to take part in decision making with regards to grave military or social matters until recently, has been mainly ignored or taken for granted in the photographic discourse.

These accepted military rights and responsibilities that also carry with them civil rights have affected photographic discourse of political art because they have been an uncontested basis of arguments about the loss of power and failure of the photographs of atrocity. I suggest that the failure is rather of analysis itself, not of the image of atrocity or its spectator, and I intend to demonstrate with some of the case studies that they already address different issues and pay attention to different problems. For instance Paglen's research on the secret state documents the production of the "black world" and exposes how covert atrocities were practised and sustained invisible, and how these illegal activities influenced and affected democratic systems, and domestic and international law in the form of human rights violations and subverted democracy.<sup>40</sup> He asserts that transparency in state affairs is a crucial part of a democratic project, but demonstrates that transparency alone does not guarantee democracy. Paglen observes that by 'Bringing the war on terror's black geography into the light did not make it disappear. Instead, the secret world sculpted the surrounding state in its own image. Torture was now "legal".'<sup>41</sup> Thus I point out that new representational strategies have been devised to make visible the infrastructure (of the government, the military and culture) that creates and hides most of the atrocities and their visual representation. In the recent study *The Public Image* (2016)

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<sup>36</sup> Scarry, E., (1993). Watching and authorizing the Gulf War. In: Garber, M., Matlock, J., and Walkowitz, R.L., (eds.) *Media Spectacles*. London: Routledge, pp.59-61.

<sup>37</sup> Linfield, S., (2010). *The Cruel Radiance : Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, Ill. : University of Chicago Press, p.33; Strauss, 2003, p.81.

<sup>38</sup> Rosler, M., (2004). *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London : MIT; Taylor, J., (1998). *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>39</sup> Hillman, J., (1994). "Man is by nature a political animal" or: patient as citizen. In: Shamdasani, S., and Münchow, M., (eds.) *Speculations after Freud: psychoanalysis, philosophy, and culture*. London: Routledge, pp.27-40.

<sup>40</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World*. London: New American Library.

<sup>41</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.273.

## *Introduction*

Hariman and Lucaites express similar observations - that 'the critique of photography suffers from a number of errors - errors due to mistaken assumptions, biased comparisons, and failure to observe significant changes in society and politics.'<sup>42</sup> Also, they observe that 'a shift in the interpretive community is beginning to emerge'<sup>43</sup> and they argue for a more transformative conception of photography as a mode of experience, a medium for social thought, and public art.<sup>44</sup>

I support my argument with four strands of argumentation demonstrated through the case studies. Firstly, I intend to demonstrate and argue that any censorship either the state/military/media or self-inflicted ('forced' and emphasised absence) has provided important stimulus to rethink and reformulate cliché/traditional assumptions about the photographs of violence and their function in society (such as giving a voice to voiceless, by exposing ills and thus bringing change, urging empathy and compassion).

Secondly, both types of censorship (exercised by the state/military/media and self-inflicted) have been useful strategies of exposure that help to move attention to infrastructures that sustain atrocities. Some recent artworks directly expose the distortions of law in Western democracies. These exposures highlight the deficiency of the democratic process and corruption of the system that executed censorship in the first instance. Thus, exposed censorship stimulates interrogation of the politics of democracy and helps to explore spectatorship and develop a more nuanced understanding of the spectatorial practice.

Thirdly, I argue that exposed censorship further complicates spectatorship as it exposes access levels to information that is deemed sensitive. Moreover, it highlights the spectator's process of interpretation. The 'negative' approach is particularly useful for bringing into focus 'mental images' of the absented bodies (ghosts) and therefore it further explores and complicates the spectator's role emphasising the role of imagination in this process.

Fourthly, I point out that accumulation has been used as a strategy to make visible a larger problem. By linking/accumulating separate incidents, the larger problem emerges. Thus, accumulation creates a new level of representation and results in a new knowledge about

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<sup>42</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, pp.2-22.

socially sanctioned violence, in other words, it could be described as a crude form of illumination.<sup>45</sup>

I want to note that partly similar ideas have been expressed (not only recently by Hariman and Lucaites but also) by John Tagg in the 1980's, and recently by photographer Don McCullin. Tagg suggested that instead of studying photography as such, we must study the field that most affects photographic meaning.<sup>46</sup> While McCullin in an interview in 2016 pondered about the cost of war and that the people who really pay the price of war are the civilians, and said: "What the fuck has it got to do with photography? Why am I here?"<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless these ideas are only partly related thoughts. I argue (together with Azoulay, Georges Didi-Huberman, Hirschhorn, Linfield, Simon, Solnit, Strauss) that photographs of violated and destroyed human bodies play an important and irreplaceable role - they provide evidence, experience and information that cannot be gained by other means. To demonstrate this statement, one might imagine for example of how WWI would be remembered without Ernst Friedrich's collection of images in the book *War against War!* Or how the Holocaust would be remembered if there were no images? What is important as already John Taylor (1998) pointed out in the absence of images that have been censored - it affects our memory and understanding, we remember a different history.

However, one can argue, as did an American writer and journalist Philip Gourevitch, that the worst things have not been photographed. This was evident from interviews conducted with soldiers for *Standard Operating Procedure*. The soldiers revealed much more than photographs were able.<sup>48</sup> As will be demonstrated in the second chapter, Abu Ghraib photographs not only expose atrocities, their quantity adds an additional level of information to the event itself. It demonstrates that what happened was not an aberration, but common practice initiated by the policy. Moreover, photographs can be used as a distraction, as Gourevitch pointed out, already available photos, memos, and other information would be enough to prosecute the creators of policies that only manifested themselves through Abu Ghraib images. If only there would be the will in those who are responsible to address this type of crime in the American Army and the Government.

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<sup>45</sup> Girard, R., (1996). *The Girard Reader*. Edited by James G. Williams. New York : Crossroad, p.269.

<sup>46</sup> Tagg, J., (2002 [1988]). *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p.63; cited in Kriebel (2007, p.31).

<sup>47</sup> Schuman, A., (2016). In *Conversation: Don McCullin*. *Hotshoe* 196, SS16, p.89.

<sup>48</sup> Gourevitch, P. and Morris E., (2008). *Standard Operating Procedure*. New York: Penguin Press.

## Research Questions

My main research questions are:

1. Why artists decide to avoid showing victims' bodies and what representational strategies they use instead?
2. What assumptions are held about depiction of the vulnerable/violated body that enabled these visual strategies?
3. What language is used to describe the atrocity image and spectator's activity?
4. What representational strategies are used to render visible censored information and particularly (visual) depictions of atrocities (rendition and torture)?
5. Which bodies are presented or removed from spectatorship and how they are framed?
6. What arguments have been exchanged for and against censorship of the atrocity images?
7. What representational strategies are utilised and devised to counter the absence of photographic evidence of atrocity?
8. How does the 'negative evidence' challenge the common perception/notion of photographic image of atrocity as evidence of atrocity?

## Methodology

To answer my research questions, I will analyse photographic case studies and use qualitative methods drawing on photographic theory, discourse analysis and anthropological approach. I will use the phenomenological reading technique<sup>49</sup> to focus on assumptions held by artists and how those have affected their artwork. The main three thinkers on whose ideas I will draw upon most are: Ariella Azoulay, Judith Butler and Hans Belting. I will employ the following concepts developed by Azoulay: "to watch" a photograph and the reconstruction of the event of the photograph (the photographic event) as a civic skill (also civic spectatorship explored by Hariman and Lucaites); the intrinsic collaborative dimension of photographs and their accumulative effects.

I draw on the following ideas developed and elaborated by Butler: visual and conceptual frames that distribute the recognisability; the frame - both, ideological and material photographic frame, that actively interpret events, but (importantly) though framing restricts what will be seen, nevertheless, that does not dictate the story<sup>50</sup>; and transformative power of the circulation of images.

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<sup>49</sup> Hart, C., (2003). *Doing Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp.103-107.

<sup>50</sup> It is brilliantly demonstrated by Azoulay's interpretations. For instance, Azoulay in her recent essay critiques three photos of Burt Glinn 'taken in 1956 of Palestinians persecuted by the State of Israel' (Azoulay's caption) and their exhibition in Paris in 2017, see: Azoulay, A., (2018). *Unlearning Expertise Knowledge and Unsettling Expertise Positions*. [fotomuseum.ch](https://www.fotomuseum.ch), September 28. [online] Available from: <<https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still->

Another important concept that I draw on is the notion of the “mental image” developed by art historian Hans Belting (1935).<sup>51</sup> Belting argues that ‘the human being is the natural *locus of images*, a living organ for images.’ That in spite of all the devices we use today to send and store images, it is ‘only within the human being, that the images are received and interpreted in a living sense; that is to say, in a sense that is ever changing and difficult to control [..].’<sup>52</sup>

Also, I recognise the relevance of the perspective of the story and draw on the ideas that have been elaborated by Rebecca Solnit and René Girard (1923-2015)<sup>53</sup> on the importance of the story told from the victim’s perspective. Girard points out that the persecution stories we usually get to know from the persecutor’s perspective. It is necessary to learn the victim’s story that is told from her perspective. Though Girard does not analyse photographic material, I nonetheless find his approach to violence and some terms he developed to address representational issues of human violence highly relevant for my research.<sup>54</sup> Those terms relate to the role that victim plays in human culture, the conditions of its spectatorship and the importance of the vantage point of the (persecution) story. Therefore, part of the interpretative tools I use to analyse depictions of violence and responses to them come from Girard’s mimetic theory. The relevant terms are modern concern for the victim, (social) scapegoat and violence as anthropological fact.

Girard argues that concern for the victim is a modern concern, that we live in unique times in this respect, because ‘*today, victims have rights.*’<sup>55</sup> And this concern continues to gain importance. Another term - scapegoat, is ‘a person or a group that is made to take blame for more widely distributed guilt.’<sup>56</sup> This ‘age-old way of gaining release from the violence

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searching/articles/155301\_unlearning\_expertise\_knowledge\_and\_unsettling\_expertise\_positions> [Accessed 29 December 2020]. Also, Azoulay, 2008, pp.138-145.

<sup>51</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.

<sup>52</sup> Belting, 2011, p.37.

<sup>53</sup> René Girard is a French-born anthropologist, philosopher of social science, literary critic and historian. He became famous in 1970s after publishing a number of controversial books *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (1978) where he introduced an original global theory of culture and explored the social function of violence and the mechanism of the social scapegoat. Girard elaborated and extended this theory in many subsequent books. In one of his latest books *Battling to the End* (2007), Girard focused directly on war.

<sup>54</sup> I find Girard’s theory particularly relevant for my research, but I did not succeed at using as many tools from his mimetic theory as I initially intended.

<sup>55</sup> Girard, R., (2014). *When These Things Begin*. Conversations with Michel Treguer. Translated by Trevor Cribben Merrill. East Lansing: Michigan State University, pp.1-10 (‘*today, victims have rights,*’ p.8).

<sup>56</sup> Mimetic Theory: *Keywords*. [online] [imitatio.org](http://www.imitatio.org). Available from: <<http://www.imitatio.org/keywords>> [Accessed 24 March 2021].

or potential violence that mimesis produces is through non-conscious convergence upon a victim.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, scapegoat mechanism is 'a generative scapegoat principle which works unconsciously in culture and society.'<sup>58</sup> It is a repetitive process.

Also, I follow his structure that there are three main modern approaches to violence. The first is the political and philosophical approach and it is based on the assumption that human beings are naturally good. Distress and unjust treatment comes from flaws in society and the ruling classes. This approach consists of a wide variety of explorations from focusing on what causes the 'systemic' violence on a level of economic and political systems<sup>59</sup> and 'symbolic' violence that is embodied in language and culture<sup>60</sup> to interrogating what links the image to violence, and violence to the image.<sup>61</sup> The second is the biological approach whose proponents argue that violent behaviour may be traced to biological basis in an individual.<sup>62</sup> The third approach has been argued by René Girard in mimetic or imitative theory.<sup>63</sup> Girard does not see violence as an aberration but as an anthropological fact. He states that, 'the law that mankind lives by on a daily basis is violence.'<sup>64</sup> Though the first approach is the most widespread and is the basis of most of the works I address in this research, in many instances I find Girard's approach and terminology developed in the theory of mimetic violence, as a more appropriate context. It

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<sup>57</sup> Girard, R., (1996). *The Girard Reader*. Edited by James G. Williams. New York : Crossroad, p.293.

<sup>58</sup> Girard, 1996, p.294.

<sup>59</sup> Arendt, H., (1970). *On violence*. London: Allen Lane; Keane, J., (1996). *Reflection on Violence*. London: Verso; Vattimo, G., (2004). *Nihilism & Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, & Law*. Edited by Santiago Zabala, translated by William McCuaig. New York: Columbia University Press.; Žižek, S., (2009). *Violence*. London: Profile Books; Chomsky, N. and Foucault, M., (2011). *Human nature: justice vs power: the Chomsky-Foucault debate*. Edited by Fons Elders. London: Souvenir Press Ltd.; Graeber, D., (2013). *The Democracy Project: A History. A Crisis. A Movement*. London: Penguin Books.

<sup>60</sup> Butler, J., (1997). *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative*. New York; London: Routledge; Žižek, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Nancy, J-L., (2005). Image and Violence. In: *The ground of the image*. Translated by Jeff Fort. Ashland, Ohio: Fordham University Press; London: Eurospan, pp.15-26.

<sup>62</sup> Raine, A. and Scerbo, A., (1991). Biological Theories of Violence. *Neuropsychology of Aggression*. **4**, 1-25. [online] Available from: <[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-4615-3878-3\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-4615-3878-3_1)> [Accessed 31 May 2017]; Miczek *et al.*, (eds.) (1994). An Overview of Biological Influences on Violent Behavior. In: *Understanding and Preventing Violence*. Volume 2: Biobehavioral Influences. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, pp.1-20. [online] Available from: <<https://www.nap.edu/read/4420/chapter/2>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>63</sup> Girard, R., (2005). *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. London; New York: Continuum; Girard, R., (2003). *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. London; New York: Continuum; Girard, R., (2001). *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Translated, with a foreword, by James G. Williams. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Girard, R., (1996). *The Girard Reader*. Edited by James G. Williams. New York: Crossroad; Girard, R., (2014). *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise. East Lansing: Michigan State University.

<sup>64</sup> Girard, 2014 (*When These Things Begin*), p.9.

## *Introduction*

offers a relevant interpretation of today's situation in regard to victims and function of socially sanctioned violence.

### **Contribution to the field of knowledge**

I participate in the discourse on photography developed by theoreticians and practitioners such as Ariella Azoulay, Judith Butler, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, Thomas Hirschhorn, Susie Linfield, Trevor Paglen, Taryn Simon, Rebecca Solnit, David Levi Strauss and many others.<sup>65</sup> I contribute to the discussion about the functions of photographic depictions of violence by integrating new concepts. Part of the interpretative tools I use to analyse depictions of violence and responses to them come from René Girard's mimetic theory and Hans Belting's anthropological theory. Girard's and Belting's terms are rarely used in photographic discourse. They offer new approaches to photographic depictions of violence and their spectatorship. Thus, I produce new insights and add to our knowledge and understanding of the atrocity image and of its critique. Therefore, I hope to further suggest how (both) photographs of violence and also their absence can be analysed and valued as resources for thinking about the role of violence and its depiction in our culture and politics.

Also, I consider invisibilities that were highlighted by Rejali's research on stealth torture and democracies, and Paglen's recent research on machine vision. Their research findings have direct consequences for the human visual culture and envisage tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action. I point out that these developments that they revealed are essential to the field of violence representation and particularly for the 'negative' approach. I suggest some further ways to adapt our vision to these new contemporary conditions we are immersed within.

### **Structure**

The thesis consists of three chapters. They all deal with the absented body.

In the first chapter I look at representational strategies devised to address the dissatisfaction with photographic images depicting social ills and atrocity, and with their creators and/or spectators' behaviour. I look at solutions offered to remediate 'failures' such as voyeurism and compassion fatigue and I explore three artworks. The first is

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<sup>65</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.6 and in addition ref.17.

Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974-75) that addresses representation of homeless alcoholics living in the Bowery area of New York. I continue with Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfl's artist book *Plan* (1999) where an unusual strategy to commemorate the Holocaust in Germany is developed, one that resisted traditional expectations and instead mapped the infrastructure of the atrocity in the contemporary city of Berlin. The last case study I consider is Adam Broomberg's and Oliver Chanarin's *The day nobody died* (2008) where artists address their embedded conditions. They devise dissenting strategy where they dispense with photographic image, stating that it is not important, instead pointing spectators' attention to video material that provides a glimpse into the structure of the military system. The common threads that weave through these artworks is their choice to avoid showing victims, and an attempt to show infrastructure of the systems that produce victims. The focus on infrastructure will be further developed in the case studies in the third chapter.

In the second chapter I look at artworks made by Alfredo Jaar where he focuses on censorship and spectatorship of the American war on terror. I consider *Lament of the Images* (2002, v.1) that addresses spectatorship that is affected by having too much and too little information. Further I analyse the *Lament of the Images* (2009) that exposes censorship of the photographs showing Abu Ghraib atrocities and delve into assumptions held about photographs of atrocities by the military and their opponents. I examine the arguments exchanged over the official refusal to publicise the remaining withheld photographs by the American government. I continue with *May 1, 2011* (2011) where Jaar exposes the levels of secrecy and considers different access levels to information.

In the third chapter I look at the representational strategies used in two collaborative projects that investigated extraordinary rendition. The first one is Trevor Paglen's photo series *The Black Sites* (2006) and collaborative book *Torture Taxi* (2006) made together with A. C. Thompson. The second is Edmund Clark's and Crofton Black's book *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* (2015). Though it is known that each rendered person is photographed many times on their route while imprisoned and tortured, these images are not publicly available (kept by the CIA). These two case studies address the rendition and expose complex infrastructure that had disappeared bodies, and at the same time expose how this dark world is entangled with the rest of the world, and how democracy is affected. Lastly, at the end of this chapter, I consider some observations and concerns raised by Paglen in his recent research on machine vision because they bear

consequences for the human visual culture and envisage tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action.

## Literature review

This literature review will discuss changing approaches to the photographic representation of the violated body and its spectatorship. The first part will focus on statements made by critics such as Susan Sontag, John Berger, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Elaine Scarry, David Levi Strauss and Susie Linfield that provide evidence of a gap within the field of discourse through which atrocity images and their spectatorship tended to be articulated. It is followed by the review of relevant attempts to reformulate the dominant approaches to the photographic image of atrocity and its spectatorship. First I briefly look at ideas that were developed in response to stated failures that Sontag and others have pointed out. Then I proceed by examining the approaches that contrast ideas expressed by Sontag, I look at theoretical and visual strategies developed by writers and artists such as Robert Hariman and John Luis Lucaites, Judith Butler, Ariella Azoulay, Linfield, Rebecca Solnit, Taryn Simon, Thomas Hirschhorn, Eyal Weizman, Trevor Paglen and Edmund Clark.

### *The photograph of the violated body and its spectatorship*

Photography has been utilised to address social and political issues from the early days of its existence.<sup>66</sup> Sharon Sliwinski argued that a 'passionate aesthetic encounter between spectators and images of distant suffering' has been central to the development and acceptance of the concept of human rights.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless after the politically active 1960s<sup>68</sup> when photographers reported on the Vietnam War, American Peace Movement,

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<sup>66</sup> Hine, L. W., (1915). *The high cost of child labor: exhibit handbook*. New York: National Child Labor Committee; Riis, J., (1891). *The Other Half and How They Live: Story in Pictures* [Reconstruction of a Magic Lantern Slide Lecture Presented at the Sixth Annual Convention of Christian Workers]. In: Beshty, W. (ed.), (2018). *Picture Industry: A Provisional History of the Technical Image 1844-2018*. SAS LUMA Arles; CCS Bard College, pp.146-161; Fehrenbach, H., and Rodogno, D., (eds.) (2015). *Humanitarian Photography: a History*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J.L., (2016). *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press; Batchen, G., Gidley, M., Miller, N. K., Prosser, J., (eds.) (2012). *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London : Reaktion.

<sup>67</sup> Sliwinski, S., (2011). *Human rights in camera*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago press, p.46.

<sup>68</sup> Solnit, R., (2006). *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. New York: Nation Books, p.29; Ritchin, F., (1989). What is Magnum? In: *In Our Time: The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers*. Compiled by William Manchester; essays by Jean Lacouture and Fred Ritchin. London: American Federation of Arts in association with Deutsch, p.434. Rosler, M., (2013). Take the Money and Run? Can Political and Socio-Critical Art "Survive"? In: Aranda, J. et al., (eds.) *Martha Rosler: Culture Class*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp.29-72.

the Civil Rights movement, the Six-Day War, the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, as well as started to focus more on social issues internally in their own countries,<sup>69</sup> many critics started to write highly critical reviews. Sliwinski observed that by the middle of the 1970's 'the spectator has become a figure of much critical derision. Innumerable books and papers sought to criticize the spectator as separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act.'<sup>70</sup> Despite the fact that many Magnum photographers developed, reformulated and reinvented their photographic practices following the agency's founding aims<sup>71</sup> and as a result of dissatisfaction with the media's developments<sup>72</sup>, visually and verbally, their voices have not been so influential as **Susan Sontag's** (1933-2004). Sontag's writing on photography encapsulated the mood that was gaining strength in the 1970's. Her book *On Photography* (1977)<sup>73</sup> has been very influential and possibly the most relevant piece of writing that set strongly the initial scene in the 1970's and determined many of the terms in photographic discourse.<sup>74</sup> Hariman and Lucaites point out that her book '*On Photography* 'became, almost instantly, a bible': it has been selling briskly since 1977 and has been translated into at least fifteen languages.'<sup>75</sup> The ideas put forward by Sontag found fertile ground and have been repeated and developed by Rosler, Sekula and many others in the coming years.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> In contrast to the early Magnum photographers, who more often covered world events, photographers in the 1960s began to investigate their own home countries. For example Magnum photographers worked on a group project in 1968 when they reported on America throughout the year and published the book *America in Crisis*. But some of them focused not only on the public and newsworthy, they explored more personal and intimate subject matters, that they often found on the fringes of their own society and produced artist books, see Ritchin, 1989, pp.434-435.

<sup>70</sup> Sliwinski, 2011, p.28.

<sup>71</sup> In a 1962 memo addressed to "All Photographers" Cartier-Bresson reminded the following: "I wish to remind everyone that Magnum was created to allow us, and in fact to oblige us, to bring testimony on our world and contemporaries according to our own abilities and interpretations." [online] Available from: <<https://www.magnumphotos.com/about-magnum/history/>> [Accessed 3 June 2017]; cited in Ritchin, 1989, p.434. Former Magnum New York bureau chief Lee Jones recalled that in the early days of the agency people believed that with the help of photography the world could be made a better place. There had been competition among photographers to find a worse wrong to right - cited in Ritchin, 1989, p.427.

<sup>72</sup> Ritchin, 1989, pp.425-426; 435-438.

<sup>73</sup> Sontag, S., (2002). *On Photography*. London: Penguin Classics. The first of her essays on photography was published in 1973.

<sup>74</sup> Sontag's stance has been linked to the earlier history of photography criticism developed by the Frankfurt School. It's most well known representatives are Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht. See Linfield, S., (2010). *The Cruel Radiance : Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, Ill. : University of Chicago Press, pp.16-25; Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.6 and ref.14.

<sup>75</sup> Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J.L., (2016). *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, p.7 and ref.21.

<sup>76</sup> Linfield, 2010, pp.5-11; Stallabrass, J., (ed.) (2013). *Documentary*. London, Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, pp.15-16; Strauss, D. L., (2014). *Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow: Essays on the Present and Future of Photography*. New York: Aperture, p.130; Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.6 and ref.15.

## Introduction

Some of Sontag's early statements (assumptions and arguments) in *On Photography* about the photographic image of atrocity, the photographer and the spectator's response are definitive for the knowledge gap I intend to point out. For instance, she states that the image maker is by definition a voyeur who by taking photographs, not only sets up 'a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world', but also 'levels the meaning of all events' (p.11). Moreover, 'the act of photographing is more than passive observing' (p.12), 'using a camera is [...] a form of participation' (p.12). It is a way of 'tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening' (p.12). By taking a picture one displays 'an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged,' it also means 'to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing - including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune' (p.12). These statements are in direct opposition to the attitude practiced by photojournalists who represent "concerned" photography.

Also, Sontag states that photographic evidence cannot construct/identify events; 'the contribution of photography always follows the naming of the event' (p.19). Hence Sontag observes that 'photography reinforces a nominalist view of social reality as consisting of small units of an apparently infinite number' (p.22). Moreover, that:

Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles; and history, past and present, a set of anecdotes and *faits divers*. The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. [...] To see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination (p.22/23).

Furthermore, Sontag states that a photograph of misery 'cannot make a dent in public opinion unless there is an appropriate context of feeling and attitude'<sup>77</sup> (p.17); she declares that 'photographs cannot create a moral position, but they can reinforce one—and can help build a nascent one'<sup>78</sup> (p.17). Instead Sontag argues that 'Photographs are valued

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<sup>77</sup> As an example Sontag discusses the photographs from the American Civil War. She states that 'The photographs Mathew Brady and his colleagues took of the horrors of the battlefields did not make people any less keen to go on with the Civil War. The photographs of ill-clad, skeletal prisoners held at Andersonville inflamed Northern public opinion - against the South.' Sontag, 2002, p.17.

<sup>78</sup> Though Sontag explains the inability by American citizens to recognise the photos of Nisei on the West Coast being transported to internment camps in 1942 as 'a crime committed by the government against a large group of American citizens' as a judgment that issued from the pro-war consensus (Sontag, 2002, p.17), she does not discuss manufacturing of consent and propaganda that American government was producing to form the pro-war consensus. The propaganda manual written by Edward Bernays was published for the first time in 1928. See Bernays, E., (2005). *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, New York: Ig Publishing.

## Introduction

because they give information. They tell one what there is; they make an inventory' (p.22). To information professionals, such as spies, meteorologists, coroners, archaeologists, etc. 'their value is inestimable. But in the situations in which most people use photographs, their value as information is of the same order as fiction' (p.22). Photographs 'cannot themselves explain anything,' but they are 'inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy' (p.23). In addition, Sontag wrote following on the spectator's response:

What determines the possibility of being affected morally by photographs is the existence of a relevant political consciousness. Without a politics, photographs of the slaughter-bench of history will most likely be experienced as, simply, unreal or as a demoralizing emotional blow" (p.19).

A similar idea was expressed earlier by **John Berger** (1926-2017) in July 1972 in a brief but extremely interesting essay 'Photographs of Agony.'<sup>79</sup> In which he writes about the news from the then-ongoing Vietnam War and points out the absence of pictures from Vietnam in the papers and examines the effect of war photographs on the spectator. Berger states that they 'arrest', 'seize' the spectator, they fill one with 'either despair or indignation' (p.31) without purpose and that the photograph is 'doubly violent' (p.32) because it reinforces the 'contrast between the photographed moment and all others.' (p.32) That 'any response to that photographed moment is bound to be felt as inadequate' (p.32); that 'it is not possible for anyone to look pensively at such a moment and to emerge stronger.' (p.32) He summarises 'possible contradictions of the war photograph' (p.32) as follows. That the general assumption that their purpose is to awaken concern contradicts the most likely effect they produce, namely, the spectator/reader 'may tend to feel this discontinuity as his own personal moral inadequacy' (p.33), that results in a dispersal of shock, that may be doubled. He may be shocked now not only by the crimes committed in the war, but by his own moral inadequacy. And there are two possible outcomes. One, to shrug off this sense of inadequacy or perform a kind of penance by contribution to charities. And, in both cases, the spectator is depoliticised, because the 'picture becomes evidence of the general human condition. It accuses nobody and everybody.' (p.33)<sup>80</sup> Notably, Berger points out 'our own lack of political freedom'<sup>81</sup> and that in the existing political system 'we have no legal opportunity of effectively influencing the conduct of wars

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<sup>79</sup> Berger, J., (2013). *Understanding a Photograph*. Edited and introduced by Geoff Dyer. London: Penguin Classics, pp.30-33.

<sup>80</sup> Berger, 2013, pp.32-33.

<sup>81</sup> Berger, 2013, p.33.

waged in our name' (p.33). That said, he does not develop this observation further, he instead indicates that photographs of agony can 'mask' this 'far more extensive and urgent confrontation' (p.33). 'The only effective way of responding to what the photograph shows' would be for the outraged spectator to 'realize this and to act accordingly' (p.33).

Nevertheless, 'double violence of the photographed moment' (p.33) hinders this realisation and that is the reason for their dissemination in the press. Regrettably, Berger did not explore what it would be to follow this realisation and 'to act accordingly'. And he did not address his own understanding in spite of the images, or to be precise, in this case in spite of the absence of the images. He writes about his mental images - photographs that he invoked to replace their absence in the news and it demonstrated that they had not blocked his own understanding.

Returning to Sontag's writing on the spectatorship of photographs of violence, we find following statements that, 'the quality of feeling, including moral outrage, that people can muster in response to photographs of the oppressed, the exploited, the starving, and the massacred also depends on the degree of their familiarity with these images' (p.19). 'The shock of photographed atrocities wears off with repeated viewings' (p.20).<sup>82</sup> 'Images transfix. Images anesthetize. An event known through photographs certainly becomes more real than it would have been if one had never seen the photographs - think of the Vietnam War' (p.20). 'But after repeated exposure to images it also becomes less real' (p.20). This 'pseudo-familiarity with the horrible reinforces alienation, making one less able to react in real life' (p.41). Hence Sontag concludes that 'in these last decades, "concerned" photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it' (p.21).

Sontag states that 'the ethical content of photographs is fragile. With the possible exception of photographs of those horrors, like the Nazi camps, that have gained the status of ethical reference points, most photographs do not keep their emotional charge.' (p.21) That 'the particular qualities and intentions of photographs tend to be swallowed up in the generalised pathos of time past' (p.21) and are overtaken by an aesthetic content. 'Aesthetic distance seems built into the very experience of looking at photographs, if not

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<sup>82</sup> Sontag backs her statement with examples from the famine coverages writing that Don McCullin's photographs of emaciated Biafrans in the early 1970s had less impact for some people than Werner Bischof's photographs of Indian famine victims in the early 1950s because those images had become banal, and the photographs of Tuareg families dying of starvation in the sub-Saharan that appeared in magazines everywhere in 1973 must have seemed to many like an unbearable replay of a now familiar atrocity exhibition (Sontag, 2002, p.19).

right away, then certainly with the passage of time. Time eventually positions most photographs, even the most amateurish, at the level of art' (p.21).

**Martha Rosler** (1943) also stated a very similar idea to Sontag's statement that the particular qualities and intentions of photographs tend to disappear with time and are overtaken by an aesthetic content.<sup>83</sup> But Rosler develops it further and argues 'against the possibility of a nonideological aesthetic' (p.186). She states that any response to an image is 'rooted in social knowledge [...], in social understanding of cultural products.'<sup>84</sup>

Consequently, Rosler argues against aestheticisation, that she finds so widespread at the time, and argues instead for contextualisation of photographic images. Nevertheless, Rosler also thought that 'It is no longer possible to evoke the camouflaging impulses to "help" drunks and down-and-outers or "expose" their dangerous existence'<sup>85</sup> by photographing them. Rosler substantiates it by pointing out that social-work that utilised photographs and other forms of discourse to rectify social wrongs, was based on faulty assumption that linked social wrongs that afflict 'working-class, immigrant and slum life' (p.177) to ignorance of society. Rosler disagrees that social ills are tolerated by the system and states that they are instead fundamental to it and concludes that expectation to invoke sympathy and charity for the poor from the rich, is rather awakening of the self-interest of the privileged so they give little 'in order to mollify the dangerous classes below' (p.177).

Rosler calls The Bowery area of New York where a lot of homeless alcoholics lived at that time, 'the site of victim photography' and its inhabitants were victims of the camera and photographer. The 'expose, the compassion and outrage, of documentary fuelled by the dedication to reform has shaded over into combinations of exoticism, tourism, voyeurism, psychologism and metaphysics, trophy hunting - and careerism' (p.178). Rosler compares photographers to astronauts who entertain viewers with images from unseen places and calls them brave, manipulative, savvy, 'who entered a situation of physical danger, social restrictiveness, human decay [...] and saved us the trouble' (p.180). For afflicted people, it seems Rosler advised self-help by questioning, 'Which political battles have been fought and won by someone for someone else?'<sup>86</sup>

Like Rosler, an American critic and artist-photographer **Alan Sekula** (1951-2013) also focused on the issues of aesthetics and explored the functions of photography in the

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<sup>83</sup> Rosler, M., (2004). *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, pp.152-206.

<sup>84</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.186.

<sup>85</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.175.

<sup>86</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.179.

system of capitalist commodity exchange.<sup>87</sup> He stated that his main concern has been 'with photography as a *social practice*' (p.xi) and the photographer as a 'social actor, never a completely innocent or objective bystander.'<sup>88</sup> He also developed ideas that situated the spectator (and the photographer) in a very restrictive position.<sup>89</sup> In his insightful writing about photography one also finds statements that the "direct" representation of misery' is pornography.<sup>90</sup> He describes the deadpan style (used by Rosler in *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1975)) as a visual strategy that 'works against the often expressionist liberalism of the find-a-bum school of concerned photography.'<sup>91</sup> That though documentary photography has accumulated 'mountains of evidence' (p.57), 'the genre has simultaneously contributed much to spectacle, to retinal excitation, to voyeurism, to terror, envy and nostalgia, and only a little to the critical understanding of the social world.'<sup>92</sup> But in spite of often harsh language used to describe the documentary photography and depiction of the vulnerable people in particular, it is clear that Sekula sees the representation of the body as 'the fundamental "battleground" of bourgeois culture.'<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, according to Sontag, 'one never understands anything from a photograph.' (p.23) Photographs do 'fill in blanks in our mental pictures of the present and the past: for example, Jacob Riis's images of New York squalor in the 1880s are sharply instructive to those unaware that urban poverty in late-nineteenth-century America was really that Dickensian' (p.23), but the camera's renderings of reality 'always hide more than it discloses.' (p.23) Sontag also mentions Brecht saying that 'a photograph of the Krupp works reveals virtually nothing about that organization' (p.23)<sup>94</sup> and concludes that

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<sup>87</sup> Sekula, A., (2016). *Photography against the grain: essays and photo works 1973 -1983*. London: Mack; Kriebel, S.T., (2007). *Theories of Photography: A Short History*. In: Elkins, J., (ed.) *Photography Theory*. New York, London: Routledge, pp.28-29.

<sup>88</sup> Sekula, 2016, p.xi.

<sup>89</sup> Lucy Soutter points out that despite the 'model of rigor, complexity and politically engaged critical analysis' of photography theorists such as Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula, Abigail Solomon-Godeau and John Tagg, their 'texts can also represent aspects of prohibition and repression.' Soutter, L., (2013). *Why Art Photography?* Abingdon, New York: Routledge, p.127. Also Linfield analyses Sekula's writing as part of the postmodern critique that exudes overwhelming 'rigid negativity' and 'utter denial of freedom.' She observes that 'They insisted that even a scintilla of autonomy, for either photographer or viewer, was impossible; insisted, that is, that the photographer could never offer, and the viewer could never find, a moment of surprise, originality, or insight when looking at a photograph.' Linfield, 2010, p.11. Hariman and Lucaites, locate Sekula together with Sontag, Berger, Rosler and others who channel an iconoclastic critical attitude, as part of the older paradigm of photography theory. Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.6.

<sup>90</sup> Sekula, 2016, p.62.

<sup>91</sup> Sekula, 2016, p.62.

<sup>92</sup> Sekula, 2016, p.57.

<sup>93</sup> Though Sekula writes that about how Rosler uses the body in her video work I find that it describes well also Sekula's own approach to the representation of the body. Sekula, 2016, p.62.

<sup>94</sup> In 'Small History of Photography' (1931) Walter Benjamin writes: 'For the situation', says Brecht, is 'made complicated by the fact that less than ever does a simple "reproduction of reality" express something about

## Introduction

understanding is based on how something functions and because functioning takes place in time, it must be explained in time. Therefore 'only that which narrates can make us understand' (p.23).

I point out that such observations, of Riis's images and Brecht's reflection, also demonstrate that there are 'our mental pictures of the present and the past' (p.23) and a pre-existing knowledge, in that instance, about the Krupp organisation. Without this already existing knowledge that the spectator (Brecht/Sontag) carries within herself, she would not be able to make such statements. Though Sontag writes about photographs as filling in blanks in our mental images and importance of the storytelling, nevertheless it appears that these activities are also somehow disconnected from the process of reading and interpreting the image. Thus this is another example that demonstrates that pre-existing knowledge that the spectator carries within herself takes an active part in deciphering the image, but somehow this ability also stays unconscious or unimportant to Sontag. Also, Sontag states that 'the limit of photographic knowledge of the world is that, while it can goad conscience, it can, finally, never be ethical or political knowledge. The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist' (p.23/24).

I want to note some contradictions that relate to the spectator's response. The first shows that the spectator might not lose affect, despite at first not knowing what she sees, and not losing the strength of the experience over years, as it was in her own story about seeing concentration camp photographs:

For me, it was photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau which I came across by chance in a bookstore in Santa Monica in July 1945. Nothing I have seen—in photographs or in real life—ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully what they were about. What good was served by seeing them? They were only photographs—of an event I had scarcely heard of and could do nothing to affect, of suffering I could hardly imagine and could do nothing to relieve. When I looked at those photographs, something broke. Some limit had been reached, and not only that of horror; I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feelings started to tighten; something went dead; something is still crying.<sup>95</sup>

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reality. A photograph of the Krupp's factory or AEG reveals next to nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional. The reification of human relations, as in, for example, the factory, no longer makes these explicit. Effectively it is necessary "to build something up", something "artificial", "posed". Benjamin, W., (2015). *On Photography*. Edited and translated by Ester Leslie. London: Reaktion Books, pp.91-92.

<sup>95</sup> Sontag, 2002, pp.19-20.

Another is about the already 'prepared spectator' who reads photographs that are more than twenty years old. Sontag notes that the political understanding that many Americans came to in the 1960s<sup>96</sup> allowed them to recognise the photographs Dorothea Lange took in 1942 of Nisei on the West Coast being transported to internment camps 'for what it was - a crime committed by the government against a group of American citizens.' (p.17) Or as in the example with Brecht and the Krupp works,<sup>97</sup> that knowledge is already in the spectator, in this case Brecht, otherwise such an example might not make sense for Brecht himself. Unfortunately, Sontag did not develop any further narrative about these observations about the spectator and the possible use of photos. These examples contradict the proposition that the image cannot tell the story or give information and therefore spectators are demoralised, anaesthetised voyeurs. But who they could be otherwise is not a question yet.

In her late essays written in direct response to 9/11 Sontag reevaluated her early vision. In the essay 'War and Photography' (2001) she disagreed with her previous views about the anaesthetizing effect of horrific photographs.<sup>98</sup> She stated a change of mind and disagreed that repeated exposure to these images makes the event less real and the spectator anaesthetized<sup>99</sup> and corrupt.<sup>100</sup> The question she poses to herself is different - 'What .. is the evidence that photographs have less and less impact, that our culture of spectacle neutralizes the moral impact of photographs of real horrors, that we are simply creating a culture of callousness?'<sup>101</sup> Sontag, observes the increase in the levels of violence in mass culture and makes a distinction between entertaining violence and one that is designated as 'real', and doubts that spectators are equally detached watching them.

Also, Sontag renounces the possibility of an 'ecology of images' that could ration horror, in order to better manipulate the spectator's responses. She suggests that possibly images have become more powerful<sup>102</sup> and that this could be due to the excessive amount of

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<sup>96</sup> Sontag, 2002, p.17.

<sup>97</sup> Sontag, 2002, p.23.

<sup>98</sup> Sontag, S., (2001). War and Photography. In: Owen, N., (ed.) *Human rights, human wrongs: the Oxford Amnesty lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. As an important experience that prompted her to re-evaluate her position on the effectiveness of photos was time spent together with journalists 'in the middle of a much-photographed war,' while she was part-time living in Sarajevo during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.265.

<sup>99</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, pp.262-265.

<sup>100</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.267.

<sup>101</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.265.

<sup>102</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.269. As possible evidence is provided the creation of many NGOs.

images and that spectators respond to them more.<sup>103</sup> Thus, she restores the value of the photographic image of atrocity, nevertheless, she still claims that they are only tokens, that 'cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer.'<sup>104</sup> Their main function is to help to keep these events in the spectator's memory. Sontag reiterates her earlier statements that photographs cannot do the moral or the intellectual work for us. But they can start us on our way.<sup>105</sup> Further revisions manifest themselves in the essay 'Looking at War' (2002), the book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004)<sup>106</sup> and in 'Regarding the Torture of Others' (2004)<sup>107</sup> that was a response to Abu Ghraib photographs.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, in 2002 Sontag still describes all spectators who cannot help or learn from it as voyeurs:

But there is shame as well as shock in looking at the closeup of a real horror. Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of this extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it—say, the surgeons at the military hospital where the photograph was taken—or those who could learn from it. The rest of us are voyeurs, whether we like it or not.<sup>109</sup>

To sum up, I pointed to Sontag's statements that display many restrictions placed on the photographic image (and particularly on the photograph of the violated body), its photographer and the spectator. Despite contradicting examples from her own personal experience<sup>110</sup> and observation<sup>111</sup> in her early writing she stated that photographs of suffering desensitise spectators, deaden their conscience and are the basis for compassion fatigue. Despite her knowledge about political and social processes she did not question the actual political capability of the spectator to achieve (noticeable, immediate) change. She did not address the propaganda that was constant in the media that affected popular opinion. Moreover, the possibility of immediately recognisable

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<sup>103</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.271.

<sup>104</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.272.

<sup>105</sup> Sontag, 2001, War and Photography, p.273.

<sup>106</sup> Sontag, S., (2004). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin Books; Sontag, S., (2002). Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death. *The New Yorker*. December 9. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/12/09/looking-at-war>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>107</sup> Sontag, S., (2004). Regarding the Torture of Others. *New York Times Magazine*. May 23. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>> [Accessed 31 May 2017]. [pp.24-30](#).

<sup>108</sup> For more detailed analysis of Sontag's ideas expressed in the 1970s and after 9/11 see - Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, pp.7-10 and Butler, 2010, pp.65-72.

<sup>109</sup> Sontag, S., (2002). Looking at War: Photography's view of devastation and death. *The New Yorker*, December 9.

<sup>110</sup> Sontag, 2002, p.19-20.

<sup>111</sup> Sontag, 2002, p.17.

outcome of political action is not doubted even in her late writings after 9/11. There are some changes in Sontag's thinking before and after 2001. After 9/11 she suggests, 'Let the atrocious images haunt us'<sup>112</sup> but they are still seen as mute tokens, that help to focus attention on some events. The term 'frame' that Sontag uses in 2001 seems to describe only the physical frame of the photograph without invoking the many levels of censorship and interpretation taking place already in the framing, (that will be explored by Butler and Azoulay). That said, in the essay written in 2004 on Abu Ghraib photographs Sontag seems cardinally reformulating what photographic image is and what interpretative possibilities it has. She states, 'the photographs are us', because they represent 'the fundamental corruptions of any foreign occupation together with the Bush administration's distinctive policies.'<sup>113</sup>

There are two more ideas that I point out as relevant for the gap in the field of knowledge. Some critics and artists announced that images of atrocity have lost the power they once had. Moreover, it was claimed that there is the intrinsic 'failure at the heart of the photograph of suffering.' **David Levi Strauss** (1953) in the essay 'A Sea of Griefs is not a Proscenium: The Rwanda Projects of Alfredo Jaar'<sup>114</sup> (1998) writes that epitaphs that replace photographs in Alfredo Jaar's *Real Pictures* (1995) are 'the inscriptions [...] in memory of *images*, and the power that images once had in us.'<sup>115</sup> Strauss writes that despite the images from the Rwandan genocide illustrating news stories, no one read the news stories, because 'If they had read them, they would have demanded that something be done to stop the killing. They did, however, look at the images. Why didn't people respond to these images with outrage, and demand political action?'<sup>116</sup> He explains it partly by the change in politics of images that has eroded 'their effectiveness, and their power to elicit action.'<sup>117</sup> This erosion has been happening for a while, but 'there has always been something about "real pictures" of real violence that undercuts their political effect, and separates them from experience.'<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Sontag, 2004, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p.102.

<sup>113</sup> Sontag, 2004, *Regarding the Torture of Others*.

<sup>114</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2003). *Between the eyes: essays on photography and politics*. New York: Aperture, pp.79-105.

<sup>115</sup> Strauss, 2003, p.93.

<sup>116</sup> Strauss, 2003, p.81.

<sup>117</sup> Strauss, 2003, p.81.

<sup>118</sup> Strauss, 2003, p.81.

**Elaine Scarry** (1946) argues that the American population has lost any part in military decisions<sup>119</sup> (and therefore even dissent has become irrelevant (or almost irrelevant))<sup>120</sup> and that civilians are ‘infantilized and marginalized’<sup>121</sup> and the best way to end ‘present infantilized position’ would be ‘to regain the actual powers of military and civil deliberation.’<sup>122</sup> Scarry writes at the time of the Gulf War and bases her comments on social contract theory. She carefully looks at the American Constitution and compares it with the events that took place before the war was started. She maintains that in the United States the Constitution sets out two constitutional safeguards. It requires a congressional declaration of war, that since World War II, has not happened. Neither in Korea, Vietnam, nor in Central America or in Iraq. And the consultation of the population that is implied by the Second Amendment, and the following authorisation by the whole population for ratifying decisions taken by the country’s leadership. Scarry concludes that as these two constitutional safeguards have been lost, America has become a military monarchy where the president acts alone and where neither Congress nor the population has any part in military decisions. This fact leads her to conclude that ‘to lose the exercise of military authority is to lose our civil authority as well.’<sup>123</sup> She indicates an interesting fact that women never had full military rights, and now men as well are disempowered.<sup>124</sup> But Scarry does not question examples preceding the Korean War and the functioning of these rights.

In addition, Scarry observes another relevant disappearance that takes place at the time of the Gulf War. She writes, that ‘there were no bodies of the enemy, no photographs of bodies, no verbal narratives about bodies, no verbal counts of bodies. [...] the body disappears, the vulnerable human body that can be injured, the bodies of the Iraqi population.’ The media instead provided citizens with spectacular war coverage. As a protection against this infantilised position, Scarry suggests to regain the actual powers of military and civil deliberation.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Scarry, E., (1993). Watching and authorizing the Gulf War. In: Garber, M., Matlock, J., and Walkowitz, R.L., (eds.) *Media Spectacles*. London: Routledge, pp.57-73.

<sup>120</sup> Scarry, 1993, p.59.

<sup>121</sup> Scarry, 1993, pp.59-61.

<sup>122</sup> Scarry, 1993, p.69.

<sup>123</sup> Scarry, 1993, p.58.

<sup>124</sup> Scarry, 1993, p.59.

<sup>125</sup> Scarry, 1993, p.69.

**Susie Linfield** has challenged most of the ideas stated about the photographs of violence by Sontag, Rosler, Sekula, Berger, Barthes and many others who had been very critical and restrictive about such images and their viewers' response possibilities.<sup>126</sup>

Nevertheless Linfield agrees that there is the intrinsic 'failure, at the heart of the photograph of suffering.' (p.33) Linfield writes that 'there is no doubt [...] that photography has, more than any other twentieth-century medium, exposed violence - made violence *visible* - to millions of people all over the globe. Yet the history of photography also shows just how limited and inadequate such exposure is: seeing does not necessarily translate into believing, caring, or acting. That is the dialectic, and the failure, at the heart of the photograph of suffering.'<sup>127</sup>

To sum up, Sontag's statements suggest that images of suffering lose their power with repeated viewing, become banal, less real and anaesthetize the spectator. They reinforce alienation and make one less able to react in real life (Sontag, 2002, p.41). Moreover, the particular qualities and intentions of photographs are 'swallowed up' (Sontag, 2002, p.21) by passing time and instead are overtaken by an aesthetic content. Berger's avoidance to explore his crucial observation of the 'lack of political freedom' (Berger, 2013, p.33) and that in the existing political system there is 'no legal opportunity to effectively influence the conduct of wars waged in our name' (Berger, 2013, p.33), instead focusing on the 'double violence of the photographed moment' (Berger, 2013, p.33) that hinders this realisation. Berger does not confront his own understanding in spite of photographic images (and also their absence from the news. He invokes his own mental photographs). Photographs and also their absence had not blocked his own understanding. Also, Rosler and Sekula do not confront their own understanding and dissent despite photographic images. They live in the culture of imperialism that 'breeds an imperialist sensibility in all phases of cultural life'<sup>128</sup> and manage to disagree. Scarry's argued observation of the loss of the say in military decisions. Strauss's and Berger's detection of change in the politics of images that has eroded 'their effectiveness and power to elicit action' (Strauss, 2003, p.81). Moreover, Strauss's and Jaar's announcement that images of atrocity have lost the power they once had. Lastly, Strauss and Linfield's claim that there is the intrinsic 'failure at the heart of the photograph of suffering' (Linfield, 2010, p.33; Strauss, 2003, p.81.). These ideas,

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<sup>126</sup> Linfield, S., (2010). *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>127</sup> Linfield, 2010, p.33.

<sup>128</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.191. Arguably, such critique can be seen as a critique of the prevalent ideas in the surrounding culture.

observations, arguments and omissions mark the gap in the field of knowledge and highlight that the political self<sup>129</sup> and its expected role in Western democracies, namely, a person's ability to take part in decision making in regards to grave military or social matters, until recently has been mainly ignored and taken for granted in the photographic discourse. Little attention has been devoted to explore further these realisations.

Instead these accepted military rights and responsibilities that also carry with them civil rights, have affected photographic discourse of political art because they have been the uncontested basis of arguments about the loss of power and failure of the photographs of atrocity (socially sanctioned violence). In addition, these politically aware and active critics often take their own understanding for granted. It is some kind of an unconscious field that was not questioned and explored further. What was questioned and blamed for 'failures' was the photographic image, its makers, and their spectators. Faults were sought and found there, thus creating photographic discourse with specific problems that were described above.

Lastly, Sontag, Berger, Rosler, Sekula and others have raised important questions about the photograph of violence and its spectatorship, I suggest that their writings could be regarded also as one of the pre-histories of the re-evaluation of the politics of democracy and art that is usually linked to the late 1980s.<sup>130</sup>

### ***The photograph of the violated body and its spectatorship differently***

Many writers, art critics and artists in order to address 'failures' or to reformulate spectatorship have proposed and developed contrasting terms and approaches such as 'slow looking',<sup>131</sup> 'empathic vision',<sup>132</sup> 'carnal knowledge',<sup>133</sup> 'to watch' the photograph,<sup>134</sup> 'seeing in the dark'.<sup>135</sup> Some of these responses operate within the critical framework set

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<sup>129</sup> Hillman, J., (1994). "Man is by nature a political animal" or: patient as citizen. In: Shamdasani, S., and Münchow, M., (eds.) *Speculations after Freud: psychoanalysis, philosophy, and culture*. London: Routledge, pp.27-40.

<sup>130</sup> McKee, Y., (2017). *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*. London, New York: Verso, pp.36-83.

<sup>131</sup> Bal, M., (2007). The Pain of Images. In: *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*. Reinhardt, M., Edwards, H., Dugganne, E., (eds.). Williamstown, MA ; Chicago: Williams College Museum of Art in association with the University of Chicago Press.

<sup>132</sup> Bennett, J., (2005). *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, And Contemporary Art*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

<sup>133</sup> Sobchack, V., (2004). *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

<sup>134</sup> Azoulay, A., (2008). *The civil contract of photography*. New York; London: Zone, p.14.

<sup>135</sup> Solnit, R., (2014). The Visibility Wars. In: *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, pp.298-310; Weizman, E., (2015). *Strikeout: the Material Infrastructure of the*

by Sontag and likeminded. They explore possibilities within the framework set by those assumptions, trying to expand the spectator's empathy, to revive her ability to see but at the same time to restrict the type of response that they expect to follow the act of seeing. For example, **John Taylor** in *Body Terror* (1998)<sup>136</sup> despite questioning ideas of image surfeit, voyeurism and compassion fatigue as dubious assumptions, nevertheless relates the following terms to looking at gruesome photographs: shame, enthrallment, gawping, staring, peeping, etc. that do not encourage the spectator to look. **Jill Bennett** in *Empathic Vision* (2005)<sup>137</sup> explores the role of affect in viewing images and pays attention to viewing conditions that can lead to a 'failure to witness', suggesting the 'phenomenon of "compassion fatigue."' <sup>138</sup> In *Practical Aesthetics* (2012)<sup>139</sup> Bennett continues to track what influences affect and what prevents 'expression of sentiment.' She explores 'how criticism might bridge the gap between image and action.'<sup>140</sup> **Mieke Bal** in 'The Pain of Images' interrogates her own response to a photograph of an emaciated man and considers productive ways to think about political art, that she finds as the only justifiable way for such art to exist at all.<sup>141</sup> **Alfredo Jaar** in *The Rwanda Project* attempted to create different representational strategies to represent the Rwandan genocide. At the time of the genocide in 1994 he thought that the spectator has failed to see what was happening and therefore his intention was to revive the spectator's ability to see.<sup>142</sup>

Many writers directly engage in the dialogue and disagreement with some of the ideas in Sontag's writings on photography. For instance, in contrast to Sontag's and her followers' ideas, **Robert Hariman**<sup>143</sup> (1951) and **John Louis Lucaites**<sup>144</sup> (1952) work on developing a new discourse on photography as a public art for the twenty-first century and argue for more robust forms of civic spectatorship.<sup>145</sup> They develop a conception of photography as

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Secret. In: *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* / Black, C. and Clark, E. New York: Aperture, pp.285-288.

<sup>136</sup> Taylor, J., (1998). *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>137</sup> Bennett, J., (2005). *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, And Contemporary Art*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

<sup>138</sup> Bennett, 2005, pp.63-64.

<sup>139</sup> Bennett, J., (2012). *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects and Art after 9/11*. London: I.B. Tauris.

<sup>140</sup> Bennett, 2012, pp.160-190.

<sup>141</sup> Bal, 2007, p.95.

<sup>142</sup> It often seems that failure is a crucial and relevant aspect of Jaar's approach.

<sup>143</sup> Robert Hariman is an American professor of rhetoric and public culture.

<sup>144</sup> John Louis Lucaites is a professor of rhetoric and public culture.

<sup>145</sup> Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J.L., (2016). *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, pp.4-5.

'a mode of experience, a medium for social thought, and a public art.'<sup>146</sup> They thank photographers for their valuable work providing the public with the images that are needed to sustain a civil society and also to reflect on its limitations. There is nothing wrong with photographers and the images they produce. They focus instead on the spectator and aspire to help the spectator to think about what is there to be seen.<sup>147</sup> For Hariman and Lucaites 'every photograph suggests a world that extends far outside the pictorial frame.'<sup>148</sup> They emphasise that 'a photograph captures a tiny sliver of time and space' that simultaneously reveals the social order.<sup>149</sup>

Also, **Judith Butler**<sup>150</sup> (1956) explores a photograph and its frame. In dialogue and disagreement with Sontag's assertion that photographs cannot offer an interpretation, Butler argues that framing is interpretive, it sets specific perspective. She pays attention to both, visual and conceptual frames, and how they are used to relay social norms. Notably, Butler points out that though framing does not dictate a storyline, it does restrict how and what is seen<sup>151</sup> and intends to control affective and ethical dispositions through the framing of violence. The photograph is not merely a visual image that awaits interpretation, it is itself actively interpreting.<sup>152</sup> If the mandatory framing becomes part of the story, it exposes the 'mechanism of restriction, and constitutes a disobedient act of seeing.'<sup>153</sup>

Butler's two books *Precarious Life* (2004)<sup>154</sup> and *Frames of War* (2010)<sup>155</sup> are written in response to post 9/11 conditions which include the suspended rights of citizens and expanded censorship, and also in response to the regulatory representation of contemporary war. In *Precarious Life* Butler considers 'what it means to become ethically responsive, to consider and attend to the suffering of others, and [...] which frames allow for the representability of the human and which do not.'<sup>156</sup> In *Frames of War* which was written after the tortures at Abu Ghraib, embedded reporting and the media censorship of pictures of war dead became public knowledge, Butler considers in more detail 'the way in which

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<sup>146</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, pp.2-3.

<sup>147</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.ix.

<sup>148</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, p.304.

<sup>149</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, p.287.

<sup>150</sup> Judith Butler (1956) is an American philosopher and gender theorist.

<sup>151</sup> Butler, 2010, p.66.

<sup>152</sup> Butler, 2010, p.71.

<sup>153</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.71-72.

<sup>154</sup> Butler, J., (2006). *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.

<sup>155</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of war: when is life grievable?* London: Verso.

<sup>156</sup> Butler, 2010, p.63.

suffering is presented to us, and how that presentation affects our responsiveness.<sup>157</sup> More specifically, Butler explores 'the *frames* that allocate the recognisability of certain figures of the human,'<sup>158</sup> and how these *frames* are 'linked to broader *norms* that determine what will and will not be a grievable life.'<sup>159</sup> Butler seeks to develop another kind of account<sup>160</sup> that is 'open to narration that decenters us from our supremacy'<sup>161</sup> and offers 'another vision of the future than that which perpetuates violence in the name of denying it, offering instead names for things that restrain us from thinking and acting radically and well about global options.'<sup>162</sup>

There are three themes that Butler explores that are relevant to my research: depiction of the violated body; framing of violence as interpretative process; and the effects of the image circulation. Butler explored the depiction of violated body already in the *Precarious Life* where she suggests that specific lives cannot be perceived as damaged or lost because these lives are not perceived as living. She argues that if there are lives that are not recognised as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived or lost in the full sense.<sup>163</sup> In *Frames of War* Butler explores further the cultural modes that regulate affective and ethical responses/tendencies through a selective and differential framing of violence in the context of war, and draws attention to two problems raised by such framing: the epistemological and ontological problem. The epistemological problem is following - the frames through which the lives of others are perceived or failed to be perceived as damaged or lost are 'politically saturated.'<sup>164</sup> Such frames are 'operations of power.'<sup>165</sup> Importantly, Butler points out that 'they do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance but their aim is nevertheless to delimit the sphere of appearance itself.'<sup>166</sup> Butler writes that although restricting how or what we see is a way of interpreting in advance what will and will not be included in the field of perception, but it 'is not exactly the same as dictating a storyline.'<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, the frames that differentiate the lives into ones we apprehend and those we cannot, not only arrange visual

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<sup>157</sup> Butler, 2010, p.63.

<sup>158</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.63-64.

<sup>159</sup> Butler, 2010, p.64.

<sup>160</sup> Butler, 2006, p.11.

<sup>161</sup> Butler, 2006, p.18.

<sup>162</sup> Butler, 2006, p.18.

<sup>163</sup> Butler, 2010, p.1.

<sup>164</sup> Butler, 2010, p.1.

<sup>165</sup> Butler, 2010, p.1.

<sup>166</sup> Butler, 2010, p.1.

<sup>167</sup> Butler, 2010, p.66.

experience, they also create specific ontologies of the subject. That 'Subjects are constituted through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognised.'<sup>168</sup>

Butler considers dual effects of the image circulation. The image reaches new contexts, but it also creates new contexts as a result of its arrival, and it becomes a part of the process through which new contexts are determined and formed.<sup>169</sup> Thus, Butler points out, the circulation of war photos breaks with context all the time, as in the case of the (unintended) circulation on the internet. The photos that fail to circulate, either because they are destroyed or censored, are incendiary for what they depict and for the limitations imposed on their movement. When the fact of such destruction is leaked, the report on the destructive act circulates in place of what was destroyed. Such 'leaks' demonstrate how to break from the context that frames the event and the image.<sup>170</sup>

Butler's exploration of the effects of physical and ideological framing resonates with the process of the reconstruction of the photographic event elaborated by **Ariella Azoulay** (1962).<sup>171</sup> Azoulay also examines the kind of ethical demand photographs of suffering and atrocity and their circulation might have on the spectator.<sup>172</sup> Azoulay, similarly to Hariman, Lucaites and Butler, emphasises that 'photography is much more than what is printed on photographic paper. The photograph bears the seal of the photographic event.'<sup>173</sup> In order to reconstruct this event it is not enough to identify what the photograph shows. She suggests that the spectator 'needs to stop looking at the photograph and instead start watching it.'<sup>174</sup> She uses the term 'to watch' the photograph.<sup>175</sup> This term indicates that it is

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<sup>168</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.3-4.

<sup>169</sup> Butler, 2010, p.9.

<sup>170</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.1-12.

<sup>171</sup> Ariella Azoulay (1962) is an Israeli art curator, film-maker and theorist of photography and visual culture.

<sup>172</sup> Azoulay, A., (2008). *The civil contract of photography*. New York; London: Zone; Azoulay, A., (2012).

*Civil imagination: a political ontology of photography*. Translated by Louise Bethlehem. London; New York: Verso.

<sup>173</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>174</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>175</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14. For example, in the case of the collaboration of Taryn Simon and Brian de Palma, the photographic image "Zahra/Farah" (2008, 2009, 2010) was made for the movie and is shown at the end of this movie. This censored event that was kept secret by the authorities was made into a movie by Brian de Palma. Controversial "Redacted" (2007) is a reconstruction of the rape and murder of a 15-year old Iraqi girl by American soldiers in Samarra in 2006. The movie and its director were severely criticised for exposing such atrocity. The photographic image made by Simon had further life as it was exhibited over years and accrued additional stories, it accumulated additional responses. Thus this could be one example that encapsulates the strategy of watching what was before and after the event of the photograph that was the reconstruction of atrocity. (I was planning to analyse Simon's work in my thesis, but after the revision of the structure of thesis I had to abandon this idea.)

not the exact moment depicted that one needs to focus on, but to reflect on before and after that one instant.<sup>176</sup> The verb 'to watch' is linked to a dimension of time and movement that need to be 'reinscribed' (Azoulay, 2008, p.14) in the interpretation of the still photograph. She writes:

When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others becomes a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation.<sup>177</sup>

This skill is activated when one comprehends that citizenship is not just a status or possession that belongs to the citizen, but rather 'a tool of a struggle or an obligation to others to struggle against injuries inflicted on those others, citizen and noncitizen alike - others who are governed along with the spectator.' (Azoulay, 2008, p.14) In addition 'the civil spectator has a duty to employ that skill the day she encounters photographs of those injuries - to employ it in order to negotiate the manner in which she and the photographed are ruled.'<sup>178</sup> Consequently, Azoulay's main argument is that anyone can pursue political agency and resistance through photography, even those with flawed or nonexistent citizenship.

**Susie Linfield's**<sup>179</sup> approach is close to Azoulay's, as she believes that the spectator needs 'to look at, and look *into*, what James Agee called "the cruel radiance of what is"<sup>180</sup>; and that the spectator needs to respond to and learn from photographs rather than just disassemble them. Her book *Cruel Radiance* (2010) is set against the photography criticism of Susan Sontag. Linfield argues that Sontag established the 'tone of suspicion and distrust in photography criticism.'<sup>181</sup> She states that photographs bring us close to experiences of suffering 'in ways that no other form of art or journalism can'<sup>182</sup> and seeks

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<sup>176</sup> Interestingly, I want to point out that the practice of watching the photograph that Azoulay develops and elaborates in her writing resembles closely the practice of image contemplation that has been described as once widespread but now forgotten spectatorship practise by David Freedberg. Freedberg, D., (1989). *The Power Of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press; Miles, M., (1998). Image, In: Taylor. M.C., (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, pp.160-172. I suggest that it would be relevant to explore and compare these spectatorship practices that stand far apart in time but resemble each other so closely.

<sup>177</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>178</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>179</sup> Susie Linfield is an American associate professor of journalism at New York University, where she directs the Cultural Reporting and Criticism program.

<sup>180</sup> Linfield, S., (2010). *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, p.xv.

<sup>181</sup> Linfield, 2010, p.xiv.

<sup>182</sup> Linfield, 2010, p.xv.

to develop a new kind of criticism, a new response to photographs that rejects the opposition of thought and emotion.<sup>183</sup> Central to Linfield's analysis is to concentrate on photographs and 'delve into the historic contexts out of which these photographs grew - and into memoirs, fiction, and works of political philosophy.'<sup>184</sup> This method is essential to her analysis as she argues that 'when we look at a documentary photograph we look at the histories, the politics, the *world* that gave birth to it.'<sup>185</sup> Therefore, Linfield claims, the photograph is most meaningful when it encourages a deeper consideration of the "world".

Another important writer who marks the shift in storytelling is an American writer and activist **Rebecca Solnit** (1961). She intends to 'illuminate a past that is seldom recognized, one in which the power of individuals and unarmed people is colossal, in which the scale of change in the world and the collective imagination over the past few decades is staggering, in which the astonishing things that have taken place can brace us to enter that dark future with boldness.'<sup>186</sup> Without omitting grave details, political context and difficult images, Solnit focuses her attention on observations that are usually not present in the media coverage, such as solidarity of the citizens in times of catastrophes as was the case of September 11, 2001<sup>187</sup> or hurricane Katrina.<sup>188</sup> Her emphasis is on hope and change. Solnit proposes a new vision of how change happens.<sup>189</sup> In her writing and public speeches she changes the imagination of change<sup>190</sup> and develops a new imagination of politics and change.<sup>191</sup> For example one of the ideas she proposes is the idea of collateral benefit.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> As examples of such criticism Linfield mentions film critics James Agee (1909-1955) and Pauline Kael (1919-2001), dance critics Edwin Denby (1903-1983) and Arlene Croce (1934), theatre critic Kenneth Tynan (1927-1980) and music critic Greil Marcus (1945).

<sup>184</sup> Linfield, 2010, p.xvii.

<sup>185</sup> Linfield, 2010, p.xvii.

<sup>186</sup> Solnit, R., (2006). Other Ways of Telling. In: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. New York: Nation Books, pp.7-12.

<sup>187</sup> Solnit, 2006, The Millennium Arrives: September 11, 2001. In: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, pp.49-52.

<sup>188</sup> Solnit, R., (2010). *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*. New York; London: Penguin Books.

<sup>189</sup> Solnit, 2006, Looking Into Darkness. In: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, pp.1-6.

<sup>190</sup> Solnit, 2006, Changing the Imagination of Change. In: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, pp.57-62; Solnit, 2010; Solnit, R., (2011). Public speech: Rebecca Solnit on Hope, *The School of Life*, May 10. [online] Available from: <<https://vimeo.com/23538008>> [Accessed 18 December 2020].

<sup>191</sup> Solnit, 2006, The Millennium Arrives: February 15, 2003. In: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, pp.53-56.

<sup>192</sup> Solnit, R., (2017). Protest and Persist: Why Giving Up Hope Is Not An Option. [rebeccasolnit.net](http://rebeccasolnit.net), March 13. [online] Available from: <<http://rebeccasolnit.net/essay/protest-and-persist-why-giving-up-hope-is-not-an-option/>> [Accessed 21 December 2020].

Furthermore, in contrast to the notion that accumulation of atrocity images has a dulling effect on the spectator as stated in the 1970's by Sontag and others, Azoulay sees the accumulation of photographs as an opportunity. She argues that, 'the widespread use of cameras by people around the world has created more than a mass of images; it has created a new form of encounter [...] thus opening new possibilities of political action and forming new conditions for its visibility,'<sup>193</sup> thus pointing to the change brought by the expansion of photography as it reshapes all manner of political experience. Also, Margaret Olin, Hariman, Lucaites, Trevor Paglen and others explore how photographic images and their viewing create a community and produce space. Thus they focus attention on photographs that record and also perform/display something to the spectator.<sup>194</sup>

Jacques Rancière reminds that 'Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed.'<sup>195</sup> Hariman and Lucaites elaborate further that spectatorship is a civic capability that is 'similar to literacy in its contribution to the public sphere. That 'spectatorship is not a series of behavioral reactions; it is an extended social relationship that works more like a process of attunement or affective alignment than a logic of direct influence. Thus photography offers a way of being in the world with others.'<sup>196</sup> They write that public life itself is a way of seeing that has developed historically and therefore carries both older and more recent technological and political skills.<sup>197</sup> In democracies this skill of seeing is adjusted to seeing people united together in a common cause.<sup>198</sup> Another important aspect of this optic is, as they point out, the circulation of images. They argue that 'Throughout this process the images are continually subject to alteration, repositioning, and other forms of translation that reflect varied social settings, alternative media technologies, and above all, an ongoing dialectic of the individual and the collective.'<sup>199</sup> As images change, the public becomes refigured. They emphasise that

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<sup>193</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.24.

<sup>194</sup> Olin, M., (2012). *Touching Photographs*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago press. H&L, 2016, p.14; Hariman and Lucaites, 2016; Paglen, T., (2008). *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*. In: Thompson, N., *Experimental Geography*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House; New York: Independent Curators International. [online] Available from: <<https://archive.org/details/experimentalgeog0000thom>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>195</sup> Rancière, J., (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator*. London, New York: Verso, p.17, also quoted in Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, pp.14-15.

<sup>196</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.14, p.15.

<sup>197</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, p.302.

<sup>198</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, pp.302-303.

<sup>199</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, p.303.

## Introduction

words and images, both, are used as a 'means for continually making sense of the world and for adjusting one's place in it in relation to others.'<sup>200</sup>

Azoulay develops further the civil political space. She makes a distinction between three types of vision: 'ordinary, technical, and civic modes of seeing: defined by neither the natural attitude of everyday perception nor the technical discernment of expert observation, the civic spectator is one who sees through a frame of ongoing discussion about public affairs, who assumes that other spectators also are seeing and discussing the same or similar images, and who forms opinions and enters into political relationships by doing so.'<sup>201</sup> **Trevor Paglen** (1974) also elaborates on the cultural production of space and opportunities it presents. For instance, he points out that:

When I write an essay such as this, get it published in a book, and put it on a shelf in a bookstore or museum, I'm participating in the production of space. The same is true for producing art: when I produce images and put them in a gallery or museum or sell them to collectors, I'm helping to produce a space some call the "art world."<sup>202</sup>

Moreover, Paglen argues that the concept of the production of space 'applies not only to "objects" of study or criticism, but to the ways one's own actions participate in the production of space.'<sup>203</sup> Paglen (following Walter Benjamin) reminds that 'there can be no "outside" of politics, because there can be no "outside" to the production of space (and the production of space is ipso facto political).'<sup>204</sup> Consequently, his published research and exhibitions create a space of inquiry and gives 'permission' to look at what has been made invisible, allowing the spectator to consider it and to take part in the production of this new space that is also a new way of being.

In *Images in Spite of All* (2000-2001) **Georges Didi-Huberman** (1953) argues that, 'in order to know, we must imagine for ourselves.'<sup>205</sup> Moreover, '*We are obliged* to that oppressive imaginable. It is a response that we must offer, as a debt to the words and images that certain prisoners snatched, for us, from the harrowing Real of their experiences.'<sup>206</sup> Spectators are 'trustees, charged with sustaining them simply by looking

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<sup>200</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.3.

<sup>201</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.15, referencing Azoulay, 2008, pp.29-125 and Azoulay, 2012, pp.95-97.

<sup>202</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

<sup>203</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography*.

<sup>204</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography*.

<sup>205</sup> Didi-Huberman, G., (c2008). *Images in spite of all: four photographs from Auschwitz*; translated by Shane B. Lillis. Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>206</sup> Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.3.

at them.' He continues that, 'we must contemplate them, take them on, and try to comprehend them. Images *in spite of all*: in spite of our inability to look at them as they deserve; in spite of our own world, full, almost choked, with imaginary commodities.'<sup>207</sup> Photographs of atrocity are not 'useless images.' 'Far from it. They are infinitely precious to us today. They are demanding too, for they require *archeological* work. We must dig again in their ever so fragile temporality.'<sup>208</sup>

The act of looking at the images of destroyed human bodies is seen as very important activity also by artists **Thomas Hirschhorn** (1957) and **Taryn Simon** (1975). They have used images of destroyed human bodies in their artworks.<sup>209</sup> American photographer Simon who collaborated with Brian de Palma on his movie *Redacted* (2007)<sup>210</sup> in an interview was asked by De Palma if there are things she doesn't want to see? Simon responded that she wanted to see everything, that not seeing or not knowing would be the preservation of fantasy.<sup>211</sup> While Hirschhorn wrote a statement in 2012 'Why Is It Important - Today - To Show And Look At Images Of Destroyed Human Bodies?'<sup>212</sup> where he emphasised the obligation to see, make sense by seeing and be implicated. Despite unclear and most of the times unverifiable provenance, he reminds us that there is no repetition of the same, it is always another human body that is destroyed. Hirschhorn also points out the reinforcement of the phenomenon of the invisibility of destroyed human bodies since 9/11 in the West, thus highlighting censorship at play.<sup>213</sup> Seeing with one's own eyes destroyed bodies is resistance to widespread practice to reduce human losses to factual information. Moreover, it is a way to engage against war, its justification and propaganda because it is the opposite of the reinforced invisibility of the war in the West. Furthermore, it can contribute to an understanding that an incommensurable amount of human beings were destroyed. And it is an important realisation. To confront the world, to struggle with its incommensurability and coexist and cooperate with the other, one needs

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<sup>207</sup> Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.3.

<sup>208</sup> Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.47.

<sup>209</sup> For example Hirschhorn's *Superficial Engagement* (2006), *The Incommensurable Banner* (2008), *Ur-Collage* (2008), *Crystal of Resistance* (2011), *Touching Reality* (2012), *Pixel-Collage* (2016); Simon's *Zahra/Farah* (2008/2009/2011).

<sup>210</sup> De Palma's movie is the reconstruction of the rape and murder of a 15-year-old Iraqi girl by American soldiers in Samarra in 2006. De Palma invited Simon to create the image of Zahra for the movie.

<sup>211</sup> Simon, T., (2011). Blow-Up: Brian De Palma & Taryn Simon in conversation. *Zarah/Farah*. [online] Available from: <<http://tarynsimon.com/essays-videos/>> [Accessed 18 June 2017].

<sup>212</sup> Hirschhorn, T., (2013). *Critical Laboratory: The Writings of Thomas Hirschhorn*. Edited by Lisa Lee and Hal Foster. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.99-104.

<sup>213</sup> Hirschhorn, 2013, p.100.

to confront reality without distance, without looking away. In his works he combats this absence by integrating large amounts of images of destroyed human bodies.

When the image of atrocity is censored or unavailable an act of taking photographs in places and of places where atrocities have happened is seen as an act of testimony and an exercise of the rights of a citizen of democracy. For instance, artists **Edmund Clark** (1963) and **Trevor Paglen** have exposed the covert atrocities by reconstructing infrastructure of the contemporary atrocity that hides violated bodies using wide variety of materials including photographs.<sup>214</sup> **Eyal Weizman** (1970) analyses the material processes that create secrecy and interrogates the way photography can reveal the presence of the absence. Weizman argues that the infrastructure of rendition that is made visible through the physical and architectural traces and documentary traces of the research needs to be interpreted through the process of redaction. Weizman, for example, compares different censorships: the redaction which appears in documents as black lines that make the text indiscernible, to the one made visible in the photographs of buildings, where buildings themselves are not important. The second type of censorship he terms 'strikeout.' Thus buildings function as strikeouts for activities hidden in them, they perform an architectural redaction. He suggests that the network put together by photographs of ordinary things, places and the redacted documents, create 'negative evidence' where an act of redaction itself works as an evidence of illegal and controversial activity. Thus, photographs do not reveal violence, but places that hide violence, where violence has happened. Moreover, Weizman indicates two different types of violence: violence against people and things, and violence against the truth, that violence has ever happened (masking, negation and denial). In other words, photographs reveal the presence of a material and architectural strikeout. Weizman suggests that 'Given the problem it deals with, the work has necessitated the invention of new ways of seeing. What the book is starting to approximate is the extent of the strikeout and the shape of the hole it leaves as negative evidence, masking the body in pain.'<sup>215</sup>

Thus, Weizman and also Solnit, point out that censorship has 'necessitated the invention of new ways of seeing' particularly if the spectator wants to see a body in pain that is

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<sup>214</sup> Paglen, T. and Thompson, A.C., (2007). *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*. Thriplow, Cambridge: Icon Books; Black, C. and Clark, E., (2015). *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition*. New York: Aperture/Magnum Foundation.

<sup>215</sup> Weizman, E., (2015). Strikeout: the Material Infrastructure of the Secret. In: *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* / Black, C. and Clark, E. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., pp.285-288.

## Introduction

masked by 'negative evidence' (by ~~strikeout~~ that hides it in plain sight);<sup>216</sup> that the spectator needs 'educated eyes to see' and that this activity could be named as 'seeing in the dark'.<sup>217</sup>

Moreover, Paglen reveals in his research that transparency and visibility are central to democratic societies, but revelation by itself does not bring the rectification of the wrongs.<sup>218</sup> He demonstrates that when the state secrets are revealed and become public, often it is the law that is changed to accommodate these illegal activities. Nevertheless he also points out that 'the secret state only recedes when other facts on the ground block its path, when people actively sculpt the geographies around them.'<sup>219</sup> He writes about his collaborations with 'numerous people both within and outside of the secret state who are trying to do just that.' Paglen states that in the efforts of people who actively work to prevent the secret state from spreading even further he sees people practising democracy.<sup>220</sup>

To conclude, this literature review looked at changing approaches to the photographic representation of the violated body and its spectatorship. The first part focused on statements made by critics: Sontag, Berger, Rosler, Sekula, Scarry, Strauss and Linfield. It demonstrated that substantive gaps exist within the field of discourse through which atrocity images and their spectatorship were articulated. Such gaps were evidenced in a number of statements made by these critics that highlighted that the political self and its expected role - a person's ability to take part in decision making with regards to grave military or social matters had until recently been mainly ignored or taken for granted in the photographic discourse. These accepted rights and responsibilities have been the uncontested basis of arguments about the loss of power and failure of the photographs of atrocity.

It was followed by the review of relevant attempts to reformulate the dominant approaches to the photographic image of atrocity and its spectatorship. I looked at the ideas developed in response to stated failures and proceeded by examining the approaches developed by writers and artists such as Hariman and Lucaites, Azoulay, Butler, Linfield, Solnit and

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<sup>216</sup> Weizman, 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Solnit, R., (2014). The Visibility Wars. In: *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, pp.298-310.

<sup>218</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World*. London: New American Library.

<sup>219</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.281.

<sup>220</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.281.

Paglen. These approaches explore opportunities that spectators have to use these photos to create a civil society and redefine the status quo and envisage a paradigm shift. Strauss has termed this shift as moving from an attempt to expose 'the traffic in pain' to focus on public life as 'a trafficking in attitudes.'<sup>221</sup> Another relevant change related to these searches and developments is the change in storytelling. Writers such as Azoulay, Solnit, Butler, Linfield, Paglen and others retell existing stories differently, with different emphasis and from new perspectives. They create another kind of account. They tell stories of human suffering that have been hidden or are (kept) invisible otherwise, thus changing the existing discourse that has been mainly managed by governments and the media. They tell both, stories of human suffering and solidarity and cooperation.

The spectatorship practice and its possibilities have been explored from different perspectives. From Rancière pointing out that being a spectator is our normal everyday situation, that 'Every spectator is already an actor in her story; every actor, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story.'<sup>222</sup> Through to Sliwinski looking at the world spectators who observe distant disasters and atrocities, who comes to conclusion that despite the fact that images of atrocities have played an important role in making and elaborating of the human rights, nevertheless 'despite their political potential, the long history of technologically reproducible images has yet to secure the practical social and political effects they are asked to procure.'<sup>223</sup> And to Paglen who points out that while researching and writing his book, he met numerous people 'both within and outside of the secret state' who practised democracy.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2014). *Words not spent today buy smaller images tomorrow: essays on the present and future of photography*. New York: Aperture, p.133.

<sup>222</sup> Rancière, 2009, p.17.

<sup>223</sup> Sliwinski, 2011, p.135.

<sup>224</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.281.

## **Chapter 1. Self-inflicted censorship: intentional absence of the depiction of the violated/vulnerable body and ghosts**

In the following chapter, I consider three art works where artists exercise self-censorship and consciously avoid showing the vulnerable/violated human body. This is an unusual practice as depiction of the vulnerable/violated body is avoided by these artists, not in order to comply with social or personal pressures<sup>1</sup>, but quite the opposite; it is executed to provoke and challenge the spectator. I focus on the new visual strategies that artists devised to critique both - visual strategies those of humanitarian, traditional commemorative, photojournalistic embedding, and their (assumed/traditional) spectatorship. These new visual strategies intend (together with other things) to reveal infrastructures of the systems that produce/d victims. I pay attention to reasons why artists chose to avoid showing the human body and what their chosen visual strategy is expected to achieve. The first work is Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974-75) where she explores ocular ethics and embodiment issues of depicting the vulnerable body in the context of the Fiscal crisis in the 1970s New York. The artist is looking at The Bowery area of New York that she calls 'an archetypal skid row' that has a long history in representations of the working class, the poor and the destitute. The second is the artist book *Plan* (1999) where artists Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfl rethink commemoration of the Holocaust by offering to consider the (historical) infrastructure of atrocity in contemporary Berlin. The third is the project *The day nobody died* (2008) by artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin where they explore censorship of the embed and resulting image creation conditions.

The central issues considered are why artists decided to avoid showing victims' bodies and what representational strategies they use instead. What assumptions about photographic image and spectatorship have been embodied? What assumptions have been held that enabled these visual strategies? What language is chosen/used to describe image and spectator's activity? Moreover, I examine assumptions held about depiction of the vulnerable/violated body. Before analysing the case studies I will look at how has the body of the victim of violence and its photographic representation been traditionally treated within Western culture/media. And why have such depictions become problematic?

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, P. and Heilmann, C., (2010). Censorship and two types of self-censorship. *LSE Choice Group working paper series*. 6 (2). The Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science (CPNSS), London School of Economics, London, UK. [online] Available from: <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/27595/>> [Accessed 5 June 2019].

With these chosen case studies I point out that the decision to avoid showing victims has led artists to devise new visual strategies that intend to make visible structures that create victims, and also question and emphasise the role of spectators. These strategies enable new modes of spectatorship and reconsider what the spectator brings to the experience of a particular art work. Furthermore, the attention is focused on the managed frame that is actively interpretive (Butler): firstly, the absence of human subject, and secondly, deadpan tone (in the first and second case study and the use of photograms and deadpan video in the last artwork). With these case studies I want to suggest that despite deliberate avoidance to show the bodies of victims, these visual strategies are defined by and infused with what is left outside the frame (Butler, Azoulay, Didi-Huberman). Moreover because of the visual strategy used, these images can be seen as staged documentary images.

I suggest that this approach of refusing to look at the vulnerable body (directly) and instead pointing the spectator in the direction of systemic violence, in other words the possibility of looking 'awry'<sup>2</sup> or 'askance'<sup>3</sup> at the atrocity, where atrocity images are available or even where photographic images are absent, is questionable in the light of the notion of 'the internal/mental images.' Therefore more importantly the 'negative' approach focuses attention on what Belting calls 'the mental images.'<sup>4</sup> He argued that 'our bodies themselves operate as a living medium by processing, receiving, and transmitting images.'<sup>5</sup> In other words, the living body is the locus of images. Thus I suggest that the visual strategy of withdrawing the vulnerable/violated body from the photographs illuminates and further complicates the role of the spectator. These photographs/photograms/video spotlight 'mental images' of absented human subjects that 'live' in the viewer (or their absence). These absented bodies are like ghosts that infuse/inhabit the spectator's imagination. I suggest that approaches of looking 'awry' or 'askance' could be problematic if there are images of subjective violence, even if there are no photographic images, because the spectator creates her own images. As Batchen points out - 'A ghost is not a ghost until it has a living audience'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Žižek, S., (2009). *Violence: six sideways reflections*. London: Profile Books.

<sup>3</sup> For example Geoffrey Batchen on a series *Lost to Worlds* by Australian artist Anne Ferran. Batchen, G., (2012). Looking Askance. In: Batchen, G., Gidley, M., Miller, N. K., Prosser, J., (eds.) (2012). *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London : Reaktion, pp.226-239.

<sup>4</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. [2001]

<sup>5</sup> Belting, 2011, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Batchen cites a line from the poet Marius Kociejowski. Batchen, 2012, p.230.

I want to point out another relevant aspect illuminated especially by the last case study - the role played by storytelling. Artists use not only descriptive captions but also reveal in interviews and their artist statements the exact things they were forbidden to photograph and in doing so subvert the initial prohibition by embed rules. I find the audio blog post of photojournalist Michael Kamber from June 2008 emblematic:

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. A few years ago the Army used to invite us to photograph the memorials. Every time a soldier was killed, there'd be a memorial ... Now those are off limits ... 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.<sup>7</sup>

I suggest that the detailed stories told about censorship of depictions of violence not only subvert the imposed prohibitions, they also connect to earlier image making and transmitting practises as we did with images before photography.<sup>8</sup> We use images of memory and imagination with which we interpret the world. This practise helps to reconsider the role of photographs (of atrocities) and their spectatorship.

Furthermore I suggest that this kind of self-censorship that is exercised without the pressure from outside (public, the state, military) or inside (two types of self-censorship) as in the case of Rosler and Lockemann (also B&C) is a unique type of censorship. Instead of concealing the violated body in order to hide it, their strategy of absencing vulnerable bodies is intended as a provocation for the spectator. Artists intend to provoke thinking, (and possibly because of that it can be questioned if this can be called censorship). It is a conscious visual strategy that artists develop to confront the spectator with questions they deem relevant.

### The vulnerable/violated body in focus

Over centuries the sight of the violated body in public space was an ordinary spectacle and it had a twofold exemplary role. For those who dwelled in a town, public executions were a sign that their town was a town of law. For outsiders the purpose of the display of

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.41. I could not open the link provided: Podcast on Battlespace project: <http://www.daylightmagazine.org/podcast/june2008>, nor <http://www.battlespaceonline.org>

<sup>8</sup> Belting, 2011, pp.144-146.

bodies was to discourage them from undesirable acts.<sup>9</sup> Punishment before the 19th century prisons and imprisonment as a punishment consisted of public infliction of pain.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless despite its main aim of deterrence,<sup>11</sup> public execution and following exhibition of the dead body was also seen as a public entertainment.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it often aroused compassion and initiated changes such as campaigns against torture, against capital sentence, and against public execution.<sup>13</sup>

Torture was practiced privately and the authorities did not hide that it was used,<sup>14</sup> but it was abolished during the second part of the 18th century.<sup>15</sup> Despite that, as Abu Ghraib and the post-9/11 system of detention and interrogation showed, torture practices are still in use in many Western democratic countries.<sup>16</sup> Notably, professor Darius Rejali (1959), an expert on government torture and interrogation, argues that after World War II Western democracies developed “clean” torture techniques that leave no evidentiary scars, such as the use of drugs, stress positions, tortures by water and ice, sonic devices, electricity, etc. These “clean” or stealth torture techniques begin in British, American, and French contexts. He argues that the ‘public monitoring and stealth torture have an unnerving affinity.’<sup>17</sup> (I look at Abu Ghraib and extraordinary rendition in the second and the third chapter accordingly.)

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<sup>9</sup> Ariès, P., (1994). *Western attitudes toward death: from the Middle Ages to the present*, translated by Patricia M. Ranum. London; New York : Marion Boyars, [1976]; Spierenburg, P., (1984). *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the evolution of repression: from a preindustrial metropolis to the European experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Cooper, D., (1974). *The Lesson of the Scaffold*, London: Allen Lane.

<sup>10</sup> Publicity and the infliction of physical suffering were the two main elements of the penal system of the *ancien régime*. Spierenburg, 1984, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> It was assumed that public executions presented a fearful example for the assembled audience. The more public the execution, the more effective was the lesson; the more awesome the execution, the longer the repressive sense of terror remained to control the passions and tendencies of those inclined to commit crimes. When a miscreant was sacrificed for the preservation of thousands, the punishment was considered humane and effectual. Cooper, 1974.

<sup>12</sup> For example for a hanging in Liverpool the railway company advertised special trains - ‘parties of pleasure,’ departing from the manufacturing towns. Cooper, 1974, pp.1-26.

<sup>13</sup> Spierenburg, 1984; Cooper, 1974.

<sup>14</sup> Spierenburg, 1984, p.188.

<sup>15</sup> Torture was abolished in Prussia in 1754; in Saxony in 1770; in Austria and Bohemia in 1776; in France in 1780-8; in the Southern Netherlands in 1787-94; in Dutch Republic in 1795-8. Spierenburg, 1984, p.190.

<sup>16</sup> At a 1996 conference on abolishing torture in Stockholm, Amnesty International’s researchers reported that ‘torture is as prevalent today as when the United Nations Convention against Torture was adopted in 1984.’ (ref.23) Three years later, at a similar conference in Chicago, Amnesty’s Eric Prokosh suggested that torture is as widespread today as at the time of Amnesty’s first Campaign against Torture in 1972. Nigel Rodney, the UN special rapporteur on torture, concede this might be true, though he asserted that the situation would be far worse if there had not been so many treaties, truth commissions, and newspaper stories (ref.24). Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, pp.21-22.

<sup>17</sup> Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

The next step was the abolition of the exposure of corpses of capitally punished delinquents. It was discontinued in Western Europe around 1800. In many countries the abolition of exposure of dead bodies coincided with the end of the *ancien régime*.<sup>18</sup> It was followed by the abolition of public executions.<sup>19</sup> Public executions disappeared almost everywhere between 1770 and 1870.<sup>20</sup> It coincided with the transition from early modern to the nation-state in most Western European countries. It has been argued that changing modes of repression are a reflection of changing sensibilities and a transformation of the state - formation of nation-state.<sup>21</sup> Because of the revulsion of the public but also because of the public order issues<sup>22</sup> the repression was privatised. Public trials were put behind the prison wall. But indirectly punishments remained public - the press delivered to the public gruesome descriptions ('the mental images') of the death penalty executed within prison walls.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, violent practices are altered to conform with historical notions of propriety. They may still be violent and cruel, but they are regarded as more apt at the exact moment in history.<sup>24</sup> In order to make state violence appear legitimate, its forms and visibilities are continually altered. As a result, certain practices and their politics of visualization or concealment (that are executed in the name of state and society) render the existence of various practices of violence reconciled with society's self-understanding as modern and civilised.<sup>25</sup>

The uses of the photographic representation of the violated body also are varied, complex and unstable; they have been used as trophies, souvenirs and also as accusation and

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<sup>18</sup> Spierenburg, 1984, pp.190-191.

<sup>19</sup> The last public capital execution in Britain took place at Newgate on 26 May 1868. On 13 August the first private hanging followed in Maidstone. Cooper, 1974, pp.170-177. The last public execution (guillotining) in France took place in 1939. Spierenburg, 1984, pp.197-198.

<sup>20</sup> Spierenburg, 1984, p.204.

<sup>21</sup> Spierenburg observes that nation-state had stronger state and police force, therefore the authorities could afford to show a milder and more liberal face. Spierenburg, 1984, pp.203-205.

<sup>22</sup> For example, executions in 18th century London were problematic from the public order point of view. The procession from Newgate to Tyburn was often seen by the authorities as a march of undue triumph for the convict. He was acclaimed by the public rather than regarded as a warning. As this occurred frequently authorities concluded that the spectacle of punishment no longer served the purpose which, it was assumed, it had always done in the past. By drawing such conclusions, Police magistrate for Westminster, Henry Fielding, decided that executions should be done a little off-stage. He suggested that being private executions would appear 'more shocking and terrible to that crowd.' Spierenburg, 1984, pp.196-197.

<sup>23</sup> Spierenburg, 1984, p.205. The penny press sold millions of broadsides purporting to give the lurid details of the crime and the criminal's own didactic verse written in the cell the night before his execution. Cooper, 1974.

<sup>24</sup> Martschukat, J. and Niedermeier, S., (eds.) (2013). *Violence and Visibility in Modern History*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>25</sup> Martschukat and Niedermeier (eds.), 2013.

indictment, a call to conscience.<sup>26 27</sup> Such photos change their intended uses by circulating and reaching new contexts.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, as Butler points out, they create new contexts as a result of their arrival.<sup>29</sup> The war on terror after 9/11 was a source of controversies about censorship of the graphic photographs. I explore in more detail the censorship of atrocity photographs exercised by the state, military and the media and artistic responses to that in the second and third chapters. I examine discourses surrounding the withholding of photos of killing of Osama Bin Laden (2011) and Abu Ghraib scandal (2004). Also, I look at the privatisation of the extraordinary rendition program and its failure to stay secret.

Though human rights activists and historians of the humanitarian movement observe that particularly representations of human suffering have been surprisingly effective in organising help and collecting resources from their viewing publics,<sup>30</sup> the dilemmas of showing or not showing the atrocity image do not lose their relevance. They resurface time and again, and are passionately argued on both sides of the debate. These exchanges reveal manifold viewpoints photographers, artists, activists, critics, journalists (etc.) take in regard to representation of violence and its spectatorship.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1949) in his 2009 book *Violence: six sideways reflections* argues that the only proper approach to violence ‘seems to be one which permits variations on violence kept at a distance out of respect towards its victims.’<sup>31</sup> Žižek uses the term ‘awry’ to describe the spectatorial mode he approves of.<sup>32</sup> The reason for not confronting violence directly but instead awry is that ‘there is something inherently mystifying in a direct confrontation with it: the overpowering horror of violent acts and

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<sup>26</sup> Though as Sue Tate argues, [ogrish.com](http://ogrish.com) forums show that two main competing discourses on the images of atrocity and the modes of their spectatorship: being deemed “pornographic” or making a call to conscience and enabling the viewer to bear witness (looking-as-civic-duty) (to scenes censored from the mainstream media because of the standards of taste and decency), these both discourses fail to elucidate the range of spectatorial positions viewers take up and their particular ethical dimensions. Tait, 2008, 91-111.

<sup>27</sup> I will focus not on private uses of such photos (trophies and souvenirs) but on their public uses, how these photos are used by artists to address other citizens.

<sup>28</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, pp.1-12; Rebecca Solnit states: “Facts themselves are political, since just to circulate the suppressed and obscured ones is a radical act.” Solnit, R., (2008). *Poison Pictures*. In: *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, p.136.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.1-12.

<sup>30</sup> Fehrenbach, H., and Rodogno, D., (eds.) (2015). *Humanitarian Photography: a History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p.16.

<sup>31</sup> Žižek, 2009, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> Žižek suggests that ‘we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible ‘subjective’ violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance.’ Žižek, 2009.

empathy with the victims inexorably function as a lure which prevents us from thinking.<sup>33</sup> In a similar approach Geoffrey Batchen uses the term 'looking askance.'<sup>34</sup> Batchen suggests that images that allude to historic atrocities deny us the stability of perspectival depth or a human subject to identify with or sympathise over, thereby making us and our potential complicity in the history the principal subject of such pictures. Such a strategy potentially turns back the gaze onto the viewer.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, I point out that the notion of the 'mental image' developed by Hans Belting might undermine and complicate positions that suggest indirect approaches.<sup>36</sup>

Žižek was involved in another interesting disagreement about the role of the atrocity representation that was provoked by the depiction of torture in Kathryn Bigelow's (1951) movie *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012). His main opponent was American film-maker Michael Moore (1954). Their respective positions can be summed up as *approval versus criticism* (endorsement versus shining a light on the 'dark seeds'). Moore argued that depiction of torture in the movie will make you hate torture.<sup>37</sup> Žižek on the contrary argued that showing is endorsing.<sup>38</sup> (It could be noted that all three artworks considered in the first chapter seem to follow Žižek's advise not to look at subjective violence, but to focus on the objective violence in the background that is the reason for the subjective violence.)

Yet another position on the role of photographs of atrocity and their spectatorship that contrasts with Žižek's position is expressed by French philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman (1953). In the book *Images in spite of all : four photographs from Auschwitz* he argues that we have a duty to look at the images of atrocities.<sup>39</sup> The initial essay was written for the 2000 Paris exhibition of four photographs from Auschwitz. In Jill Bennett's words, 'it is one of the most significant works on the ethics of the documentary image', 'a powerful ethical polemic against iconophobia and the rhetoric of the

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<sup>33</sup> Žižek, 2009, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Batchen, G., Gidley, M., Miller, N. K., Prosser, J., (eds.) (2012). *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London : Reaktion, pp.227-239.

<sup>35</sup> Batchen, G., (2012). Looking Askance. In: Batchen, G. *et al.*, (eds.) *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, pp.231-232.

<sup>36</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.

<sup>37</sup> Moore, M., (2013). In Defense of Zero Dark Thirty. [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/mmflint/posts/10151199285611857) Jan 24 [online] Available from: <<https://www.facebook.com/mmflint/posts/10151199285611857>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>38</sup> Žižek, S., (2013). Zero Dark Thirty: Hollywood's gift to American power. In *The Guardian*, January 25 [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/25/zero-dark-thirty-normalises-torture-unjustifiable>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>39</sup> Didi-Huberman, G., (c2008). *Images in spite of all : four photographs from Auschwitz*; translated by Shane B. Lillis. Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press.

unimaginable.<sup>40</sup> However, Didi-Huberman's essay provoked a heated debate. Bennett points out that the debate is much more than 'competing interpretations or readings. It concerns the status and cultural value of the image.'<sup>41</sup>

Also, there have been some notable about-turns and explorations in the representational strategies that are relevant for my research as they often explicitly reveal the line of thinking they are based on. For example (as I already noted above in the first note) American photographer and curator Edward Steichen (1879-1973) described the change in his own visual strategy in writing that:

Although I had presented war in all its grimness in three exhibitions, I had failed to accomplish my mission. I had not incited people into taking open and united action against war itself [...]. I came to the conclusion that I had been working from a negative approach, that what was needed was a positive statement on what a wonderful thing life was.<sup>42</sup>

Steichen's about-turn was due to disillusionment with the 'negative approach.' His hope that a 'positive approach' could do a better job at making the change for good was materialised in the project "The Family of Man."<sup>43</sup> A similar change, a shift to show the positive side, also occurred within the fields of humanitarian photography<sup>44</sup> and concerned photography.<sup>45</sup> Eyal Weizman (1970) points out even further changes that took place within the process of reinvention of humanitarianism that started in the early 1970s. He observes that the 'emphatic' attention to the testimony of the people who suffered is replaced by the 'misanthropic gaze of forensics, as exercised by scientists and former military personnel.'<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Weizman states that 'it also mirrors the transformation of the focus in the field of humanitarianism and human rights from a form of independent

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<sup>40</sup> Bennett, J., (2009). Review: Georges Didi-Huberman. Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz. *caa.reviews*. December 31. [online] Available from: <[http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1380#.X24w\\_C2ZO34](http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1380#.X24w_C2ZO34)> [Accessed 25 September 2020].

<sup>41</sup> Bennett, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Steichen, E., (1963). *A Life in Photography*. New York: Doubleday. Cited in Azoulay, A., (2016). Photography Is Not Served: "The Family of Man" and the Human Condition. In: Balsom, E. and Peleg, H., (eds.) *Documentary Across Disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, p.112.

<sup>43</sup> See Azoulay's polemical engagement with some of the widely known critiques of *The Family of Man* exhibition. Azoulay, A., (2016). Photography Is Not Served: "The Family of Man" and the Human Condition. In: Balsom, E. and Peleg, H., (eds.) *Documentary Across Disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp.110-141.

<sup>44</sup> Fehrenbach and Rodogno (eds.), 2015, *Humanitarian Photography: a History*.

<sup>45</sup> Ritchin, F., (1989). What is Magnum? In: Manchester, W., [compiled by] *In our time: the world as seen by Magnum photographers*. London: American Federation of Arts in association with Deutsch.

<sup>46</sup> Weizman, E., (2017). *The least of all possible evils: a short history of humanitarian violence*. London, New York: Verso, p.5.

engagement with the pains of this world in the 1970s and 1980s to a political and military force in the 1990s, and finally into a legalistic strategy in the 2000s.<sup>47</sup>

Though changes in the representational strategies used by photographers and artists are more complex than giving a 'positive' look. Magnum photographers explored different photographic approaches.<sup>48</sup> The increasing frustration and complexity of their role as witnesses led many to rethink not only the nature of the act of witnessing, but also the relationships among the reader, subject, and photographer.<sup>49</sup> Arguably these shifts, searches and explorations can be seen as part of the interrogation of the politics of democracy. McKee writes that a proximate art-historical starting point is the period starting from the late 1980s to 2011. But there are a number of pre-histories that are linked to these explorations of the conjunction of art and politics and they go as far back as the birth of the avant-garde in the nineteenth century and extend through to groups of the 1968 era such as the Diggers and the Art Workers' Coalition.<sup>50</sup>

Rosler's work *The Bowery* can be situated as being part of the pre-history of the interrogation of the politics of democracy.<sup>51</sup> Also, it is valued as a 'milestone' of Conceptual Art, that attempted to reposition the viewer's attention from the represented thing itself to the representational systems,<sup>52</sup> and it considered the conditions and limits of spectatorship

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<sup>47</sup> Weizman, 2017, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Ritchin describes abandonment of traditional, "liberal" empathy for everyone involved in war as its inevitable victim that Philip Jones Griffiths exercised in the 1971 book *Vietnam Inc.*. Instead it becomes a searing, sarcastic indictment of American involvement. Ritchin, 1989, pp.436-437. Further on Ritchin observes that there are photographers, such as Gilles Peress (and the book *Telex Iran*), that begun to implicate the reader/spectator in their own situation as reporter-observer and attempt to shatter the easy sense of the photograph as a window onto the world that can be quickly accessed. Ritchin, 1989, p.438.

<sup>49</sup> Ritchin, 1989.

<sup>50</sup> McKee, Y., (2017). *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*. London, New York: Verso, p.37.

<sup>51</sup> Durden, M., (ed.) (2013). *Fifty Key Writers on Photography*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.195-200.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Crow regards this work to be a 'milestone' of Conceptual art. Brandon Taylor calls it structuralist work and argues that this project sought 'to shift the viewer's attention from the thing represented to the representational systems themselves.' (Cited in Edwards, 2012, 6) Laura Cottingham thinks that 'This piece challenges the inadequacy of pictures and words, simply stated, to reveal social reality, especially the reality of the "other", specifically the reality of "Bowery bums".' (Cited in Edwards, 2012, p.161) She adds that 'Rosler refuses to voyeurize Bowery residents and replicate accepted stereotypes. Her project subverted both the premise and practice of documentary photography and its assumptions of realism.' (Laura Cottingham, interview, October 1991) Edwards (2012) summarises that these distinct responses all suggest that *The Bowery* represents a critique of humanist or liberal documentary photography that never rejected the documentary mode, but only tried to imagine possibilities for its radical extension or reinvention as Rosler herself stated in her essay. Edwards, S., (2012). *Martha Rosler: The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*. London: Afterall Books.

itself.<sup>53</sup> As Green observed the polemics of the meta-documentary practices of the 60s and 70s suspended and deconstructed the social value of documentary and created conditions for the re-emergence of its social and political potential.<sup>54</sup> Rosler's later work, that continued to explore homelessness and its representation, also revealed the shift to positive representation that intended to show political agency of the people affected rather than perpetuate visual stereotypes.

Another shift of focus in addressing the atrocity was noticed around the 1990s emerging in the works of art relating to the Holocaust. A new generation of artists turned away from what had become a standard focus on the often anonymous victims and instead focused on perpetrators.<sup>55</sup> The second case study in the first chapter focuses on the alternative visual strategy in the commemoration of the Holocaust. Importantly, the case studies I will discuss in this chapter highlight what Solnit puts in the following words: "the questions a photographer raises may be more profound than the answers the medium permits."<sup>56</sup> These observations/history suggest that visibility should be considered as a complex and unstable system of permissions and prohibitions. It is a shifting process, where some bodies are brought into the frame and others are left outside; and/or brought back into the frame to make them socially and politically visible and significant.

### **1.1. Martha Rosler. Challenging the representation of the Other and their uses in the art system**

Homelessness and housing as a human right are themes that Rosler (1943) has explored over years. One of the first works devoted to homelessness and its representation is her photo-text work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974/75). It was made during the 1970s fiscal crisis in New York City that, with its subsequent budget cutbacks on the social and municipal services, reshaped the city and pushed more people into

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<sup>53</sup> The aim of most Conceptual Art is for the conditions and limits of spectatorship to become a reflexive part of the work. Newman, *Conceptual Art*, p.98. Cited in Newman, M. and Bird, J. (eds.) (1999). *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, London: Reaktion, p.179.

<sup>54</sup> Green, D., (2009). *Reconstructing the Real: Staged Photography and the Documentary Tradition*. In: Baetens, J., Green, D., and Lowry, J., (eds.) *Theatres of the Real*. Brighton: Photoworks and Antwerp: Fotomuseum Antwerp, cited in Heron, F., (ed.) (2012). *Visible Economies: Photography, Economic Conditions, Urban Experiences*, Brighton: Photoworks. p. 40. (*Economies of Visibility: The City by Fergus Heron*)

<sup>55</sup> Kleeblatt, N. L., (ed.) (2002). *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery / Recent Art*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>56</sup> Solnit, 2008, *Poison Pictures*. In: *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*, p.136.

homelessness.<sup>57</sup> Then in 1989 Rosler curated a multi-part project “If You Lived Here....” This project, held at the Dia Art Foundation in New York City, comprised three exhibitions (*Home Front; Homeless: The Street and Other Venues; and City: Visions and Revisions*) on housing, homelessness, and architectural planning. It comprised work by artists, film- and videomakers, homeless people, squatters, poets and writers, community groups, schoolchildren, and others. There were also four forums featuring the participation of artists, activists, advocates, elected representatives, academics, and community members; and it was accompanied by a book *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism. A Project by Martha Rosler*.<sup>58</sup>

I am interested in Rosler’s reasons for avoiding the depiction of marginalised, vulnerable people that live on the margins of society in her early work; the function she ascribed to the photographic frame and the role of the spectator. Here I look at Rosler’s artwork where she exercised such self-censorship while addressing the issue of homelessness. I also look at an accompanying essay where she discusses the issue of depicting vulnerable people such as vagrants and other poor people: the 1981 essay ‘In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography).’ I focus on Rosler’s approach to the depiction of the vulnerable body and assumptions about its spectatorship.<sup>59</sup> I also look at the representational strategies used in her 1989 project where people affected by the housing crisis pose in the photographs, as it helps in the consideration of Rosler’s evolving thinking on the subject.

### *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems (1974/75)*

*The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* is an installation with black-and-white photographs and photographed texts represented in a grid. It was intended to be exhibited in the art space of a museum or gallery (particularly in an American context). It consists of 24 groupings of words (the last is an end title) and 21 photographic images. The photos show The Bowery, New York’s archetypal Skid Row. The words are a series of lists of names and phrases for drunks and drunkenness. In 1981 it was also published in the book

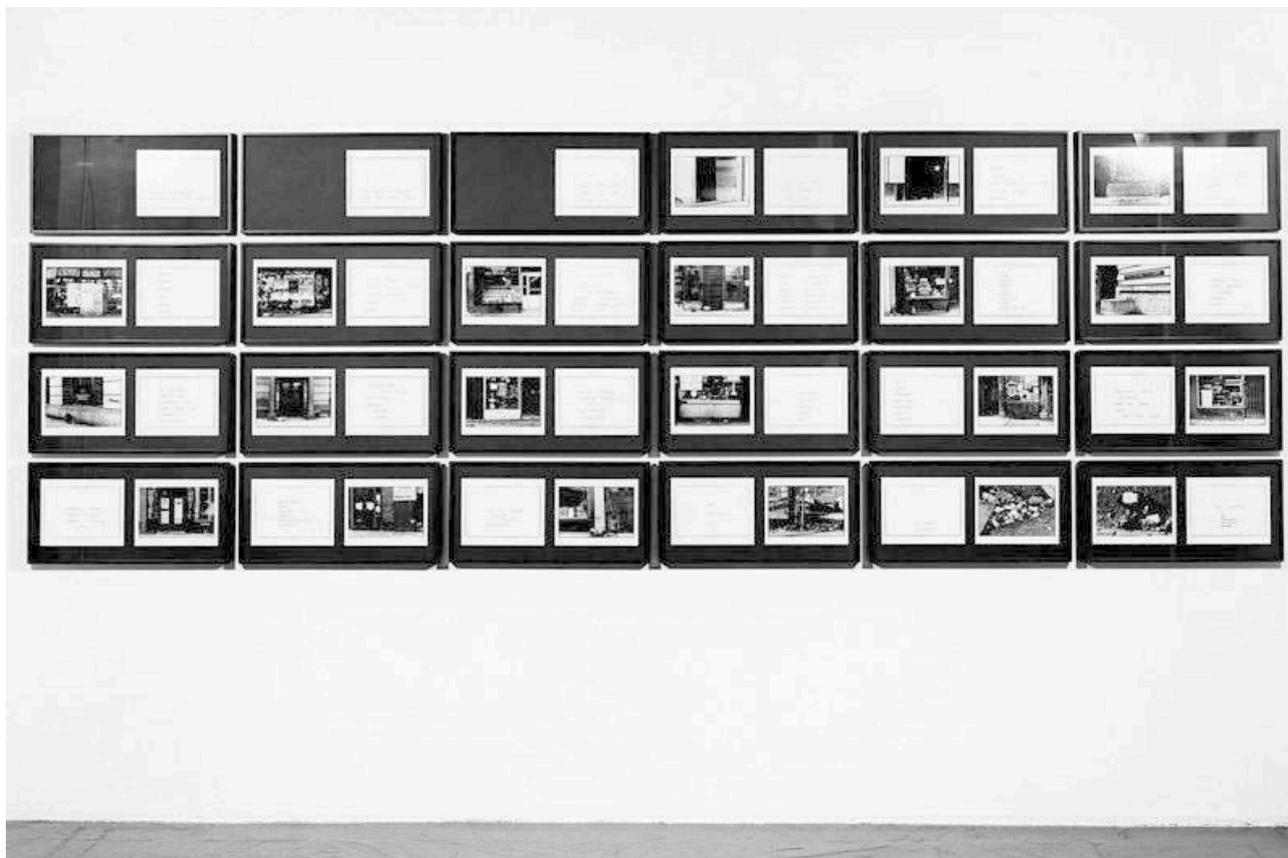
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<sup>57</sup> Holtzman, B., (2017). “Shelter is Only a First Step”: Housing the Homeless in 1980s New York City. *Journal of Social History*. 52 Issue 3, Spring 2019, 886-910 [online] Available from: <<https://academic.oup.com/jsh/article-abstract/52/3/886/4036217>> [Accessed 25 September 2020].

<sup>58</sup> Wallis, B., (ed.) (1991). *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism. A Project by Martha Rosler*. Dia Art foundation and Bay Press.

<sup>59</sup> For thorough analysis of Rosler’s *The Bowery* see Edwards, S., (2012). *Martha Rosler: The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*. London: Afterall Books.

3 Works along with *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile* (1977) and the essay from 1981 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography).' This essay was designated as a 'work' and added to elucidate the ideas embodied in *The Bowery*.<sup>60</sup>



1. Martha Rosler, *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974/1975

As the title suggests both descriptive systems - photography and language, are regarded as inadequate. That is inadequate to describe the Bowery, an area in New York she calls 'an archetypal skid row'<sup>61</sup> that has a long history in representations of the working class, the poor and the destitute. In her 1981 essay 'In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)' the artist states that 'it is no longer possible to evoke the camouflaging impulses to "help" drunks and down-and-outers or "expose" their dangerous existence'<sup>62</sup> and intends to reconsider documentary photography as a photographic practice. Her statement comes out of an argument that 'the meliorism'<sup>63</sup> of social-work that

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Buchloh: a Conversation with Martha Rosler in de Zegher, M. C., (ed.) (1998). *Martha Rosler: positions in the life world*. London: The MIT Press, p.45.

<sup>61</sup> Rosler, M., (2004). In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography). In: Rosler, M., *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London : MIT, p.175.

<sup>62</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.175.

<sup>63</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

made use of images and other forms of discourse for 'the rectification of wrongs'<sup>64</sup> is based on the failed assumption that these wrongs are tolerated and not bred by the existing social system.<sup>65</sup> Therefore reformist documentary is inadequate for its task and subsequently fails. On the one side wrongs are fundamental to the social system of capitalism, and on the other side 'with the manifold possibilities for radical demands that photos of poverty and degradation suggest, any coherent argument for reform is ultimately both polite and negotiable.'<sup>66</sup> In addition, Rosler reminds us that such images often 'awaken the self-interest of the privileged'<sup>67</sup> and that charity 'is an argument for the preservation of wealth.'<sup>68</sup>

In such context Rosler sees the Bowery as a site of victim photography<sup>69</sup> (victims - of the capitalist system and of photographer); and the spectator (including photographer) without intention (and ability) to bring change is a voyeur. Therefore the Bowery area's representation veers, she argues, 'between outraged moral sensitivity and sheer slumming spectacle.'<sup>70</sup> Such documentary carries '(old) information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful.'<sup>71</sup> Rosler argues that the meaning of all such work, past and present, has changed because 'the liberal New Deal State has been dismantled piece by piece. The War on Poverty called off. Utopia has been abandoned, and liberalism itself has been deserted. Its vision of moral idealism spurring general social concern has been replaced with a mean-minded Spencerian sociobiology that suggests, among other things, that the poor may be poor through lack of merit.'<sup>72</sup> 'The expose', the compassion and outrage, of documentary fuelled by the dedication to reform has shaded over into combinations of exoticism, tourism, voyeurism, psychologism and metaphysics, trophy hunting - and careerism.'<sup>73</sup> Consequently, the criticism of the photographic image and its usage (spectatorship practice) is rather a criticism of the American society and culture. Rosler describes the change and dysfunction of the

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<sup>64</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

<sup>65</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

<sup>66</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

<sup>67</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

<sup>68</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.177.

<sup>69</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.178. More on photography and victimhood - pp.187-188.

<sup>70</sup> Most of the journalistic attention to working-class, immigrant, and slum life' Rosler links to 'the pure sensationalism'.

<sup>71</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.179.

<sup>72</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.178.

<sup>73</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.178.

previous model, and argues for a different image, an image that adapts to these changes.<sup>74</sup>

Rosler argues for another kind of documentary that is integrated into an explicit analysis of society and that goes hand in hand with substantive social activism. Documentary that is 'committed to the exposure of specific abuses caused by people's jobs, by the financier's growing hegemony over the cities, by racism, sexism, and class oppression; works about militancy or about self-organization, or works meant to support them.'<sup>75</sup> And Rosler's 1989 multi-part project "If You Lived Here...." can be seen as a perfect example of such an approach. It was comprised of three exhibitions on housing, homelessness, and architectural planning and was made up of work by artists, film-and videomakers, homeless people, squatters, poets and writers, community groups, schoolchildren, and others. There were four forums featuring the participation of artists, activists, advocates, elected representatives, academics, and community members. These forums were followed by public discussions.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, McKee points out that it tactically deployed the resources and visibility provided by a mainstream art institution to create temporary organising platform that connected artists and activists from groups like Homeward Bound and the Mad Housers<sup>77</sup> involved in contemporary housing struggles in New York, for a common fight against devastation brought on by neoliberalism.<sup>78</sup>

In the 1981 essay Rosler used the photograph of the First National City Bank together with words: "plastered, stuccoed, rosined, shellacked, vulcanized, inebriated, polluted" that invites us to ponder on the role of the banking system as the bank's wall provides a huge background for a few unattended bottles left at its entrance. (Perhaps these two images can be seen as a condensed version of the entire *The Bowery*.) The bank's facade with its dark space (entrance?) takes up the whole frame. Thus, Rosler moves our attention from the affected person depicted in the photographic image to the ideas and values society

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<sup>74</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.46.

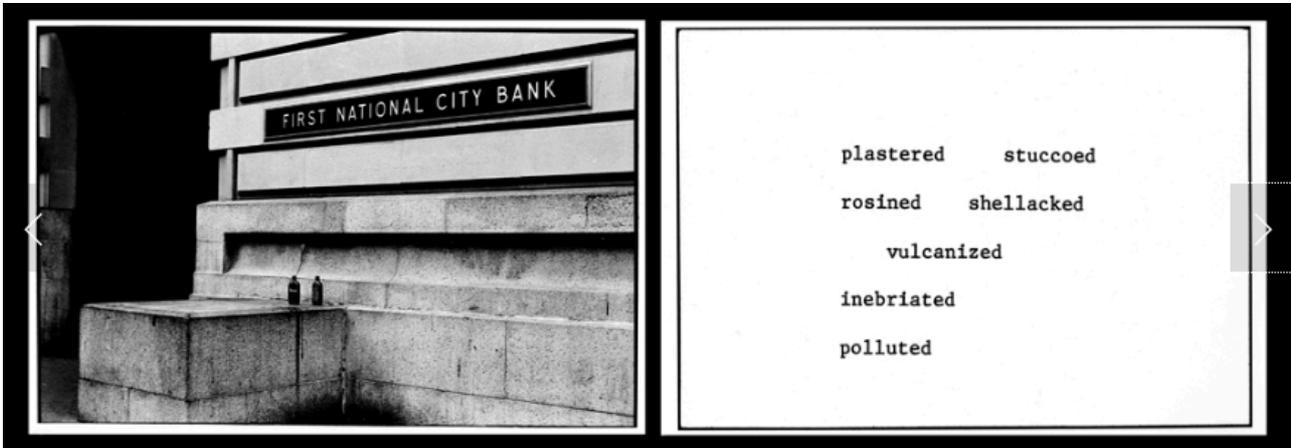
<sup>75</sup> Rosler, 2004, p.198.

<sup>76</sup> Wallis, B., (ed.) (1991). *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism. A Project by Martha Rosler*.

<sup>77</sup> Homeward Bound Community Services was a self-organised group of homeless people who had coalesced in 1988 to create an encampment in front of City Hall, protesting Mayor Ed Koch's lack of concern with homelessness. Rounthwaite, A., (2014). In, *Around, And Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound*. *Art Journal*, Vol. 73, no. 4 Winter, pp.47-63. The Mad Housers emerged in 1987. It is American nonprofit corporation engaged in charitable work, research and education, famous for providing shelter to homeless people, see [www.madhousers.org](http://www.madhousers.org)

<sup>78</sup> McKee, Y., (2017). *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*. London, New York: Verso, pp. 39-40.

lives with; and an accompanying image with words that describe homeless and alcoholics in common language and slang evoke mental images of the missing people in the spectator.



2. Martha Rosler, from the series *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974/5

### *Absented vulnerable bodies and new representational strategy*

The Bowery inhabitants - homeless alcoholics and other poor and destitute people, are invisible. This invisibility could be seen not only as a refusal to picture the already 'twice victimised: first by society, and then by the photographer who presumes the right to speak on their behalf.'<sup>79</sup> It also mimics their social invisibility. As Edwards observed, the photographs leave an impression of blockage, of barriers to sight and barricades against imaginative reach. He sees Rosler's planar vision as employed to shut out the viewer. The boarded-up, shuttered and grilled premises emphasise symbolic exclusion; and *The Bowery* is seen as a dead-pan look at the fiscal crisis of New York in the 1970s. It seems to depict the political economy of an inhospitable modernity.<sup>80</sup> Edwards suggests that 'Rosler constructed a critical engine from the seemingly neutral grid, which enables the attentive spectator to step back and reflect on the social relations of poverty and dislocation and on the means at our disposal for imagining these conditions and relations. The apparatus puts the spectator in the frame, but on this side of a line, standing with the downtrodden and defeated. It calls for identification.'<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Owens, 1985, p.68, cited in Edwards, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Edwards, 2012, p.55.

<sup>81</sup> Edwards, 2012, p.64.

The strategy of absenting bodies from photographs follows a characteristic anti-humanist turn<sup>82</sup> that was essential for structuralism and conceptual art in the 1970s.<sup>83</sup> It also explores the failure to represent the object and the subject of systems.<sup>84</sup> Moreover it utilises the form of the grid (as a way of avoiding valorisation that was associated with the single image) that is associated with conceptual art and minimalism.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, Rosler states that her work is critical of conceptual art and conceptualism's photography degree zero. For her FSA photography (American traditions of the 1930s) are an important context and reference for *The Bowery*. Contrary to conceptualists she wanted to represent the social and to employ narrative,<sup>86</sup> to foreground the apparatus, to use theatrical or dramatised sequences.<sup>87</sup> Thus, her photographs are constructed and staged, and rather constitute an expanded documentary approach. Other relevant aspects of this visual strategy besides the dead-pan mode<sup>88</sup> are centrality and anti-compositionality. Rosler saw it as a seizing of control of the discourse, the reading, and a focusing of attention: "Look here now!" Don't look here in order to go somewhere else in your mind. I thought if you are going to engage with everyday life, you have to be very careful about selecting what is to be looked at.<sup>89</sup> Questions such as "What does a person bring to looking? What is the intention of the person that is asking you to look?" had already emerged as relevant in the 1970s, but as Rosler acknowledges, 'It took a while for me to understand that just because you are looking at something doesn't mean you understand the historical meaning.... You need other information.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Rosler states that *The Bowery* is a work of refusal. It is not defiant anti-humanism. It is an act of criticism. Rosler, 2004, p.191.

<sup>83</sup> Meltzer, E., (2013). *Systems we have loved: conceptual art, affect, and the antihumanist turn*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>84</sup> Meltzer, 2013, p.19 (anti-humanist turn); p.87 (failure to represent, all we get arbitrary marks)

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Buchloh: a Conversation with Martha Rosler in Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.44.

<sup>86</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.33; pp.36-37.

<sup>87</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.33.

<sup>88</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.42. Alan Sekula points out following aspects of the visual strategy that Rosler utilised in *The Bowery*. 'The cool, deadpan mannerism works against the often expressionist liberalism of the find-a-bum school of concerned photography. This anti-"humanist" distance is reinforced by the text, which consists of a series of lists of words and phrases, an immense slang lexicon of alcoholism. This simple listing of names for drunks and drunkenness suggests both the signifying richness of metaphor as well as its referential poverty, the failure of metaphor to "encompass," to adequately explain, the material reality to which it refers.' Sekula, A., (1976/1978). *Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)*. In: Sekula, A., (2016). *Photography Against The Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973 - 1983*. London: Mack, pp.60-61.

<sup>89</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.28.

<sup>90</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, p.28.

*Visibility as pedagogical lesson & self-production of meaning or ethical image*

If in *The Bowery* the homeless (and all other) people were rendered invisible, for *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, the second exhibition in *If You Lived Here . . .*, Homeward Bound group's participants were highly visible to art audiences in Dia's gallery and also at the "Homelessness" public forum. The group had an office within the gallery installation and participated in the forum on homelessness held simultaneously with the show; and the terms of their (Homeward Bound) visibility, both - their presence in the gallery and in the photographic representation for the book, within *If You Lived Here . . .* were discussed and negotiated among Rosler, Dia, and the group members themselves.<sup>91</sup> In what follows I focus in more detail on these two aspects of visual strategy employed by Rosler in the 1989 project that is discussed by the American art historian Adair Rounthwaite in her 2014 essay 'In, Around, And Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound.' I find them relevant because it reveals a development of ideas that Rosler problematised in her earlier work *The Bowery*.

Rounthwaite observes that for the Homeward Bound visibility itself was an important element of their own participation. One of the central reasons why they agreed to be on display was a 'specific model of audience viewership' that its members' promoted.<sup>92</sup> This model saw the viewer as a pedagogical subject, who through the interaction with the groups activities would see homeless people in a more positive light, and would 'gain a new understanding of her- or himself as a site of reciprocal visibility.'<sup>93</sup> Rounthwaite argued that "education" was the most important conceptual stake for Homeward Bound and this investment in education was closely connected to the condition of being on display.<sup>94</sup> The positioning of the viewer as a learner about the problem of homelessness was seen as a pedagogical situation that reversed typical power dynamics between the homeless and the housed. Thus in 1989 project Rosler helped to increase visibility of the homeless people in the media and for the wider community, but it was done collaboratively

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<sup>91</sup> For detailed description and analysis of the participatory role of Homeward Bound group in Rosler's 1989 project see Rounthwaite, A., (2014). In, Around, And Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound. *Art Journal*, 73 (4) Winter, pp.47-63. Also [online] Available from: <<http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=6052>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>92</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014, pp.47-63.

<sup>93</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014, pp.47-63.

<sup>94</sup> Originally Rosler intended for Homeward Bound to be able to sleep in the gallery and had included beds as part of the installation for that purpose but Dia did not allow for Homeward Bound people to sleep in the space. See Rounthwaite - Interviews with Rosler, July 21, 2010, Brooklyn, and Wiley, May 26, 2011, New York. Moreover, as Rounthwaite reveals, visitors and participants reaction/reception was ambiguous - feeling discomfited by the situation, and ambivalent about whether it simply objectified the group or productively created a challenging representation, see Rounthwaite, 2014, pp.47-63.

agreeing on the terms of visibility. (Such agreed visibility is associated with the political power.)

The second aspect of the visual politics is embodied in the photographic documentation of Homeward Bound's participation that for Rosler held a pedagogical importance.<sup>95</sup> Rounthwaite directly links Rosler's attitude toward the photographic to her critique of American documentary photography, that she articulated in her 1981 article 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography),' and in the photo-text work *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–75). That in contrast to early works - 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts' and *The Bowery* that are critical works and interpret the politics of photographic representation negatively, by emphasising what documentary should not be, collaboration with 'Homeward Bound illustrates the strength of Rosler's commitment to positive representation of an oppressed group.'<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014.



3. Posed photograph of members of Homeward Bound Community Services at *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, 1989 (photographer unknown)



4. Posed photograph of members of Homeward Bound Community Services at *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, 1989 (photographer unknown)

As Rosler's personal archive reveals, for the 1989 project's book Rosler and the group wanted to use a picture of Homeward Bound sitting or standing behind their desk at the exhibition (see two images above from Rosler's archive<sup>97</sup>). Despite this agreement the book includes a selection of Alcina Horstman's black-and-white photographs of Homeward Bound members in their City Hall park encampment. These images, as Rounthwaite points out, attempt to capture spontaneously the group members as friendly and cheerful people, and that on a stylistic level these images resonate with the American documentary tradition that Rosler critiques. In contrast, one of the most powerful visual characteristics of the images of Homeward Bound that the group and Rosler wanted to use is their posed quality. Images reveal that Homeward Bound members posed together as a group for these photographs in the gallery space.<sup>98</sup> The agreement was that they did not want to be represented as "just" more homeless individuals camped out in the park. For Rosler the ethical image refuses to reduce homeless people to a stereotyped generalisation, it 'provides the jumping-off point for a viewer experience with the potential to create political change.'<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Rosler provided two photographs to Rounthwaite that represent Homeward Bound as present within its office space in the gallery. On her website presenting the 1989 project Rosler uses another posed photo. There we see Rosler herself posing together with the Homeward Bound group members.

<sup>98</sup> Rosler had a set of ten images in her possession. In Dia's archive there are two photos showing Homeward Bound members and their authorship is unclear. They might have been taken by Rosler or by the photographer Oren Slor, who documented the installations of *If you Lived Here ...*, or by someone else. As Rounthwaite reveals, these images of Homeward Bound group were discussed by Rosler and Dia to agree on how to represent the group in the project book. Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014.



5. Alcina Horstman, Members of Homeward Bound Community Services at the City Hall Vigil, Summer 1988, 1988

Though, as Rounthwaite admits, Rosler has not written about the importance of the pose directly, in her writing on photography there are various occasions of a critique of spontaneity, that might be considered the opposite of the pose. Rosler associates spontaneous-seeming photos with ‘an ideological function, in which the photograph is assumed to capture a single moment of truth, unsullied by the investments of the photographer.’<sup>100</sup> Thus, Rounthwaite concludes that for Rosler the appearance of spontaneity has an anti-pedagogical effect, in that it keeps viewers from becoming aware of the ideological structures that shape the production and experience of the photograph.<sup>101</sup> Drawing on Roland Barthes and bell hooks writing on the pose<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Rounthwaite: Rosler discusses this effect in her essay on Lee Friedlander, where she argues that despite its highly authorial nature, Friedlander’s oeuvre productively disrupts this spontaneity/truth effect. Martha Rosler, “Lee Friedlander, an Exemplary Modern Photographer” (1975), rep. *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2003* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p.115.

<sup>101</sup> In 1981 essay Rosler, identifies two “moments” of documentary photography that effectively hide the photograph’s ideological function. The first, an “immediate” moment in which an image is captured “as evidence in the most legalistic of senses, arguing for or against a social practice and its ideological-theoretical supports.” Which is followed by a second, “aesthetic” moment, when the viewer takes pleasure from the formal qualities of the image. In these two moments, proof and pleasure unite to create a powerful discourse in which aesthetic appeal cloaks the photograph’s ideological function. Rosler, 2004, pp.185-186. Cited also in Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Roland Barthes describe the pose as a process in which one actively transforms one’s body into an image. (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 10–11, 92); bell hooks writes on the significance of personal snapshots in African American life and describes posing as an act of self-fashioning. (bell hooks, “In Our Glory: Photography and

Rounthwaite concludes that, in these photos of Homeward Bound, ‘the collective pose unites the group visually into a compositional unit, and thereby conceptually into a common project. The pose claims for Homeward Bound the visual vocabulary of the team, the collaborative, the club, thereby stressing its collective organization to meet specific, clearly legible goals.’<sup>103</sup> In addition, ‘the fact of the posing articulates a relation with the viewer of the image. [...] The act of posing thus becomes the visual manifestation, in the image, of someone else’s future act of looking at the photograph. [...] it assigns privileged audiences a place in relation to the homeless people who are positioned to function as their educators, but without positing a relationship of sameness between them.’<sup>104</sup>

Moreover, Rounthwaite argues that the experiences of viewership evoked by the two sets of images (the posed ones that Rosler preferred and Horstman’s photos) are radically different. Only posed images are seen as giving the group an opportunity to engage with the process of its representation.<sup>105</sup> (Nevertheless question can be raised about the source of the new posed visuality. Was it proposed by Rosler?)

### *Mental images*

In *The Bowery* the words that accompany photos without human figures (only some odd shadow can be discerned) insist on the presence of the invisible inhabitants. They invoke, revive their images in the imagination of the spectator. In the 1998 interview with Benjamin Buchloh Rosler explained that she avoided depicting socially marginalised people who literally live on streets (also other people are missing) because *The Bowery* is infused with ghosts of the people. People are extracted partly because of the tradition (because there are people in Walker Evan’s photographs), but also because the spectator already understands what a city street is and what the Bowery represents.<sup>106</sup> Clearly, in the 1998

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Black Life,” in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: New Press, 1994), 43.) Both cited in Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Rounthwaite argues that ‘In the more formally posed, less animated of the two images, we are less able to project ourselves into the image as an imagined situation, to think that we know something about these people and what their relationships were like. The pose, to this extent, blocks a certain kind of knowledge, decreasing the image’s capacity to act as a space for the imaginary exploration of a past situation. This block is frustrating for the viewer, in that it closes down the pleasure of imaginary projection. But read from the perspective of Rosler’s approach to photography, it appears productive for precisely this reason: the posed images discourage an imaginary possession of the homeless by the mind of the curious viewer, who is no longer confidently able to think she or he holds authoritative knowledge of the people pictured.’ Rounthwaite, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Buchloh: a Conversation with Martha Rosler in de Zegher, M. C., (ed.) (1998). *Martha Rosler: positions in the life world*. London: The MIT Press, p.44.

conversation Rosler regards the spectator as an important part of the interpretive process. She points out that the spectator is already a prepared spectator - the spectator has a knowledge that can fill in the 'blanks'/absences created in the photographs.<sup>107</sup> I suggest that both, verbal descriptions and absented human figures, create/invoke mental images in the spectator and at the same time emphasise interpretive activity exercised by the spectator.

The gallery and museum provided a necessary context for Rosler's 'argument about a native tradition'<sup>108</sup> and in addition the spectator there was better prepared to view *The Bowery*. In the interview with Benjamin Buchloh she joked that, 'who cares about inadequacy of representation? The general public doesn't care about inadequacy, the art world and artists care about adequacy or representational systems.'<sup>109</sup> Though *The Bowery* was made for the art auditory and was meant to be exhibited together with other artworks in museums and galleries, it seems that the interpretive role played by the spectator and her mental images becomes relevant only in later discussions of this art work.

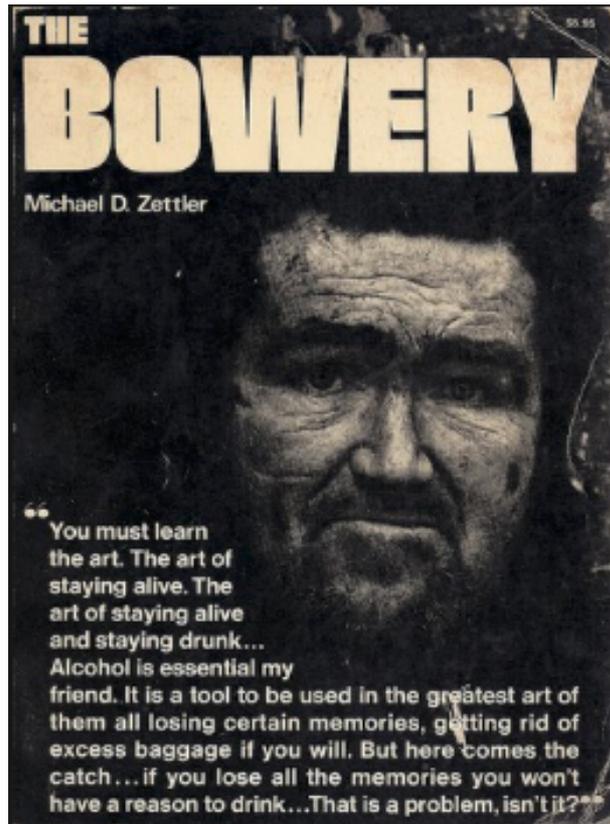
To return to Rosler's question: "What could you learn from them that you didn't already know?" This question grows out of the idea cultivated by Rosler (and also the Homeward Bound group members) that the photograph has to have a pedagogical aim. That it has to be useful. But I want to invoke Didi-Huberman's idea that photos can be seen as monuments. And even if the spectator cannot do anything about the situation of the represented person, there is a different ethical aspect there. Moreover, as Linfield and Strauss (and others) remind us, photographic images convey/communicate in ways that language cannot.

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<sup>107</sup> McKey argues that art-historical starting point when the politics of democracy are interrogated in the United States by artists, critics and curators stretch from the late 1980s to 2011, McKee, 2017, pp.37-39) As one of the artistic responses he mentions Rosler's project *If You Lived Here...* Nevertheless already in *The Bowery* Rosler stops and rethinks the American documentary tradition and its political engagement.

<sup>108</sup> A conversation with Martha Rosler in Zegher, M. C. de., (ed.) (1998). *Martha Rosler: positions in the life world*. London: The MIT Press, p.44.

<sup>109</sup> Zegher (ed.), 1998, pp.44-45.



6. Cover of Michael D. Zettler's book *The Bowery* (New York and London: Drake Publishers, 1975)

To conclude, the artwork *The Bowery* exemplifies a provocative mode. Rosler's visual strategy consists of many conscious choices that contrast with the tradition of documentary photography, such as composed/constructed frames without human figures in a dead-pan mode; photographed words and expressions from common language and slang that invoke absented homeless alcoholics. The strategy of absenting the vulnerable body was not only an ethical approach, it also mimicked their social invisibility. Rosler developed further the ethics of representation and in the 1989 project people affected by homelessness were highly visible and the terms of their visibility - both: the presence in the gallery space and mode of representation in photographs, were discussed and agreed upon before and during the project.

Rounthwaite's analysis of the photographic representation from the 1989 project revealed that an important aspect of the visual strategy was the control of the representation by the people affected by homelessness. In other words, they practised the self-production of meaning. They were able to agree on the way they were represented for the wider public. The pose was a pivotal feature in this new visual strategy. The pose was utilised to

counter the appearance of spontaneity that characterised the documentary tradition. In the earlier project *The Bowery* Rosler utilised the absence of human figure.

The shift in the approach to spectatorial practice revealed that in the later project the spectator is treated as a pedagogical subject who learns about the issues at stake. If in the 1981 essay Rosler focused on the photographic image that is thoroughly affected by ideology and therefore fails to deal with reality (therefore vulnerable people should not be objectified. Absence of people was an ethical solution to this problem), in later conversations about *The Bowery* Rosler focused on ghosts that inhabit *The Bowery*. The absence of people was explained partly on the tradition (photos with the people) but also because the spectator already understands what a city street is and what the Bowery represents. I suggested that the ghosts and appreciating the knowledge that the spectator already holds can be regarded as 'mental images.'

Moreover, I point out another development in Rosler's visual strategy of dealing with homelessness and its representation. Initially the 1974/5 installation was exhibited with no additional information, the essay to elucidate ideas embodied in the artwork is added only in 1981. In comparison, the 1989 project was an ambitious platform organising that delved into historical causes of the problem of homelessness and linked together victims and activists of the then contemporary housing struggles in New York.

## **1.2. Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfl: Atrocity commemoration and resistance to expectations**

In the early 1990s in Germany there was a public discussion going on about the Holocaust memorial that was planned for construction in Berlin. Different ideas were discussed about how Germans in Germany should commemorate the Holocaust in specific locations where acts of violence took place and also in the capital Berlin. Bettina Lockemann (1971) and Elisabeth Neudörfl (1968) took part in this discussion. One of the main ideas was to build a major memorial in the centre of Berlin<sup>110</sup>. Both artists opposed this idea on the grounds that it would become a tourist destination and a place where politicians would give memorial speeches on certain dates. They thought that such a place would easily lose its

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<sup>110</sup> This idea had been materialised since by an American architect Peter Eisenman.

real meaning.<sup>111</sup> Their idea instead was to recognise that in Berlin there were many places that were important to the conception of what consequently became the Holocaust. They wanted to 'go to those places and have memory implemented into the fabric of the city and not just one spot.'<sup>112</sup> They asked, 'How would we be able to commemorate the Holocaust in a different way?'<sup>113</sup> Their ideas were embodied in the artist book *Plan* they created in 1996.

Lockemann and Neudörfl chose 'to render visible' locations that are relevant to the Holocaust from the viewpoint of the perpetrators and not of their victims.<sup>114</sup> They researched on government agencies and ministries that were involved, on places where Jewish people were forced to move, on the Wannsee Conference where the idea was born to kill the entire Jewish population of Europe. In the process of research they discovered many locations that they did not know about before, as well as already known locations.<sup>115</sup> The two artists had some important considerations. They decided to avoid 'specific symbolic visuality - like the train tracks going to the Auschwitz gate, or commemorative plaques and sculptures.'<sup>116</sup> They wanted to show the mundaneness of these locations - 'If you don't know, you don't see anything and you won't notice that you are walking through an environment where all these ideas were generated or carried out.'<sup>117</sup> Another important decision was that the images have no captions. Only at the end of the book there is a list with addresses of all the places and their function during the Nazi era. Image and text are strictly separated to make a direct association between location and function impossible. They did not want that a picture with the caption would become 'a piece of information.'<sup>118</sup> They chose this strategy to emphasise that every place is potentially a place of remembrance.

Lockemann and Neudörfl documented the places where the ideas were formulated. Places where the administrative bodies planned the destruction, coordinated the execution. There are forced labor assembly camp sites, concentration camps, deportation

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<sup>111</sup> Silas, S. and Stathacos, C., (2015). A conversation with Bettina Lockemann. [online] Available from: <<http://www.mommybysilasandstathacos.com/2015/04/03/a-conversation-with-bettina-lockemann>> [Accessed 31 March 2016].

<sup>112</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>115</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>116</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>118</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

## Chapter 1

stations. There are Jewish institutions that were forced to cooperate with the Nazis. There are also places that are associated with the so-called euthanasia program and with the exclusion of the Roma. Photographed places represent various stages of expulsion and extermination. Though the artists located and documented places where historical facts took place, they did not use archival images, but took photographs in their own contemporary city.



They photographed chosen places so that nothing pointed to the particular events that took place there a long time ago. The places themselves convey no content. Only the knowledge of those events would distinguish one place from any other. It was important for Lockemann and Neudörfl that an emotional appeal in the picture is not supported by the photographed places themselves. The brittle appearing (deadpan) approach was chosen to deprive places of any particularity.<sup>119</sup> As Hans Dieter Huber observes, Lockemann's work 'plays with an intentional misunderstanding and with what the audience thinks they know already. It addresses the borders of the visual by challenging the borders of the media.'<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015.

<sup>120</sup> Bettina Lockemann uses this citation on her website <http://www.archivalien.de> [Accessed 9 June 2019].



In the artist book *Plan* (1996) there are 86 black and white photographs. There is no text or captions. Only at the back of the book there is a page listing the addresses and what happened at each location. It was published in 1999 by the Institute for Bookart Leipzig. The project and resulting artist book *Plan* was intended to address the German public, but the book and project installation has been exhibited also internationally<sup>121</sup> (and is available also to wider spectatorship online). The book was exhibited as part of the installation. It was placed on the table allowing careful study. On the wall next to it there was a map on which the photographed places were marked.

Though intended spectators would be already well-informed about the Holocaust, the artists wanted to avoid giving spectators information that would help to make sense of what they are seeing. They avoided presenting information that can be easily recognised. The artists wanted to reflect the idea of 'not seeing and not wanting to see what is going on.'<sup>122</sup> In an interview Lockemann talks about her grandmother who avoided any contact

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<sup>121</sup> First, in 2000 at the International Photo Biennale in Rotterdam. Then in 2001 in Dortmund in an international exhibition "new ideas - old tricks". And in 2005 in China at Pingyao International Photography Show.

<sup>122</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015, A conversation with Bettina Lockemann.

with the Jews at the time of their persecution<sup>123</sup> as a point of reference for this attitude and resulting artistic approach. Thus deadpan photographs did not have captions to guide spectators' imagination and interpretation in order to mimic conscious ignorance.

The photographs leave an eerie feeling, as they show buildings and places in the contemporary city but they are charged with the Nazi era functions. In the spectator's imagination the Nazi time is evoked back, possibly as a reminder that some of its remains might still linger on?<sup>124</sup> <sup>125</sup> There are no people in the photographs. This visual strategy alludes to the disappearance of people that this artistic project commemorates. But there is also another aspect that dictates the absence of people and censors their photographic depiction/reproduction. In German law the citizen is an author and owner of his/her appearance while the photographer is merely copying the original and must thus ask for permission to publish any portrait.<sup>126</sup>

To conclude, in this collaborative project and resulting artist book *Plan* Lockemann and Neudörfl intended to challenge the spectator while addressing commemoration of the Holocaust. The artists engaged in rethinking how Germans in Germany should commemorate atrocity. They did not use traditional visual tropes, nor historic images with the Holocaust victims. In their photographs they avoided capturing any human figure. Avoidance of using the atrocity image altogether and avoiding the depiction of the body was guided by an assumption that the vulnerable or violated body is a distraction. Also, I point out the relevance of German law for their visual strategy that was not discussed by the artists themselves. Furthermore, self-inflicted censorship of atrocity images in the situation where photos are available was used with an aim to disrupt 'easy' spectatorship.

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<sup>123</sup> Silas and Stathacos, 2015, A conversation with Bettina Lockemann.

<sup>124</sup> In her presentation at the conference in Finland in 2014, Bettina Lockemann reminded her audience that she is a grandchild of the Nazis. Lockemann, B., (2014). Talk: The Power of Place. Photographing the Holocaust Today. In: *Helsinki Photomedia conference: Photographic Powers*, Aalto University.

<sup>125</sup> In the *Dark Continent: Europe's 20th Century* a British historian Mark Mazower (1998) traces the history of Europe in the 20th century and reveals that all 3 rival ideologies - liberal democracy, communism and fascism, were very popular and despite the defeat of fascism, its popularity might have not disappeared instantly after the war. Mazower, M., (1998). *Dark Continent: Europe's 20th Century*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

<sup>126</sup> In Germany in 1907 a law was passed that granted individuals the power to control the appearance and the use of their image in public, including after death. A private subject came to exist with rights to control any photographic likeness, and their heirs would be able to exercise these rights posthumously for ten years. McClean, D., (2011). *Photography and the Law: Five Groundbreaking Cases of Photography in Litigation*. In: Beshty, W. (ed.), (2018). *Picture Industry: A Provisional History of the Technical Image 1844-2018*. SAS LUMA Arles; CCS Bard College, pp.735-738.

Instead, the artists documented buildings and locations that were relevant for the execution of the Holocaust. These places were photographed in a dead-pan mode in the contemporary city of Berlin. The artists did not make it easy and fast reading. They avoided visual and verbal supplements. There are no captions or descriptions alongside the photos (reserving them for the end of the book) thus emphasising the uncertainty of what is being seen. Also the compositions used in the photographs do not make it explicit what is the main object in them. Often it is not clear if that is a building or an open space that is the main object in the frame. Such a visual strategy further questions the Holocaust and its memory.

Lastly, by avoiding the depiction of atrocity - the artists intended to move attention away from the victim to the perpetrators and the infrastructure of the atrocity. They moved attention from the resulting atrocity to the earlier events in the unfolding of the Holocaust, to its infrastructure that was created to execute the extermination/atrocity. Thus they changed the perspective not only of how atrocity is traditionally commemorated, but changed the topology of atrocity commemoration itself from one symbolic place (and images of victims displayed in that place) to spreading reminders throughout the contemporary city. Also, the title 'Plan' makes references to the topographical and to the management and planning level.

7. Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfl, Güterbahnhof Grunewald, Deportationsbahnhof, from the series *Plan*, 1999

8. Bettina Lockemann and Elisabeth Neudörfl, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Referat IV B-4 (Eichmann), Kurfürstenstraße 115-116, from the series *Plan*, 1999

### 1.3. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin. The strategy of disclosure

The overarching issue artists Adam Broomberg (1970) and Oliver Chanarin (1971) explore in the project *The day nobody died* (2008) is how representation is produced in the embed conditions.<sup>127</sup> They were deeply concerned about 'a sanitised view of the so-called War on Terror' that the embedding system produced<sup>128</sup> and questioned the ambiguous role of the photojournalist as professional witness<sup>129</sup> and photography as evidence.<sup>130</sup> Artists organised their own embedding as photojournalists with British MoD and decided to collude and expose the process of collusion.<sup>131</sup> Their stated aim was to resist or to interrupt the narrative the army would have liked them to describe.<sup>132</sup> Thus this work addresses censorship of the embedding system, including the prohibition on photographing violated bodies. I consider artworks that focus on making visible censorship in the next chapter. Here, in this chapter, I consider two aspects of this work that I find relevant in the context of self-censorship. The first is the statement by the artists that the most subversive way to engage for them felt 'to not show anything,'<sup>133</sup> and I look at the visual strategy they adopted, that of captioned photographs and video. The second is the role played by verbal descriptions of human losses that describe exact things they were forbidden to photograph.

In June of 2008 both artists were embedded as photojournalists with British Army units on the front line in Helmand Province in Afghanistan. Following this embedding they made a series of works *The Day Nobody Died*. The works comprise 13 captioned photographs and 23 minutes long video.<sup>134</sup> The video follows a parcel of a sealed, lightproof box of photographic paper (a roll 50 meters long and 76.2 cm wide) from their studio in London to the front-line in Helmand Province as it is carried around by the military personnel and its journey back to London.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Stallabrass, J. (ed.), (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and The War of Images*. Brighton: Photoworks, p.134.

<sup>128</sup> Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O., (2008). Artists' statement for the exhibition "The day nobody died." The Barbican Art Gallery, December 4. [online] Available from: <<http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text-2/https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56e1e3e24d088e6834d4fbf4/t/591c28adb8a79bb9b2d9cded/1495017647002/ARTICLE+05+-+The+Day.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Jan 2019].

<sup>129</sup> Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died.

<sup>130</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, pp.132-134.

<sup>131</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, pp.135-137.

<sup>132</sup> Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died.

<sup>133</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.134.

<sup>134</sup> Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O. (2008). Video: The Day Nobody Died. youtube, May, 18, 2017 [online] Available from: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHLtEicCkZ8&t=585s>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>135</sup> Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O., (2012). What is Conceptual Photography? (part 3), SOURCE Photographic Review, Sep 18 [online] Available from: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TvpXG9fLqo>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020]; Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, pp.130-142.

*Visual strategy - decision 'to not show anything'*

The embed agreement specifies what can and what cannot be represented.<sup>136</sup> At the time of their embedding the rule that specifies depiction of dead or wounded soldiers and Marines was updated<sup>137</sup> so that it was illegal to take any photographs of anyone who was killed or wounded unless they had prior written form of consent.<sup>138</sup> Thus the injured soldiers, dead soldiers, the morgue, the hospitals, officer's tents, the results of the enemy fire, and anything that resembles a sign of war was out of their reach.<sup>139</sup> For Broomberg and Chanarin to make radical work in a situation of censorship is to construct a two-pronged attack. The first strategy is to display images that the media is not prepared to show, to show the reality of the war and the physical effects it has on the body.<sup>140</sup> The other strategy is to withhold images. In other words - to collude, but to expose that process of collusion.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> The initial embed rules are provided in Katovsky, B. and Carlson, T. (2003). *Embedded: The Media War in Iraq*. The Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, pp. 401-17.

<sup>137</sup> The rule 4.H.1. Media representatives will be reminded of the sensitivity of using names of individual casualties or photographs they may have taken which clearly identify casualties until after notification of the NOK and release by OASD(PA). Cited in Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.103.

<sup>138</sup> Photojournalist Ashley Gilbertson in an interview with Stallabrass in 2008 in Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.103.

<sup>139</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.133; Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died.

<sup>140</sup> As an example they mention Thomas Hirschhorn's 18-foot-long banner showing the effects of modern munitions on the human body (Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.135).

<sup>141</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, pp.135-137.



9. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008



10. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

To comply with and also to expose embed restrictions the artists adopted their second strategy 'to not show anything.'<sup>142</sup> Although they do not show what they assume is expected from them - 'spectacle, images the public and photo-editors demand: like a

<sup>142</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.134.

soldier silhouetted against a desert sunset'<sup>143</sup> they nevertheless created images. It was important for them to create images that were 'different.'<sup>144</sup> In response to each event that would typically be recorded and disseminated in the media (and also to a series of more mundane moments, such as a visit to the troops by the Duke of York and a press conference), they unrolled a six/seven meter section of the paper and exposed it to the sun for 20 seconds. Importantly, in their visual strategy the mandatory framing becomes part of the story.<sup>145</sup> The video follows their journey and reveals to the spectator how the military personnel lead them, how the photographs are made, and also how soldiers restrict their filming. As a result the mandating of perspective that defines their embed conditions is made visible. Also, in their interviews and written statements they discuss and reveal conditions of embedding that forcefully framed what they could and could not do while on embed with the British forces. Butler argues that such a strategy where the photograph<sup>146</sup> 'yields its frame to interpretation', also 'opens up to critical scrutiny the restrictions on interpreting reality. It exposes and thematizes the mechanism of restriction, and constitutes a disobedient act of seeing.'<sup>147</sup> Their approach and behaviour can be described not only as a 'disobedient act of looking' but also as a disobedient act of behaving.<sup>148</sup>

As Butler pointed out, by considering the mandatory and dramaturgical "framing" - one is 'led to interpret the interpretation that has been imposed upon us, developing our analysis into a social critique of regulatory and censorious power.'<sup>149</sup> Thus, for war photography it is important to consider not only what it shows, but also how it shows what it shows. Butler reminds that 'the "how" not only organizes the image, but works to organize our perception and thinking as well.'<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.135.

<sup>144</sup> Broomberg, A. and Chanarin, O., (2014). Points of memory: Broomberg and Chanarin. *Tate Etc.* issue 32: Autumn [online] Available from: <<https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/points-memory-broomberg-and-chanarin>> [Accessed 23 Jan 2019]; Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died.

<sup>145</sup> Butler points out that military and governmental authorities mandated what can be seen, both, by regulating content and also by regulating perspective. Moreover that 'Embedded reporting implies that reporters working under such conditions agree not to make the mandating of perspective *itself* into a topic to be reported and discussed [...]' the Butler, 2010, p.64; pp.64-66.

<sup>146</sup> Though they did not use the photograph, their photographs play similar role as ascribed by Butler to the photographic frame. Butler, J. (2010). *Frames of war : when is life grievable?* London : Verso, pp.71-72.

<sup>147</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.71-72.

<sup>148</sup> In some accounts they state that they have not taken/used photo camera at all: 'we aimed for the frontline of a raging war without any conventional photographic instruments to record what we found.' - Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died. In other account they say they took photos of events they were expected to take, but at the end of day they ritualistically deleted them. Broomberg and Chanarin, 2012, What is Conceptual Photography?

<sup>149</sup> Butler, 2010, p.72.

<sup>150</sup> Butler, 2010, p.71.

The artists' statements seem to be contradictory and ambiguous about the role of photograms they created.<sup>151</sup> They have emphasised that the spectator should pay attention not to colourful photograms, but to a video frame. They say that they would not exhibit photograms on their own. Broomberg has stressed that the most important part of this project is the film that reveals the process of production. It shows their performance.<sup>152</sup> The movie follows the box and shows 'you this war that you would never normally see in a journalistic context. To see the mechanisms is to see something ultra banal, the way the whole machine is constructed to allow the war to function.'<sup>153</sup> The movie is meant to make the spectator 'feel the mundanity and the banality of war.'<sup>154</sup> We do not see any spectacle or 'the unfolding of the conflict'. It is a dead-pan movie and what we see is the army machinery that is served by soldiers. The box they carry around is like any other object they are asked to move around. Nevertheless I find their adopted visual strategy, that of captioned photograms together with video relevant and necessary for considering the forced absence of the depiction of the violated human body. In what follows I pay attention to how the images that the artists created and displayed can be interlinked with verbal descriptions of human losses we read in captions and also in descriptions that the artists have revealed in their statements and interviews.

### *The 'third image' and the 'mental image,' and the civil political space*

What the artists ended up showing is not nothing. They did show images. One type - exposed photographic paper rolls and another - a video screen with a 23' long movie. I want to suggest consideration of the third type of images that they do not distinguish in their statements and interviews as a separate kind of visualisation - verbal 'frames'. Moreover, I want to point out that between the given images and the text there is a space, and that space is potentially inhabited by what Strauss calls 'the third image' or what

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<sup>151</sup> Talbot regarded the photogram as 'at once the quintessence of the index [...] and the epitomy of the chemical idea of photography, and thus emblematic of *The Pencil of Nature's* definition of the photograph.' Armstrong, C., (1998). *A Scene in a Library: The First Photographically Illustrated Book*. In: Beshty, W. (ed.), (2018). *Picture Industry: A Provisional History of the Technical Image 1844-2018*. SAS LUMA Arles; CCS Bard College, p.45.

<sup>152</sup> Adam Broomberg said, that 'Let's face it, these (photograms) show the marks of light on paper. Of course we are playing on the pictorialist and sublime notion of beauty, that there is something beautiful about it or violent because red denotes blood and therefore violence. But for us the most important part of the work is not what the viewer sees in the rolls of paper but rather their reaction to the film. I don't think we would ever show one of those rolls without the film which describes the process of production - this performance is most important. I don't care what the paper looks like.' Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.137.

<sup>153</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.138.

<sup>154</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.138.

Belting calls 'mental image'<sup>155</sup>, and also it potentially is what Azoulay calls 'the civil political space.'

Broomberg stated that their images 'are useful because suffering does require a witness,' and that 'to bring back a piece of paper that has been right there, not a photograph but that same piece of paper, and to pin it to the wall is to bring back some visceral form of evidence.'<sup>156</sup> In the context of censorship that is executed not only by the army, but also by the media, their work can be seen as a reminder that the absence of news and images of human losses does not mean the war is over. And more than ten years after their embedding this war in Afghanistan is still silently ongoing.<sup>157</sup> Their title *The day nobody died* is an utopian title for the war artists to use. The day no one dies is an unlikely day, utopian day. It is emphasised by the photographic paper sheets covered in colours that please the eye. It feels like a truce or disruption in the cruel flow of a killing machine that an army at war constitutes. Nevertheless some photograms have captions that reveal a different story: *The Fixer's Execution*, June 7, 2008; *The Brother's Suicide*, June 7, 2008; *The Day of One Hundred Dead*, June 8, 2008.

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<sup>155</sup> Belting describes human body as locus of images. The spectator internalises existing images, remembers already seen images, and she also creates images and updates them.

<sup>156</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.137.

<sup>157</sup> The war in Afghanistan (2001 - ongoing). The United States (and its allies) invaded Afghanistan on 7 October 2001.



11. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Fixer's Execution, June 7*, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008



12. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Brother's Suicide, June 7*, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

By bringing framing into focus and revealing censorship of depiction of the violated human body, this artwork pays particular attention to the censored bodies, those of soldiers - British and Afghan, and also the Afghan collaborators. I want to consider this absence of injured and dead soldiers bodies and to continue with considering another absence that this work brings into focus. By the second absence I mean the absence of reference to civilians. British historian and journalist Mark Curtis (1963) uses term 'Unpeople' to describe the principal victims of Britain's foreign policies.<sup>158</sup> Butler describes them as lives that are not deemed recognizable and grievable.<sup>159</sup> Those are lives that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone.<sup>160</sup>

#### *Verbal image - disclosure and absented bodies*

In interviews, discussions and artist statements Broomberg and Chanarin are explicit not only about the history of this project and their choice of strategy, but they talk about the very things they have been prohibited from showing by signing the embed contract. They

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<sup>158</sup> Curtis, M. (2004). *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses*. London: Vintage, p.2.

<sup>159</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.63-64.

<sup>160</sup> Butler, 2010, p.xix.

remind us that they arrived during the deadliest month of the war. In the artists' statement for the exhibition in 2008 at the Barbican Gallery they state:

On the first day of our embed, a BBC fixer was dragged from his car and executed and nine Afghan soldiers were killed in a suicide attack. The following day, three British soldiers died, pushing the number of combat fatalities to 100. That was followed by a suicide attack on a group of Afghani soldiers killing all 8. On receiving the news of his brother's death in that ambush, another Afghan National soldier turned his M16 to his chest and pulled the trigger.<sup>161</sup>



13. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Day of One Hundred Dead, June 8*, from the series *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

I suggest that this work prompts us to reflect not only on the relation between the image of photogram and the text (the added caption), thus considering 'the third image' but also on the spectator's own 'mental images.' The movie and photograms with captions cover the same period of time. I am drawn to think of those people seen in the movie. Azoulay argues that in extremely difficult conditions where people suffer it is 'insufficient to account for photography through a focus on photographers or spectators,' because they ignore the gaze of the photographed subject.<sup>162</sup> Are any of those soldiers seen in the movie mentioned also in the captions?

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<sup>161</sup> Broomberg and Chanarin, 2008, Artists' statement: The day nobody died.

<sup>162</sup> Azoulay, 2008, pp.18-20; Azoulay, 2012, p.227.



14. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

Are they still present there or alive at the time of watching ten years later? Are these the nine Afghan soldiers that were killed in a suicide attack? Or did any of them died in another suicide attack on a group of Afghani soldiers that killed 8 people? Are any of them captured in the frames of the movie?



15. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

On June 8, 2008 three British soldiers died, pushing the number of combat fatalities to 100. On GOV.UK website under Operations in Afghanistan one finds all British fatalities, among them are also three soldiers who died on Sunday, 8 June 2008.<sup>163</sup> There are their names, their age and pictures of them. What is achieved by the censorship of the creation and circulation of the image of the violated body? (I consider censorship by the army and media in more detail in the next chapter, and the third chapter.) Oliver Chanarin stated:

Images of other peoples suffering are designed to elicit a sense of shame. But in this project we are questioning that ... What use do these images actually have, other than to act as a catharsis of some kind? Looking at images of war can actually short-circuit any kind of immediate call to action. One aim of our work is to try to put the burden of looking back on the viewer. To rob the viewer of the cathartic effect of looking and ignoring images of human trauma.<sup>164</sup>

What is the spectator supposed to do with their look? Shame? Catharsis? Burden of looking? Or rather the burden of imagining and knowing? The artists have focussed on the deaths of army personnel. The MOD website states that as of 11 October 2015, a total of 456 British forces personnel or MOD civilians have died while serving in Afghanistan since the start of operations in October 2001. Their names, circumstances of death and photos also appear there.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless in the movie the spectator sees also people without uniforms. We see civilians.

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<sup>163</sup> Ministry of Defence. British fatalities: Operations in Afghanistan. [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan) [online] Available from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>164</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.137.

<sup>165</sup> Ministry of Defence. British fatalities: Operations in Afghanistan. [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan) [online] Available from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan>> ; U.S. casualty status - U.S. Department of Defense. Casualty Status. [defense.gov](https://www.defense.gov) [online] Available from: <<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Casualty-Status/%EF%BB%BF>> [Both accessed 22 Sep 2020].



16. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

The British historian Mark Curtis revealed in his study of the post-World War II depredations of the British Empire that in 2001, the first year of the war in the bombing of Afghanistan by US and British forces, the estimated number of deaths are 15,000-25,000.<sup>166</sup> The war in Afghanistan is still ongoing. About 157,000 people have been killed in the Afghanistan war since 2001. More than 43,000 of those killed have been civilians. An additional 41,000 civilians have been injured since 2001.<sup>167</sup> The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported that 2,100 civilians were killed as a result of armed conflict in Afghanistan in 2008.<sup>168</sup> That is the highest civilian death toll since the end of the initial 2001 invasion. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission estimated the number of civilians killed as a result of the armed hostilities in 2008 at around 1,800. 1,000 killed by militant groups and about 800 killed by U.S.-led military forces.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Curtis, 2004, p.312. Curtis notes that figures vary widely. The *Guardian* estimated 10,000-20,000 civilian deaths as an indirect result of the bombing. Estimates of the military deaths are usually in the 3,000-6,000 range. *Web of Deceit*, p.49, p.361.

<sup>167</sup> Watson Institute For International And Public Affairs. The Costs of War Project. Costs of War: Afghan Civilians. [watson.brown.edu](http://watson.brown.edu) [online] Available from:

<<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>168</sup> Reuters, (2009). 2,100 civilians killed in Afghanistan in 2008: UN. [abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au), Feb 3, [online] Available from: <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-02-04/2100-civilians-killed-in-afghanistan-in-2008-un/282520>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>169</sup> IRIN News, (2009). UNAMA raps new report by rights watchdog. *The New Humanitarian*, January 22 [online] Available from: <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/82502/afghanistan-unama-raps-new-report-rights-watchdog>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].



17. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

These people do not appear in captions and descriptions (apart from collaborators), nevertheless these ‘ungrievable and unrecognisable lives’ are like a huge shadow one should not miss noticing in the movie (and also in war statistics). As Butler points out, frames that allocate recognisability, ‘the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated’ and ‘are themselves operations of power’ that aim to delimit the sphere of appearance itself.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, she argues that these ‘frames do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance’ and do not constrict the story. (Which is a different stance to that of structuralists.) Because ‘restricting how or what we see is not exactly the

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<sup>170</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.1-32; 63-100.

same as dictating a storyline,' though 'it is a way of interpreting in advance what will and will not be included in the field of perception.'<sup>171</sup>



18. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, video still from *The Day Nobody Died*, 2008

Butler, like Azoulay, argues that the spectator cannot simply examine the contents of the frame, because 'it is constituted fundamentally by what is left out, maintained outside the frame within which representations appear.'<sup>172</sup> Azoulay uses the term 'to watch' and suggests that the spectator stops looking at the photograph and instead starts watching it.<sup>173</sup> The process of viewing/watching of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others becomes a civic skill.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, the civic spectator has 'a duty to employ that skill the day she encounters photographs of those injuries - to employ it in order to negotiate the manner in which she and the photographed are ruled.'<sup>175</sup>

As was revealed in the news, the ordinary citizen can be directly albeit unwittingly involved in warmongering. On 10th of January 2019 it was revealed that UK councils are complicit

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<sup>171</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.66-67.

<sup>172</sup> Butler, 2010, p.73.

<sup>173</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>174</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>175</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

in funding war in Yemen.<sup>176</sup> The reporting revealed that ‘more than half a billion pounds of council workers’ pension money has been directly invested by local authorities in arms companies implicated in Saudi Arabia’s military campaign in Yemen, in which thousands of civilians have been killed.’<sup>177</sup> According to nearly 100 freedom of information requests 43 pension funds have shares worth £566m in companies such as BAE Systems, Airbus, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman. These pension funds have earned more than 18.5m pounds in dividends in 2018, a period in which civilian deaths reportedly surged and a (punishing) famine took hold. This means that thousands of local authority staff will have their retirement payouts part-funded by the companies, some of which manufacture arms linked to incidents in which civilians and children were killed. Notably, in the latest play “Evening at The Talk House”<sup>178</sup> that American actor and writer Wallace Shawn (1943), brought to London in 2015,<sup>179</sup> many ordinary people find themselves increasingly complicit and compromised in modern warfare.

To conclude, for artists Broomberg and Chanarin the images of other people’s suffering are important and in the conditions of censorship they (images) have to be made explicitly different. The artists chose to use captioned photograms and dead-pan video (that provides a glimpse inside the British war machine). I suggest that their visual strategy together with their verbal disclosures draw the spectator’s attention to the absented bodies - not only the violated and lost bodies of the British soldiers and Afghani collaborators that the artists directly address in this project, but also the bodies that were not mentioned, those of the Afghani civilians. This work creates a space for the consideration of both, the bodies lost that are accounted for and also those who stay unaccounted for, and in turn emphasise the spectator’s own body as a place where the ‘mental images’ reside. Also, this artwork demonstrated that by absenting something it can become a point of direct attention and exploration.

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<sup>176</sup> Davies, R., (2019). UK councils invest £566m in arms firms linked to Yemen war. *The Guardian*, Jan 10 [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jan/10/uk-councils-invest-566m-in-arms-firms-implicated-in-saudis-yemen-campaign>> [Accessed 23 Jan 2019].

<sup>177</sup> Davies, 2019.

<sup>178</sup> Shawn, W., (2015). *Evening at The Talk House*. London: Faber & Faber. ‘Set in the course of one night, it eavesdrops on several people who worked together on “Midnight in a Clearing With Moon and Stars,” a fictitious flop from a decade ago. They have gathered for a reunion at a rundown club. As they snack and sip and reminisce, they reveal the brutality of the world outside and the ways that artists can abet it, resist it and ignore it.’ Soloski, A., (2017). Drama as Protest: ‘Our Complacency Is Dangerous.’ *The New York Times*, Jan 25 [online]. Available from <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/theater/wallace-shawn-evening-at-the-talk-house.html>> [Accessed 27 Sep 2020].

<sup>179</sup> “Evening at The Talk House” was first produced in association with Scott Rudin on the Dorfman stage of the National Theatre, London, on 17 November 2015. [online] Available from: <<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/evening-at-the-talk-house>> [Accessed 27 September 2020].

To sum up, these three case studies evidenced that the decision to exercise self-censorship and avoid the showing of victims led artists to devise visual strategies that made visible structures that create/d victims. Thus, moving attention away from the victim to perpetrators and infrastructure of the atrocity. Such strategies were intended as a provocation and challenge for the spectator (not to provide what the artists assumed the spectator would expect to see and thus provoke an effort to make sense/think). As a result they questioned and emphasised the role of the spectator. Also, because of the chosen visual strategy, in particular, its two main features: the absence of the human subject (the vulnerable/violated body), and the deadpan tone (in the first and second case studies and the use of photograms and deadpan video in the last artwork) these images can be seen as staged (documentary) images. In other words, these are managed frames, that are themselves actively interpretive (Butler).

I suggest that the visual strategy of (deliberate) withdrawal of the vulnerable/violated body from the photograph's visible frame illuminates and further complicates the role of the spectator. I argue that these artworks create space where the spectator can consider vulnerable and lost bodies, and at the same time they also emphasise the spectator's own body as a place where the 'mental images' reside (where invoked 'ghosts' appear/live and also by activating the knowledge that the spectator already holds). These images are defined by and infused with what is left outside the frame (Butler, Azoulay, Didi-Huberman). By absenting the vulnerable/violated body artists have drawn attention to these absent/ed people (ghosts). Consequently, these photographs/photograms/video spotlight 'mental images' of absented human subjects that 'live' in the viewer (or their absence). These absented bodies are like ghosts that infuse/inhabit the spectator's imagination. Therefore, importantly, the 'negative' approach focuses attention on what Belting calls 'the mental images.' Belting argued that 'our bodies themselves operate as a living medium by processing, receiving, and transmitting images.'<sup>180</sup> In other words, the living body is the locus of images.

Lastly, such a visual strategy together with verbal disclosures illuminated, especially by the last case study, emphasise the role played by storytelling. Artists Broomberg and Chanarin used descriptive captions and also revealed in their interviews and artistic statements exact things they were forbidden to photograph and in doing so subverted the initial

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<sup>180</sup> Belting, 2011, p.5.

*Chapter 1*

prohibition by embed rules. I suggest that the detailed stories told about censorship of depictions of violence not only subvert the imposed prohibitions, but they also connect to earlier image-making and transmitting practises as we did with images before photography (Belting). We use images of memory and imagination with which we interpret the world. This practise further helps to reconsider the role of photographs (of atrocities) and their spectatorship. As a result, these visual strategies enabled new modes of spectatorship and reconsidered what the spectator brings to the experience of a particular art work.

## **Chapter 2. Censored Images - exposing censorship and control of the depictions of violated bodies**

In the following chapter I consider three artworks made by a Chilean born architect and artist Alfredo Jaar (1956) that address the state and the media censorship of atrocity photographs from the U.S. war on terror and relevant discourse that surrounds these censored events and their visual depiction. The first work is *Lament of the Images* (2002, v.1) where Jaar considers simultaneous censorship and overabundance of images in the media. The second is *Lament of the Images* (2009), a version for newspaper and book format that addresses the censorship of Abu Ghraib photos. The third is installation *May 1, 2011* (2011) that renders visible the invisibility of an atrocity image and thus exposes state censorship of photographic evidence of Osama Bin Laden's killing and at the same time makes visible two layers of secrecy. The main voices in the (American) censorship debate are those of the art and cultural critic David Levi Strauss, the author and journalist Philip Gourevitch, the writer and filmmaker Errol Morris, the investigative journalist and political writer Seymour Hersh and the writer Susan Sontag, as they contrast or align themselves with the official announcements of image censorship by the then-American president Barack Obama.

The central issues considered here are 'What representational strategies are used to make censorship visible?', 'Which bodies have been presented or removed from spectatorship?' and 'How they are framed?' I look at the effects of circulation and exposure and at the assumptions that enabled these accounts. In addition, I examine the assumptions held about atrocity photographs and arguments that have been exchanged for and against censorship of these atrocity images. With these case studies I want to point out that there is a line of thought that does not isolate photos from their context but carefully puts photographs in a bigger infrastructure - that of the army and the government efforts to wage the war on terror. I argue that exposed censorship not only reveals the fact of redaction, it also helps to see the surrounding machinery of censorship and further complicates spectatorship, as it exposes levels of access to information that is deemed sensitive. These exposures highlight the deficiency of the democratic process and corruption of the system that executed the censorship in the first instance. This chapter will examine three representational strategies used by Jaar to make the censorship visible.

### Historical background

Censorship, being the suppression and prohibition of anything that is considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security,<sup>405</sup> relies on secrecy and invisibility.

Although censorship can be traced back to ancient times, the modern secrecy system had its substantive start not in antiquity, but in the vast infrastructure of World War II.<sup>406</sup> Next to the trade secrecy, state secrets and military secrets that are the background to the modern secrecy system, new sectors of secrecy emerged. Alongside the nuclear secrecy arose another fundamental category, National Security Information.<sup>407</sup> The National Security Agency (the NSA) was formed in 1952, but the functions of this agency had been secret up until 1975. The existence of the British equivalent, Britain's electronic surveillance agency (GCHQ), was revealed to the British public in 1976.<sup>408</sup>

In Britain and in the U.S. there were similar approaches to the censorship of the images of destroyed bodies. Many images and photographs taken during the American Civil War (1861-5) did not follow the previous martial tradition that had created romantic war images that were created by artists, most of whom never accompanied an army into the field.<sup>409</sup> In 1861, for the first time, photographers and sketch artists lived permanently with the armies and they created more realistic images that were based on their own experiences and observations. Photographs distributed by Mathew B. Brady (of the Antietam battlefield) were described as the 'honest sunshine' that provides 'conception of what a repulsive, brutal, sickening, hideous thing' war is.<sup>410</sup> Such pictures 'bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war.'<sup>411</sup> These photographs earned the description that one is

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<sup>405</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/censorship>

<sup>406</sup> Galison, P., (2004). Removing Knowledge. In: *Critical Inquiry* 31 (1), pp.229-243.

<sup>407</sup> Galison, 2004, p.231.

<sup>408</sup> Cobain, I., (2016). *The History Thieves: Secrets, Lies and the Shaping of a Modern Nation*. London: Portobello Books, pp.228-229; Campbell, D. and Hosenball, M., (1976). The Eavesdroppers. *Time Out*, 21 May; Campbell, D., (2015). GCHQ and Me: My Life Unmasking British Eavesdroppers. *The Intercept*, August 3. [online] Available from: <<https://theintercept.com/2015/08/03/life-unmasking-british-eavesdroppers/>> [Accessed 28 May 2017].

<sup>409</sup> Thompson, W.F., (1994). *The Image of War: The Pictorial Reporting of the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, p.7.

<sup>410</sup> American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes published an essay 'Doings of the Sunbeam' in *Atlantic Monthly* (July 1863), 1-17. There he wrote about images recently issued by Brady of the Antietam battlefield. It is cited in Trachtenberg, A., (1985). *Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs, Representations*, Winter. 9, p.8-9. These images are attributed to photographer Alexander Gardner, see reference 22 in Trachtenberg, 1985. Gardner published his own account of the Civil War in Gardner, A., (2001). *Gardner's photographic sketchbook of the American Civil War, 1861-1865*. New York: Delano Greenidge Editions. His photograph "A Harvest of Death at Gettysburg, July, 1863" (Gardner, Plate 36) is accompanied by following text: "Such a picture conveys a useful moral: It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation." Cited in Trachtenberg, 1985, p.24.

<sup>411</sup> This quote comes from the account of the pictures that Brady displayed in his Broadway gallery, that was published on October 20, 1862, in the *New York Times*; cited in Trachtenberg, 1985, p.8.

'going to see the elephant' meaning the reality of war.<sup>412</sup> They left very strong and enduring effects, so that during the First World War (1914-8) images that might reflect the nature of trench warfare and show the dead or injured were outlawed from the outset.<sup>413</sup> Cameras were not allowed under (the British) military law and possession of them was punishable by court martial with a possible death sentence.<sup>414</sup> In addition, all pictures intended for publication in newspapers had to pass strict vetting procedures of the Official Press Bureau. 'Rigorous British government' censorship created a severe shortage of images.<sup>415</sup> Similar censorship was exercised by the American government. During the Second World War (1939-1945) Americans had a 'Chamber of Horrors' where the censored photographs of the American World War II casualties were concealed. The existence of the 'Chamber of Horrors' was kept secret<sup>416</sup> and parts of its contents were released only under strict guidance of the American government.<sup>417</sup>

In Britain a regime of government guided press self-censorship was established in the early 20th century with the 1911 Official Secrets Act and the establishment of the Joint Committee of Official and Press Representatives in 1912. Other examples of the effectiveness of the British regime are the eleven-year covert war the British waged in Dhofar in the 1970s that stayed (almost) unknown to the public<sup>418</sup> and the unreported war of the Falklands.<sup>419</sup> This regime operates the DA-Notice<sup>420</sup> system up to this day. The Ministry of Defence had even gone further by asking the courts to issue super-injunctions that not only prevent publication of a news report, but prohibit anyone from revealing the existence of the injunction.<sup>421</sup> Thus, there are two relevant aspects of censorship. First, censorship tries itself to remain permanently censored. Second, it has been argued that secrecy is not only a problem for the science<sup>422</sup> and military industry, but it is also a threat

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<sup>412</sup> Nachtwey, J., (1989). *Deeds of war*. Introduction by Robert Stone. NY: Thames and Hudson.

<sup>413</sup> Struk, J., (2011). *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War*. London: I.B. Tauris, p.26.

<sup>414</sup> Struk, 2011, p.21.

<sup>415</sup> Struk, 2011, pp.29-30.

<sup>416</sup> Roeder, G.H., (c1993). *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, p.10; see note 7 where author states that the Chamber of Horrors might not have been publicly mentioned until 1985.

<sup>417</sup> Roeder, 1993, pp.7-17.

<sup>418</sup> Curtis, M., (2004). *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses*. London: Vintage, pp.303-309; Cobain, 2016, pp.73-92.

<sup>419</sup> Brothers, C., (1997). *War and Photography: A Cultural History*. London: Routledge, pp.206-209, 213-214; Seaton, J., (2005). *Carnage and the Media: The Making and Breaking of News About Violence*. London: Penguin, Allen Lane, p.204 - Seaton points out that even bodies of the British soldiers killed in the Falklands War were buried on the islands themselves; Cobain, 2016, pp.53-54, 92-93.

<sup>420</sup> Initially it was called the D-Notice, in 1993 the notices were renamed DA-Notices (defence advisory) - Cobain, 2016, p.59.

<sup>421</sup> Cobain, 2016, pp.30-31, 59-63.

<sup>422</sup> Galison estimates that the classified universe is about five to ten times larger than the open literature that is added to libraries. And this classified universe continues to expand. Galison, 2004, p.231.

to democracy. 'It is political at every scale, from attempts to excise a single critical idea to the vain efforts to remove whole domains of knowledge.'<sup>423</sup> These two aspects of censorship - its intended invisibility/secretcy and its influence on the democratic system are the main overarching issues that will be traced in this chapter (and the next chapter).

When censored material is exposed as such it has unexpected effects and results in the very opposite of what has been intended. The report on a destructive act circulates in the place of that which was actually destroyed. The absence of evidence is evidence in its own right, it becomes negative evidence<sup>424</sup> and provokes unwelcome attention and scrutiny. Such exposure demonstrates how to break from the context that initially framed the event and the image. The experience of widespread secrecy, in the form of censorship and embedded-ness, that surrounds the war on terror had been fertile ground for critical inquiry and artistic exploration.<sup>425</sup> The artist and geographer Trevor Paglen explores the "blank spots on the map" created by the American government's secrecy, which he documents through photos of classified U.S. military installations taken from a distance with a telescope, or of the anonymous corporate architecture around Washington, D.C., that houses U.S. intelligence agencies.<sup>426</sup> The work of artist Mishka Henner<sup>427</sup> highlights the bright polygons that the Dutch government uses to block secret sites on Google Maps. Those are political, economic and military locations deemed vital to national security. The artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen<sup>428</sup> in the installation *End Credits* (2012) used declassified FBI documents pertaining to the African-American celebrity singer and actor, and left-wing activist Paul Robeson. In *Redaction Paintings* (2004-ongoing), the artist

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<sup>423</sup> Galison, 2004, p.243.

<sup>424</sup> Weizman, E., (2015). *Strikeout: the Material Infrastructure of the Secret*. In: Black, C. and Clark, E. *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition*. New York: Aperture, pp.285-288.

<sup>425</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of war : when is life grievable?* London : Verso, pp.1-12; Greenwald, G., (2014). *No Place To Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA and the Surveillance state*. London: Hamish Hamilton, the Penguin Group; Stallabrass, J., (ed.) (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and The War of Images*. Brighton: Photoworks; Struk, J., (2011). *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War*. London: I.B. Tauris; Paglen, T., (2010). *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World*. New American Library; Poitras, L., (2016). *Astro Noise: A Survival Guide for Living Under Total Surveillance*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; Currier, C., (2016). *Redaction Art: How Secrets are Made Visible*. *The Intercept*, March 5. [online] Available from: <<https://theintercept.com/2016/03/05/redaction-art-how-secrets-are-made-visible/>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>426</sup> Paglen, T. *Work: Limit Telephotography* [online] paglen.com Available from: <<http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=limit>>; Paglen, T., (2014). *New Photos of the NSA and Other Top Intelligence Agencies Revealed For First Time*. *The Intercept*, February 10. [online] Available from: <<https://theintercept.com/2014/02/10/new-photos-of-nsa-and-others/>> [All accessed 7 June 2017].

<sup>427</sup> Henner, M., (2011). *Dutch Landscapes*. [online] Open Society Foundations. Available from: <<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/moving-walls/22/dutch-landscapes>> [Accessed 14 September 2020].

<sup>428</sup> McQueen, S., (2012). *End Credits*. [online] Schaulager Laurenz Foundation. Available from: <<http://stevemcqueen.schaulager.org/en/exhibition/end-credits-2012.html>> [Accessed 14 September 2020].

Jenny Holzer<sup>429</sup> works with military and intelligence documents that include the redacted handprints of soldiers accused of war crimes in Iraq. Redaction is also a theme of artist, filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras' immersive installation *Astro Noise* (2016).<sup>430</sup> Thomas Hirschhorn in *Pixel Collage* (2016)<sup>431</sup> explores the pixelation phenomenon that is intended to “protect the viewer” from atrocity, but at the same time make the incommensurable visible. In an exhibition in China of her *A Living Man Declared Dead and other Chapters I-XVIII* (2011)<sup>432</sup> Taryn Simon did not withdraw several images that Chinese authorities censored, but represented them visually in the exhibition by blacking out all of the framed panels that contained the contested content, therefore underscoring, not mitigating the act of censorship. Such exposures of the dark world render visible not only the fragmented form of clues and missing context, they show that there is always a possibility that there is more we do not know.<sup>433</sup>

### **2.1. Alfredo Jaar. *Lament of the Images* (2002, v.1)**

Artist Alfredo Jaar (1956) has explored many representational strategies of atrocities. He worked for six years on *The Rwanda Project* (1994-2000) where the main task he set for himself was to explore the issues of genocide and indifference and express as much as possible about them and circulate the work as widely as possible.<sup>434</sup> Jaar's intention was to revive the spectator's ability to see atrocity and empathise with the victims of the genocide. He felt that people in Western democracies had lost the capacity to see and be affected due to the relentless bombardment of images that completely de-contextualised everything.<sup>435</sup> In addition, he focused on the containment of the interpretation of the artwork intending to keep it narrow and focused on its desired affect/influence. In these works Jaar used self-inflicted censorship by not showing any mutilated bodies despite having a large archive with thousands of photographs from the Rwandan genocide that he created together with his assistant in 1994. After *The Rwanda Project*, he focused on censorship exercised by the state, the military and the media.

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<sup>429</sup> Holzer, J., (2006). *Redacted Paintings*. [online] Cheim & Read. Available from: <<http://www.cheimread.com/publications/jenny-holzer-redaction-paintings/gallery/images>> [Accessed 24 April 2016].

<sup>430</sup> Poitras, L., (2016). *Astro Noise*. Whitney Museum of American Art. [online] Available from: <<http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/LauraPoitras>> [Accessed 14 September 2020].

<sup>431</sup> Hirschhorn, T., (2016). *Pixel-Collage*. [online] Galerie Chantal Crousel. Available from: <<https://www.crousel.com/home/exhibition/600/>> [Accessed 14 September 2020].

<sup>432</sup> Simon, T., (2015). *Rear views, a star-forming nebula, and the Office of Foreign Propaganda: the works of Taryn Simon*. London: Tate Publishing.

<sup>433</sup> Currier, 2016.

<sup>434</sup> Morgan, A.B., (2004). The responsibility of privilege. *Sculpture*, May. **23** (4).

<sup>435</sup> Cited in Ritchin, F., (2013). *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen*. New York: Aperture, pp.62-63. (ref.28).

In 2002 Jaar made two installations both named *Lament of the Images* that address the state/military and the media censorship. The first version<sup>436</sup> of *Lament of the Images* (2002) was made for documenta 11 (2002)<sup>437</sup> contemporary art exhibition in Kassel, Germany, in 2002, for which Jaar invited the American writer David Levi Strauss to collaborate. The result was an installation that consisted of two rooms connected by a narrow, dark corridor. The installation started in a darkened space with three backlit texts on a wall. Each text described image absence, removal or censorship. After reading the texts, one entered a dark corridor and at the end of it there was a strong light. In the second space there was a huge bright white screen.



19. Alfredo Jaar, *Lament of the Images*, v.1., 2002

There were no photographic images there, but all the texts were concerned with images that were absent, withheld and withdrawn. Strauss wrote three texts 'to take place of

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<sup>436</sup> The title *Lament of the Images* comes from a poem by the Nigerian poet Ben Okri in which lament for lost old ways triggers hope for the future. Jaar already cited Okri's poem for the exhibition in 1998 *Alfredo Jaar: Lament of the Images* at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Massachusetts that displayed three photography-based installation works from *The Rwanda Project: The Eyes of Gutete Emerita, Let There Be Light, and Field, Road, Cloud* [online] Available from: <<https://listart.mit.edu/exhibitions/alfredo-jaar-lament-images>> [Accessed 16 Sep 2020].

<sup>437</sup> documenta 11 aimed to be "a seismograph of developments in contemporary art" and a place where innovative and standards-setting exhibition concepts are trialed. [online] Available from: <[http://www.documenta.de/en/about#16\\_documenta\\_ggmbh](http://www.documenta.de/en/about#16_documenta_ggmbh)> & <<http://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta11>> [Accessed 16 September 2020].

images that, for political reasons, we were not allowed to see.<sup>438</sup> The first text described Nelson Mandela's imprisonment in cruel conditions that had taken away his ability to cry. When released from prison after twenty-eight years Mandela did not weep and therefore there were no photographs that showed him weeping. The second text described the removal of images from the public sphere. Bill Gates purchased and buried the Bettmann and United Press International archives.<sup>439</sup> That was one of the largest collections of historical photographs in the world comprising around 17 million images. At the same time as preserving images, this move made them inaccessible. In total Gates owned the rights to around 65 million images. The third text described the U.S. Defense Department's purchase of exclusive rights to all available satellite images of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries before the 2001 airstrikes by the Anglo-American campaign.<sup>440</sup> This purchase produced direct consequences for the Western media. It was impossible to see the effects of the bombing and verify or refute claims made by the government. Thus the narrative of events was effectively controlled by the American government. The restrictions imposed on commercial imaging satellite Ikonos by the US Government are known as "shutter control."<sup>441</sup> Strauss concluded the last text with the following sentence: "There is nothing left to see."

The artistic statement for this work reveals that Jaar aims 'to make art out of information most of us would rather ignore.'<sup>442</sup> Information ignored by most in this case is censorship and access to photos. He focuses on the reasons for these absences. Jaar describes *Lament of the Images* as a philosophical essay on the crisis of representation today. It is a

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<sup>438</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2014). *Words not spent today buy smaller images tomorrow : essays on the present and future of photography*. New York : Aperture, p.146.

<sup>439</sup> In 1995 the software billionaire Mr. Gates purchased the Bettmann Archive. Lohr, S., (1995). Huge Photo Archive Bought By the Chairman of Microsoft. *The New York Times*, Oct 11 [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/11/business/huge-photo-archive-bought-by-the-chairman-of-microsoft.html>>; Boxer, S., (2001). A Century's Photo History Destined for Life in a Mine. *The New York Times*, April 15 [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/15/us/a-century-s-photo-history-destined-for-life-in-a-mine.html>>; Coates, J., (1995). Gates Buys Bettmann Archive. *Chicago Tribune*, Oct 11 [online] Available from: <[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-10-11/business/9510110202\\_1\\_corbis-corp-bettmann-collection-doug-rowan](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-10-11/business/9510110202_1_corbis-corp-bettmann-collection-doug-rowan)> [All accessed 16 Sep 2020]; Sterling, C.H., (general ed.) (2009). *Encyclopedia of journalism*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. : SAGE Reference, p.1053.

<sup>440</sup> Whitehouse, D., (2001). US buys Afghan image rights. *BBC News*, Oct 17 [online] Available from: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1604426.stm>>; Campbell, D., (2001). US buys up all satellite war images. *The Guardian*, Oct 17 [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/17/physicalsciences.afghanistan>>; Chavan, A., (2001). U.S Buys Exclusive Rights to Afghanistan Satellite Images. *Planetizen*, Oct 28 [online] Available from: <<http://www.planetizen.com/node/5394>>; Simpson, C., (2001). Press Access to Satellite Images is a Casualty in this War: The Department of Defense owns and controls these pictures. *NiemanReports*, Dec 15 [online] Available from: <<http://niemanreports.org/articles/press-access-to-satellite-images-is-a-casualty-in-this-war/>> [All accessed 16 Sep 2020].

<sup>441</sup> Whitehouse, 2001, US buys Afghan image rights. *BBC News*.

<sup>442</sup> Documenta11. Alfredo Jaar: Artist statement. [online] Available from: <https://www.documenta12.de/archiv/d11/data/english/index.html> [Accessed 16 Sep 2020].

poetic meditation on what is seen and what is not seen. It is a search for light in the darkness. It is a lament of the images. It is an attempt to make visible the invisible.<sup>443</sup> Jaar states that *Lament of the Images* is about our increasing blindness.<sup>444</sup> Jaar's description of his installation invites the viewer to consider some issues. One of the issues Jaar points to is the crisis of representation. In an interview in 2002 he talked about a paradox of the day:

On the one hand we are bombarded by thousands of images, but on the other hand it has never before been so controlled, be it by the government or by a certain part of the private sector. Therefore, I believe that we have lost the ability to see and be moved by images. Nothing moves us anymore, nothing has any meaning.<sup>445</sup>

The notion of crisis was introduced by Jaar in his earlier project devoted to the Rwanda genocide addressing the absence of response from the international community to the genocide. The crisis that Jaar addresses here is rather different. He highlights the absence and withdrawal of images initiated by the government and the military and maintained by the media control over what is 'seen and what is not seen'; and simultaneously juxtaposes it with the 'bombardment' of the media images that is visualised in the huge bright screen. Therefore, concern raised in this artwork is more about state of being robbed of images, not being blind. Not given too much, but being deprived of images. That resonates with the idea encapsulated in the last sentence by Strauss that 'there is nothing left to see.' Thus in this artwork Jaar seems to continue to work with ideas addressed in previous work from The Rwanda project: the effects of the image's removal and an act of seeing. Here images are already removed or nonexistent, and it is their absence and the spectator that are left for consideration. There are at least three versions of the *Lament of the Images* that Jaar and Strauss created over the years from 2002 to 2009. As this project evolves one can observe the change in their views with regard to the importance of images and the spectator's role. They both return to acknowledge the importance of the images<sup>446</sup> and 'attempt to make visible the invisible.' In 2011 Jaar writes:

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<sup>443</sup> Morgan, A.B., (2004). The responsibility of privilege. *Sculpture*, May. **23** (4); Morris, D., (2011). Humiliation and Hope: Alfredo Jaar and Simon Critchley in Conversation. *Mute*, March 30. [online] Available from: <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/humiliation-and-hope-alfredo-jaar-and-simon-critchley-conversation>> [Accessed 14 September 2020].

<sup>444</sup> Documenta11. Alfredo Jaar: Artist statement.

<sup>445</sup> Haupt, G. and Binder, P., (2002). Alfredo Jaar: Interview, Details. *Universes in Universe*. [online] Available from: <<http://universes-in-universe.de/car/documenta/11/frid/e-jaar-2.htm>> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

<sup>446</sup> In Pete Brook interview with David Levi Strauss - Brook, P., (2014). The war over the US Government's unreleased torture pictures. *Wired*, 12 December. [online] Available from: <<https://www.wired.com/2014/12/war-us-governments-unreleased-torture-pictures/>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

Images are important. Very important. In creating this work I was trying to lament their loss, mourn their absence. In doing so, I ended up creating a new image, which is unavoidable. An image of an intense, blinding light that could possibly become the blank screen on which we project our fears and our dreams.<sup>447</sup>

Although photographic images have been important for Jaar all the time (even at the time of the Rwanda genocide), I would suggest that the shift of focus can be observed in two 'directions.' Firstly, if in early versions the authors stress the spectator's loss of ability to see (because no one did anything), afterwards the focus is shifted to image distribution (the problem Jaar highlighted already in the Rwanda Project) and control. Thus zooming out of the photographic frame (that has been redacted) and 'framing' the process of image control by the state and bringing into the frame those who have access to censored images (that will be discussed later on with the artwork *May 1, 2011*). Secondly, the juxtaposition of text and the empty frame, tend to highlight their un-relatedness. By that I mean that the empty frame is used to represent both - redacted evidence/images and it is presented as a screen that Jaar describes in the above citation as a space where 'we project our fears and our dreams.' I suggest that these projections can be seen as mental images that the spectator already has and also creates while experiencing the installation. Jaar creates a context for his 'empty' works in accompanying project descriptions.

In addition, this artwork makes it relevant to think about the spectator's 'blindness' and the tradition of the avant-garde to de-familiarise, to make strange in order to achieve a change in the way that the spectator perceives the problem addressed by the artwork. In the case of the absence of images, previous methods cannot be applied. Familiarisation with what has been redacted is a method here.<sup>448</sup> In this attempt to 'make visible the invisible' Jaar frames the censorship and control of images. He enlarges absence to cinematic size and at the same time shines that same light on the spectator. The use of light, that comes from the screen and makes the spectator visible, highlights its function to bring into light (to make visible) and to enlighten. Spectators become part of the installation and enliven it. The absence of images is unmistakable. Furthermore, Jaar himself has constructed the space so that he leads the spectator from the dark space, where he displays texts about censorship thus informing her, to another space with a huge white screen that might represent overload of information with which the spectator is flooded by the media. Is it

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<sup>447</sup> Morris, 2011, Humiliation and Hope: Alfredo Jaar and Simon Critchley in Conversation. *Mute*.

<sup>448</sup> The change in approach and interpretation on part of the artist can be observed in the slight changes occurring in description of this project in later discussions. Early on one of the sentences mention 'our increasing blindness' that disappears from later descriptions.

that the spectator can either be attracted or distracted by this overwhelming light, so that information left in the darkness becomes invisible/forgotten?

The word 'blindness' is a powerful term. Originally meaning turbid or cloudy, it indicates both, obstruction to the eye or to the mind. It is the state of being blind, but also being prevented from seeing clearly and understanding. It is not based on reason. It is being deprived of evidence, dazzled.<sup>449</sup> A temporary blindness has been created by Jaar in this installation. Coming from a dark space, the spectator encounters the blinding light of the white screen. It is intended to blind her temporarily. The authors play with this blindness in the texts and in the installation. But as the spectator's eyes adapt, the faculty of discernment returns and the spectator finds herself well lit. The spectator becomes the main point of attention. She is brightly lit and visible to other spectators. As a result, spectators are highlighted to each other. This installation explores the perceptual experience and puts on a display the fact that the viewer is both a perceptual and an ideological subject. This approach resembles John Cage's experiment with silence that Jaar admired.<sup>450</sup> In a lab created to experience total silence, Cage discovered that there was no total silence. Being deprived of outer sounds, he started listening to his heart. Cage discovered that there was no total silence. 'It does not exist. It is always about yourself'.<sup>451</sup>

Hence, Jaar embodies absent images in order for them to acquire visibility. Although censored images possibly will never be accessible, the image frame exposes absence. The empty frame brings images back into perceivable existence. This installation does not hinder the creation of new mental images. The spectator might inform and update existing mental images that she already carries with herself. Consequently, 'our bodies function as media themselves, living media as opposed to fabricated media'.<sup>452</sup> This work exposes the centrality of the spectator's body to create and transmit images, even for absent images. Jaar's interest in the ability of the photographic image to represent atrocity and an act of seeing, which instigates an act of doing, is re-contextualised. This installation addresses contemporary visual communication as a 'regime to be managed.' Or perhaps here he exposes the inappropriateness of the assumption that links seeing to doing in a

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<sup>449</sup> New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, India: Surjeet Publications, 1988.

<sup>450</sup> Morgan, 2004, *The responsibility of privilege*, p.45.

<sup>451</sup> Morgan, 2004, p.45.

<sup>452</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. [2001], p.3.

contemporary media environment that is controlled and managed. Jaar's work seems to juxtapose two visions of future that were put forward in the early 20th century by writers George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. In *1984* (1949) Orwell envisaged the society that is deprived of information. Huxley on the other hand in *Brave New World* (1932) feared that there will be no reason to ban a book, because people would be so overwhelmed with abundance, so that no one would want to read.<sup>453</sup>

Now I am going to consider the third version of the *Lament of the Images* (2009) that focuses on the censorship of images of atrocities during the American wars on terror waged after 9/11.

## **2.2. Alfredo Jaar. *Lament of the Images* (2009)**

This part of the chapter first considers the history of the Abu Ghraib's (AG) photo release and the long legal battles fought over the release, that illuminates and demonstrates the facts that support my argument about the corruption of the democratic system. It is followed by an examining of the discourse about the photographic images of violence and their assumed role. It concludes with the arguments expressed by American cultural critics and investigative journalist about AG's photos and their release.

In 2003, six months before media organisations published the infamous Abu Ghraib photos, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)<sup>454</sup> filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request<sup>455</sup> for records, which included photos relating to the abuse and torture of prisoners in U.S. detention centres overseas. The American government has released more than 100,000 pages since then<sup>456</sup> and these documents reveal both 'that hundreds of prisoners were tortured in the custody of the CIA and Department of Defense, and that the torture policies were devised and developed at the highest levels of the Bush administration.'<sup>457</sup> But there is still an ongoing legal battle to release nearly 2,100 (at the

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<sup>453</sup> Postman, N., (1987). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. London: Methuen.

<sup>454</sup> Together with Center for Constitutional Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, Veterans for Common Sense, and Veterans for Peace.

<sup>455</sup> ACLU, (2003). Torture FOIA. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/torturefoia/legaldocuments/nnACLUFOIArequest.pdf>> [Accessed 21 September 2020].

<sup>456</sup> All documents are searchable in Torture Database - ACLU. Torture Database. [online] Available from: <[https://www.thetorturedatabase.org/search/apachesolr\\_search](https://www.thetorturedatabase.org/search/apachesolr_search)> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

<sup>457</sup> ACLU, (2015). ACLU v. Department of Defense. Aug 18. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/cases/aclu-v-department-defense>> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

moment some 1,800 are still withheld from that collection of photos<sup>458</sup>) photos taken in Iraq and Afghanistan depicting alleged torture because the photos have been withheld or redacted from released documents.

After Abu Ghraib's leaked photographs were published in 2004, the Bush administration admitted possessing other prisoner abuse photographs, but refused to release them arguing that they would provoke violence. Nevertheless the district court rejected that argument in 2005, and the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the decision in 2008.<sup>459</sup> In September 2008, the order was issued by an appeals court<sup>460</sup> directing that the American government<sup>461</sup> should, by May 28 2009, release 21 photographs depicting abusive treatment of detainees by United States soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although the Obama administration said that it would release the photographs, on May 13, 2009, then-American President Barack Obama announced that he had decided not to release more detainee-abuse images from Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>462</sup> It was a reversal of what the White House press secretary announced a month previously, saying that the White House had no problem releasing the photos. President Obama ordered 'government lawyers to object to a court-ordered release of additional images showing alleged abuse of detainees because the release could affect the safety of U.S. troops and "inflare anti-American opinion."<sup>463</sup> According to a Pentagon official said that the president had been advised against the publication by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Centcom commander Gen David Petraeus and the commander of US forces in Iraq, Gen Ray Odierno.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Only in February 2016, after more than a decade, the Defense Department released 198 photos from this collection, but remaining images the government still refuses to release for national security reasons. The ACLU is continuing to fight for the full collection's release. ACLU, (2016). Pentagon releases 198 photos relating to detainee abuse in long-running ACLU lawsuit. Feb 5. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/news/pentagon-releases-198-photos-relating-detainee-abuse-long-running-aclu-lawsuit>>; <<https://www.aclu.org/other/aclu-v-dod-198-photos-previously-certified-under-protected-national-security-documents-act>>; Relman, E., (2016). Pentagon Releases 198 Abuse Photos in Long-running Lawsuit. What They Don't Show Is a Bigger Story. ACLU, Feb 5. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/pentagon-releases-198-abuse-photos-long-running-lawsuit-what-they-dont-show-bigger>> [All accessed 21 Sep 2020].

<sup>459</sup> ACLU, 2016, Pentagon releases 198 photos relating to detainee abuse in long-running ACLU lawsuit.

<sup>460</sup> ACLU, (2008). ACLU v. DOD - Decision. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/aclu-v-dod-decision?redirect=cpreirect/36878>> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

<sup>461</sup> "The defendants" in the appeal court were The United States Department of Defense and Department of the Army.

<sup>462</sup> Hornick, E., (2009). Obama reverses course on alleged prison abuse. *CNN*, May 13 [online] Available from: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/05/12/prisoner.photos/index.html?iref=topnews>> ; BBC News, (2009). Obama defends abuse photos U-turn. *BBC*, May 14 [online] Available from: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8048774.stm>> [All accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>463</sup> Hornick, 2009.

<sup>464</sup> Quoted in the story from BBC NEWS, 2009, Obama defends abuse photos U-turn.

In addition, while supposedly preparing the photos for release, Congress was asked to carve out an exception to the FOIA which allowed the government to keep photos secret if the secretary of defense certified that their release would jeopardise national security. Then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates issued a blanket certification for hundreds of photos in 2009. His successor Leon Panetta issued an identical certification in 2012.<sup>465</sup>

In March 2015, the government was again ordered to release all of the photos, but the government appealed again. Only in February 2016, after more than a decade of legal battles, did the Defense Department released 198 photos from this collection.<sup>466</sup> They are the first photos the government has released since the litigation process began in 2003. The photos mainly show close-ups of body parts like arms, legs and heads, many with injuries. Many photos show bound or blindfolded prisoners. The photos are from more than two dozen different detention facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, thus showing not just the injuries but also the scope of abuse. The government has described these photos as 'benign',<sup>467</sup> but as Alex Abdo has pointed out 'they are disturbing and hint at the brutality of what the government is still keeping secret'<sup>468</sup> and are the 'best evidence of the serious abuses that took place in military detention centers.'<sup>469</sup> The government still persistently refuses to release the remaining images<sup>470</sup> or they give individualised reasons for withholding them.<sup>471</sup> The ACLU is continuing to fight for the full collection's release.

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<sup>465</sup> ACLU, 2016, Pentagon releases 198 photos relating to detainee abuse in long-running ACLU lawsuit.

<sup>466</sup> ACLU, 2016, Pentagon releases 198 photos relating to detainee abuse in long-running ACLU lawsuit; ACLU, ACLU v. DOD - 198 photos previously certified under the protected national security documents act of 2009 [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/other/aclu-v-dod-198-photos-previously-certified-under-protected-national-security-documents-act>> ; Worland, J., (2016). Pentagon Releases Detainee Abuse Photos After ACLU Lawsuit. *TIME*, Feb 5 [online] Available from: <<http://time.com/4210303/war-abuse-photos-aclu>> [All accessed 22 Sep 2020]; Relman, 2016, Pentagon Releases 198 Abuse Photos in Long-running Lawsuit. What They Don't Show Is a Bigger Story. ACLU.

<sup>467</sup> Walker, L., (2016). The Pentagon Released 200 Images of Detainee Abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Newsweek*, Feb 5. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newsweek.com/pentagon-defense-department-200-images-detainee-abuse-iraq-afghanistan-423625>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>468</sup> Abdo, A., (2016). The Power of Pictures. *ACLU*, Feb 5 [online] Available from: <<https://aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/power-pictures>> (Originally published by *Times* <http://time.com/4210483/aclu-on-detainee-photos/>) [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>469</sup> ACLU, ACLU v. DOD - 198 photos previously certified under the protected national security documents act of 2009.

<sup>470</sup> ACLU keeps online spreadsheet with descriptions and other information about still withheld photos. Relman, E., (2015). A picture of torture is worth a thousand reports. *ACLU*, April 28 [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/torture/picture-torture-worth-thousand-reports>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>471</sup> U.S. District Court Judge Alvin Hellerstein ordered to give individualised reasons for withholding of the images to establish how each image would endanger Americans if released - to add link to the order.

Chapter 2

Following Obama's May 13, 2009 announcement not to release more photographs Alfredo Jaar invited David Levi Strauss to collaborate in another version of *Lament of the Images*. They prepared an op-ed piece for the *New York Times*. Strauss wrote captions for three missing - blacked out images, to stand in for the many images that the American president decided not to release to the public.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2014). *Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow: Essays on the Present and Future of Photography*. New York: Aperture, p.146. See op-ed proposal on p.120 and detail on the cover of the book.

# Hurrying Into the Next Panic?

By Paul Wilentz

ISTANBUL  
ON vacation in Turkey, I am picked up at the airport by a minibus. It's past midnight, pitch-black, the driver is speeding around corners. Only one headlight is working. And I have my doubts about the brakes. In my head I'm planning the letter of complaint to the tour company. And then the driver's cellphone rings, he picks it up and answers it, he has only one hand on the steering wheel. Now I'm mentally compiling the list of songs to be played at my funeral.

That's rather how I feel when people talk about the latest fashions among investment banks and hedge funds: high-frequency algorithmic trading. On top of an already dangerously influential and morally suspect financial minefield is now being added the unthinking power of the machine.

The idea is straightforward: Computers take information — primarily "real-time" share prices — and try to predict the next twitch in the stock market. Using an algorithmic formula, the computers can buy and sell stocks within fractions of seconds, with the bank or fund making a tiny profit on the blip of price change of each share.

There's nothing new in using all publicly available information to help you trade; what's novel is the quantity of data available, the lightning speed at which it is analyzed and the short time that positions are held.

You will hear people talking about "latency," which means the delay between a trading signal being given and the trade being made. Low latency — high speed — is what banks and funds are looking for. Yes, we really are talking about shaving off the milliseconds that it takes light to travel along an optical cable.

So, is trading faster than any human can react truly worrisome? The answers that come back from high-frequency proponents, also rather too quickly, are "No, we are adding liquidity to the market" or "It's perfectly safe and it speeds up price discovery." In other words, the traders say, the practice makes it easier for stocks to be bought and sold quickly across exchanges, and it more efficiently sets the value of shares.

Those responses disturb me. Whenever the reply to a complex question is a stock and unconsidered one, it makes me

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worry all the more. Leaving aside the question of whether or not liquidity is necessarily a great idea (perhaps not being able to get out of a trade might make people think twice before entering it), or whether there is such a thing as a price that must be discovered (just watch the price of unpopular goods fall in your local supermarket — that's plenty fast enough for me), I want to address the question of whether high-frequency algorithmic trading

## The real reason to be wary of high-speed stock trading.

ing will distort the underlying markets and perhaps the economy.

It has been said that the October 1987 stock market crash was caused in part by something called dynamic portfolio insurance, another approach based on algorithms. Dynamic portfolio insurance is a way of protecting your portfolio of stocks in case the market falls; you can limit your losses to an amount you stipulate in advance. As the market falls, you sell some shares. By the time the market falls by a certain amount, you will have closed all your positions so that you can lose no more money.

It's a nice idea, and to do it properly requires some knowledge of option theory as developed by the economists Fischer Black of Goldman Sachs, Myron S. Scholes of Stanford and Robert C. Merton of Harvard. You type into some formula the current stock price, and this tells you how many shares to hold. The market falls and you type the new price into the formula, which tells you how many to sell.

By 1987, however, the problem was the sheer number of people following the strategy and the market share that they collectively controlled. If a fall in the market leads to people selling according to some formula, and if there are enough of them following the same algorithm, then it will lead to a further fall in the market, and a further wave of selling, and so on — until the Standard & Poor's 500 index loses over 20 percent of its value in a single day: Oct. 19, Black Monday. Dynamic portfolio insurance caused the very thing it was designed to protect against.

This is the sort of feedback that occurs between a popular strategy and the underlying market, with a long-lasting effect on the broader economy. A rise in price begets a rise. (Think bubbles.) And a fall begets a fall. (Think crashes.) Volatility rises and the market is destabilized. All that's needed is for a large number of people to be following the same type of strategy. And if we've learned only one

lesson from the recent financial crisis it is that people do like to copy each other when they see a profitable idea.

Such feedback is not necessarily dangerous. Take for example what happens with convertible bonds — bonds that can be converted into stocks at the option of the holder. Here a hedge fund buys the bond and the hedge funds some market risk by selling the stock itself short. At the price of the stock rises, the relevant formula tells the fund to sell. When the stock falls the formula tells it to buy — the exact opposite of what happens with portfolio insurance. To the outside world — if not necessarily to the hedge fund with the convertible bonds — this mix is usually seen as a good thing.

Thus the problem with the sudden popularity of high-frequency trading is that it may increasingly destabilize the market. Hedge funds won't necessarily care whether the increased volatility causes stocks to rise or fall, as long as they can get in and out quickly with a profit. But the rest of the economy will care.

Buying stocks used to be about long-term value, doing your research and finding the company that you thought had good prospects. Maybe it had a product that you liked the look of, or perhaps a solid management team. Increasingly such real value is becoming irrelevant. The rest is now between the machines — and they're playing games with real businesses and real people.

THOMAS L. WATSON

# 59 Is The New 30

Last April I took a break from being the former U.S. Open champion. I was in North when he passed away. I was in the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf tournament in Savannah, Ga. It was a very nice moment that I watched in awe on some television from Afghanistan or Pakistan. I made his amazing run at winning the British Open at age 30. Watson made me talk about foreign affairs more than golf. So let him know you love him more than you love him. I never met him in the final round. "Does the Taliban see rooting for you?"

Indeed, I have been struck at how many golfers and non-golfers get going up in Watson's historic performance — trying for the lead after he had already won. Turnberry, but losing in a playoff to the 36-year-old Stewart Cink. I was surprised to be being devastated that he was not able to win. Like millions of others, I stayed on the TV as his ball ran across the green — leading for others. "STOP! STOP! STOP!" as if I personally had

## It's not about the ball.

something at stake. Why was that?

Many reasons. For starters, Watson's run was freaky unusual — a 30-year-old man who had played his entire career in rounds in this tournament with a 30-year-old Halton Amet — was able to beat the greatest golfers in the world a decade after anyone would have thought it possible. Watching this happen actually surprised me since of what is long known is capable of. That is, when Kalle Wiisala scores 70 points, we are in awe. When Tiger Woods wins by 15 strokes, we are in awe. But when a man our own age and size wins the world's best — who are half his age — we identify.

Of course, Watson has unique golfing skills, but if you are a baby boomer you could not help but look at him and say something you would never say about Tiger or Kobe: "He's my age; he's my build; he's my height; and he even had his hip replaced like me. If I can do that, maybe I can do something like that, too."

Neil O'Ryan, Watson's caddy, who is a top Democratic political consultant in his real life, told me: "After Thursday's round with Tom, when we left the scoring tent I said to him, 'You know, this is a thing.' He understood what I meant. On Sunday morning, the two of us were in the corner of the locker room without another human being around, sitting in these two easy chairs facing each other behind a partition. We were chatting about golf, and I said to him, 'For a lot of people, what you're doing is life-affirming.' I took it from a story about when Betty Comden and Adolph Green — the writers of 'Singin' in the Rain' — showed Leonard Bernstein the famous scene of Gene Kelly. Bernstein said to them, 'That scene is an affirmation of life.' What Tom did last week was an affirmation of life."

Also, as Watson himself appreciates, the way he lost the tournament underscored why golf is the sport most like life. He hit two perfect shots on the 18th hole in the final round, but the second one bounced just a little too hard and ran through like green, leaving him a difficult chip back, which he was unable to get up and down. Had his ball stopped a foot shorter, he would have had an easy two-putt and a win.

That's the point. Baseball, basketball and football are played on flat surfaces designed to give true bounces. Golf is played on an uneven terrain designed to surprise. Good and bad bounces are built into the essence of the game. And the reason golf is so much like life is that the game — like life — is all about how you react to those good and bad bounces. Do you blame your caddy? Do you cheat? Do you throw your clubs? Or do you accept it all with dignity and grace and move on, as Watson always has. Hence the saying: Play one round of golf with someone and you will learn everything you need to know about his character.

Golf is all about individual character. The ball is fixed. No one throws it to you. You initiate the swing, and you alone have to live with the results. There are no teammates to blame or commiserate with. Also, pro golfers, unlike baseball, football or basketball players, have no fixed salaries. They eat what they kill. If they score well, they make money. If they don't, they don't make money. I wonder what the average N.B.A. player's free-throw shooting percentage would be if he had to make free throws to get paid the way golfers have to make three-foot putts?

This wonderful but cruel game never stops testing or teaching you. "The only comment I can make," Watson told me after, "is one that the immortal Bobby Jones related to me: 'One learns from defeat, not from victory.' I may never have the chance again to beat the kids, but I took one thing from the last hole: hitting both the tee shot and the approach shots exactly the way I meant to wasn't good enough. ... I had to finish."

So Tom Watson got a brutal lesson in golf that he'll never forget, but he gave us all an incredible lesson in possibilities — one we'll never forget.

# Lament of the Images

By Alfredo Jaar and David Levi Strauss



Autopsy image of an Afghan prisoner who died in U.S. custody, showing rope burns on his neck and a cross cut into his scalp. Snapshot of an unidentified U.S. soldier crouching down with one thumb raised in victory, grinning and leaning toward a blackened, decaying corpse.

Photograph taken at Abu Ghraib prison in mid-December 2003, picturing a small number of individuals using guard dogs to intimidate naked Iraqi detainees.

MAUREEN DOWD

# Sarah Grabs the Grievance Grab Bag From Hillary

WASHINGTON  
The woman who was prematurely counted in is out. And the woman who was prematurely counted out is in.

Goodbye, Sarah. Hello, Hillary.  
In their vivid twin performances Sunday — Hillary on "Meet the Press" in Washington and Sarah at her farewell picnic in Fairbanks — two of the most celebrated and polarizing women in American political history offered a fascinating contrast.

Hillary, who so often in the past came across as aggrieved, paranoid and press-leaking, was confident and comfortable in her role as top diplomat, dismissing off suggestions that she has been disappeared by her former rival, the president.

Sarah, who was once a blazingly confident media darling, came across as aggrieved, paranoid and press-leaking in her new role as bizarre babe-at-large, a Nixon with hair extensions ranting about "American apologetics," which sounds like a cross between apologists and Diogenes.

Sarah once criticized Hillary for being a whiny presidential contender, arguing that women who try to "progress this country" should not complain about being under a "sharper microscope," but instead should just work harder to prove themselves capable. Now Sarah is a whiny presidential contender, complaining about the sharper microscope that women wanting to progress this country are under and rejecting advice to work harder to prove herself capable.

The Alaskan who shot to stardom a year ago as the tough embodiment of Diana the Business has now stepped down as governor and morphed into what the Republicans always caricatured Hillary as — precisely, screechy and snarky.

And Hillary, who is at long last in a job that she earned on her own merits, has lost that irritating question mark she used to carry around above her head like a thunder cloud: What is Hillary owed because of what she gave up, and went through, for Bill?

During the campaign, Hillary got in trouble for pretending to be more than she was, for bragging about dodging bullets in Bosnia and making peace in Northern Ireland. Just so Sarah got in trouble for pretending to be knowledgeable about foreign affairs just because she lived across site Bering Strait from Russia.

But now Hillary does not have to tell stretchers. She's fully qualified for her job and doesn't sound defensive. Now Sarah has taken up Hillary's old habit of keeping grudges and playing the victim and blaming the press for her own mistakes in judgment and puffs.

If Sarah's problem on the trail was that she knew too little, Hillary's was that she knew too much. Before her misty turn in New Hampshire, Hillary's workiness got in the way of her ability to make people comfortable.

Sarah, lacking Hillary's cerebral side, has decided to wing it, Quaalude-style, and go only for the visceral. That's why she now sounds like a demagogue, embody-

ing grievances and playing to people's worst impulses.  
Hillary's radiant robustness, on the other hand, even with a sore elbow, makes the dictators in Iran and North Korea we're so worried about seem like frail, little creatures.

Obama advisers say privately that the president truly respects the woman he ran against, and that they have a good relationship, so good it has even surprised Hillary. Certainly, she doesn't have to worry that this president's gaze is going to drift over her shoulder to some pretty thing behind her. In this White House,

## A tale of two women: The cerebral and the visceral.

Barack Obama is the pretty thing who is taken with Hillary's serious, smartest-get-it-Midwesty aura. In a funny way, he's the man of her dreams.

His support of her has allowed her to keep her paranoia in check — even with Richard Holbrooke and Joe Biden biting off parts of her portfolio.

Just to make sure it stays that way, Obama advisers told Hillary that she could not bring on board Sidney Blumenthal, her former aide de camp nicknamed G.K., "Crabby Knoll" for his tend-

ency to stoke her grievances.  
In her cautious speech in Fairbanks, Sarah warned voters to "be wary of accepting government largess. It doesn't come free." Funny coming from a woman who charged the Alaska taxpayers every time she worked from Wasilla.

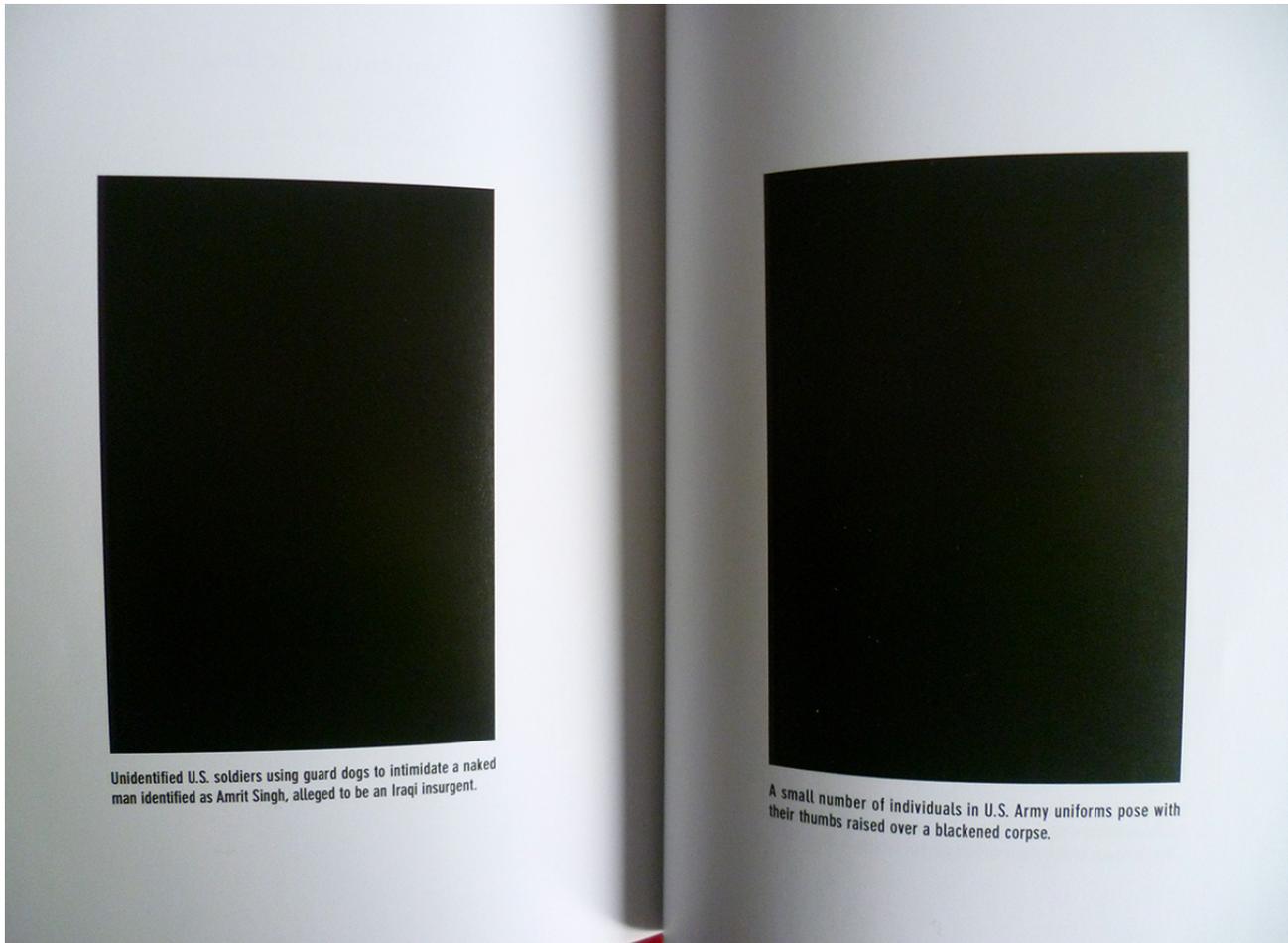
She also went after that old conservative villain Hollywood, saying, "They use these delicate, tiny, very talented celebrity starlets for 'their anti-Second Amendment causes.'"

Sarah seems happily oblivious that she benefited from Hollywood casting techniques. Just as movie directors have beautiful young actresses playing nuclear physicists and Harvard professors, knowing the fusion of sex appeal and a heavyweight profession will excite, the novelty of a beautiful former beauty queen and TV reporter cast in a powerful role that has featured dense, gray old men like Dick Cheney was thrilling. At first.

At McCain pal and Republican strategist Mike Murphy so sagely observed recently: "If Sarah Palin looked like Golda Meir, would we even be talking about her?"  
Sarah should follow her own advice to Hillary and work harder to be capable. Until then, she's all cage, no bird.

ONLINE OPINION TODAY  
Happy Days: Mark Dowd On pleasure, perception and the language of ice cream.  
nytimes.com/opinion

The *Times* chose not to publish this piece. Jaar and Strauss instead published a different version as part of the book *Picturing Atrocity* in 2012 (in chapter 7: The Afterlife of Photographs).<sup>473</sup> This extended version comprises six black vertical rectangles with brief texts underneath. There is no date and no authorship assigned to them.<sup>474</sup>



21. Alfredo Jaar and David Levi Strauss, *Lament of the Images*, 2009

The information provided by descriptions:

*Unidentified U.S. soldiers using guard dogs to intimidate a naked man identified as Amrit Singh, alleged to be an Iraqi insurgent.*

*A small number of individuals in U.S. Army uniforms pose with their thumbs raised over a blackened corpse.*

*Scene of a drone attack in North Waziristan that killed five suspected militants and 25 civilians, according to Pakistani intelligence officials. The Pentagon is not commenting on drone attacks.*

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<sup>473</sup> Batchen, G., Gidley, M., Miller, N.K., Prosser, J., (eds.) (2012). *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London : Reaktion, 2012.

<sup>474</sup> In the mock-up proposal for *New York Times* op-ed page there are three horizontal black frames and the first text provides location and year - "Photograph taken at Abu Ghraib prison in mid-December 2003, picturing a small number of individuals using guard dogs to intimidate naked Iraqi detainees."

*Mutilated bodies of Sufis laid out in mourning after a bombing in Peshawar by the Pakistani Taliban. Human rights groups have called systematic attacks on Sufis in Pakistan “genocidal.”*

*Autopsy image of an Afghan prisoner who died in the custody of military contractors, showing rope burns on his neck and a cross cut into his scalp.*

*Pfc. Ben Walter from Chapman, Kansas, just after being shot by a sniper in Anwar province on Wednesday.*

These texts focus on U.S. soldiers intimidating their prisoners or posing with dead bodies in a cheerful manner; An American soldier being wounded or killed; a scene of a drone attack that killed 30 people; mutilated bodies of Sufis and an Afghan man. They describe representations of the American presence in conflict zones that the American government consistently censors out of the media coverage of war as well as covert operations like drone attacks. The government refuses to report on civilian casualties and it censors photos of dead American soldiers, even pictures of returning coffins are forbidden to be publicised. Thus in this version of *Lament of the Images* blackened out rectangles with added descriptions, in a condensed form, make visible censorship at work in the media coverage of the war on terror. Jaar and Strauss highlight the strategy behind the distribution of photographs of atrocity. The spectator is faced with the presence of events and their depiction that she is usually deprived of.

These descriptions create internal images and echo photos that the spectator had seen or heard of, or read about in the investigative journalism reports. In such presentations, as in censorship itself, immersion into the reality-effect created by the photo is absent. The viewer does not have a point of view of the image taker to step in or identify with. There is no retinal impression apart from the black frame. The spectator is confronted with her own mental images or their absence. This strategy makes visible the absence of visual distraction/stimulus by utilising black as the colour of redaction. The spectator is confronted with censorship whose target is the spectator herself. It highlights absences that issue from the initial withdrawal or destruction of images. This strategy raises the issue of the effects of the withdrawal of images and the effects of their circulation.<sup>475</sup> It also raises the issue of how the absence of the photographs disrupts and changes the spectator's experience of feeling present in order to make visible and imaginable what has happened and disrupt the usual process of empathy and understanding.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of war : when is life grievable?* London : Verso, p.9.

<sup>476</sup> Solnit, R., (2007). *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes For Politics*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, p.217.

### **The role of the photos**

Photographs played a crucial role in the human rights scandal known as “Abu Ghraib”. The internal military investigation and the resulting (devastating) report on conditions at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq by Major General Antonio M. Taguba was triggered by the photographs of the sexual humiliation and abuse of prisoners. Several of these photographs were broadcast on the *60 Minutes II* on April 28th 2004 and some were published in *The New Yorker* on May 10, 2004.<sup>477</sup> Without the leaked photographs there would probably have been no scandal.<sup>478</sup> Despite the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as other humanitarian organisations and journalists voiced serious concerns about the wellbeing and imprisonment conditions of Abu Ghraib and other American prisons well before the scandal broke, there was no interest from the media or the government in addressing the problem. As Susan Sontag put it ‘It was the photographs that made all this “real” to Bush and his associates. Up to then, there had been only words, which are easier to cover up in our age of infinite digital self-reproduction and self-dissemination, and so much easier to forget.’<sup>479</sup> Journalist Seymour Hersh explained how the media silence pointed to a different problem. In order to report abuse, they needed evidence, and it became available, at least for Hersh, when Gen. Taguba’s report was leaked to him as well as the photographs. In what follows I look at the assumptions expressed about the photos by soldiers and other military officials. Later I look at the reasons for and against the release of the photos expressed at the time of Obama’s decision to block the release of images.

### **Soldiers use of the photos**

The soldiers’ motives and assumptions about the role and function of the photos from Abu Ghraib prison are shown in the book *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008)<sup>480</sup> where American soldiers describe their experience at the prison. Two of the M.P.s on the MI block who took many of the infamous AG photos, Specialist Sabrina Harman and Corporal Charles Graner, recalled what follows here. Specialist Harman began photographing what

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<sup>477</sup> Hersh, S.M., (2004). Torture at Abu Ghraib: American soldiers brutalized Iraqis. How far up does the responsibility go? *The New Yorker*, May 10. [online] Available from:

<<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>478</sup> Gourevitch, P., and Morris E., (2008). *Standard Operating Procedure*. New York: Penguin Press, p.264.

<sup>479</sup> Sontag, S., (2004). Regarding the Torture of Others. *New York Times Magazine*. May 23. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>480</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, *Standard Operating Procedure*.

she saw because she found it hard to believe. She wanted to have evidence of what was allowed to be done to detainees.<sup>481</sup> In the case of a prisoner who, it was claimed by their platoon commander, died of a heart attack in the shower, Harman said: "I just started taking photos of everything I saw that was wrong, every little bruise and cut. His knees were bruised, his thighs were bruised by his genitals. He had restraint marks on his wrists".<sup>482</sup> She said: "There were so many things around the bandage, like the blood coming out of his nose and his ears. And his tooth was chipped - I didn't know if that happened there or before - his lip was split open, and it looked like somebody had either butt-stocked him or really got him good or hit him against the wall. It was a pretty good-sized gash. I took a photo of that as well."<sup>483</sup> She continued: "It was to prove to pretty much anybody who looked at this guy, Hey, I was just lied to. This guy did not die of a heart attack. Look at all these other existing injuries that they tried to cover up."<sup>484</sup> She wanted to expose a policy and intended to give the photographs to CNN after she got home from Iraq and out of the army.<sup>485</sup> Corporal Graner, former prison guard, used photos and video to document planned use of force, as was usual practice in U.S. prisons. The idea being, if anything went wrong, the pictures would tell the story.<sup>486</sup>

### ***The Military and the photos at Abu Ghraib - the memo and cover-up***

The Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse and torture photos were not a secret. Corporal Graner had shown his photographs of 'naked, trussed, panty-hooded prisoners' to his superior officers higher up the chain of command, and nobody objected to what they saw. There is no official record of their response to these photos.<sup>487</sup> On the contrary, Graner received a written assessment from his captain saying 'You are doing a fine job....You have received many accolades from the M.I. units here.'<sup>488</sup>

Two days after Graner's photos and videos were given by Sergeant Joseph Darby to the Army's Criminal Investigation Command (CID), Colonel Pappas issued a unique three-

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<sup>481</sup> Gourevitch, P., (2008). Exposure: The woman behind the camera at Abu Ghraib. *The New Yorker*, 24 March. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/exposure-5>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>482</sup> Gourevitch, 2008, Exposure: The woman behind the camera at Abu Ghraib.

<sup>483</sup> Gourevitch, 2008, Exposure: The woman behind the camera at Abu Ghraib.

<sup>484</sup> Gourevitch, 2008, Exposure: The woman behind the camera at Abu Ghraib.

<sup>485</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, pp.107, 112.

<sup>486</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.140.

<sup>487</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.128.

<sup>488</sup> Gourevitch, 2008.

page memo to all military personnel at the prison<sup>489</sup> announcing a forty-eight hour amnesty period and inviting anyone who had “contraband” to get rid of it “without penalty or legal consequence” by depositing them in “amnesty boxes” that were put in soldier’s living areas.<sup>490</sup> In between prohibited items that were defined as “contraband” such as booze, porn, personal weapons, and pets, were the photos. Point ‘e’ of this memo stated the following:

Pursuant to Geneva Convention directives, personnel will neither create nor possess photographs, videotapes, digital videos, CD/DVDs, computer files/folders, movies or any other medium containing images of any criminal or security detainee currently or formerly interned at Baghdad Central Correctional Facility, located at FOB Abu Ghraib, Iraq ....<sup>491</sup>

Evidently the army colonel ordered the destruction of evidence during the early period of the investigation of the AG photographs.

An Army public affairs officer, Lieutenant Colonel Vic Harris after seeing the Abu Ghraib photographs was shocked not just by the photos, but even more by the Army’s response to the pictures. He heard the discussion of the staff and commanders planning to contain the photos. They were not planning to prosecute anyone. ‘The only intent was to hide it and try to prevent the images from getting out to the media, to make it go away and not let the public know about it.’<sup>492</sup> In addition, Harris knew that Army lawyers contacted CID agents in the States in an attempt to try and hunt down all the friends and family members of the Abu Ghraib soldiers who might have had received copies of the photographs. Harris saw that the Army organised a cover-up.<sup>493</sup> As a result, Harris contacted one of the producers from the *60 Minutes* program and informed them that a number of soldiers had abused prisoners at Abu Ghraib and that there were photos.

Army Investigation focused entirely on the photos. CID summoned Special Agent Brent Pack, the lead forensic examiner of the computer crime unit of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigative Division and handed twelve compact discs that contained thousands of pictures from Abu Ghraib with an instruction:

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<sup>489</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.247.

<sup>490</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.248.

<sup>491</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.248.

<sup>492</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.251.

<sup>493</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.252.

We want you to find the ones that depict possible prisoner abuse, or people that were in the area at the times abuse was occurring. And we want to know exactly when the pictures were taken. Put them on a time line so that a jury can see when each incident began and when it ended; how much time elapsed in between these photographs; how much effort went into what these people were doing to the prisoners; and who else was there when these things occurred.<sup>494</sup>

This clearly only focused on who took the photos and who appears in them. After culling the unnecessary ones, they were left with 280 photographs, nearly all of them from the cameras of Graner, Harman and Frederick. On the account of these photographs, low ranking soldiers who took and appeared in them were sentenced to punishments ranging from a reduction in rank and a loss of pay to ten years in prison. The only person ranked above staff sergeant who was investigated was cleared of criminal wrongdoing. As Gourevitch pointed out 'No one has ever been charged for abuses at the prison that were not photographed.'<sup>495</sup> Thus exposure was turned into cover up. Having all the required evidence, the army avoided bringing to justice those who created and approved policies and gave orders.

### ***Vivid description (mental images) v. seeing the photo with one's own eyes***

Journalist Hersh revealed an interesting aspect in the perceived difference between the seeing of physical photos versus hearing descriptions of their contents. He reported that government officials and army generals either consciously avoided looking at the photos (despite already being informed of what they depicted), or verbally gave excuses for not knowing about the atrocities, because they had not seen the photos. To illustrate this, Hersh references the then-Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld saying: "Oh, my god, if I had only known. I had no idea about this. I didn't look at the pictures until the day or night before I came to the Congress, and nobody ever gave me any information about this."<sup>496</sup> This was despite the fact that through a military back-channel 'they were given explicit memoranda and details, including very vivid and graphic descriptions of what the photographs showed. As Taguba said, you did not need to "see" the photographs - that is, quote/unquote "see" - to know what was on them.'<sup>497</sup> Another example Hersh mentions is that of one three-star general who refused to see the photographs and explicitly said:

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<sup>494</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.265.

<sup>495</sup> Gourevitch, 2008.

<sup>496</sup> Goodman, A., (2007). Interview with Seymour Hersh. *Democracy Now!* June 19 [online] Available from: <[https://www.democracynow.org/2007/6/19/seymour\\_hersh\\_reveals\\_rumsfeld\\_misled\\_congress](https://www.democracynow.org/2007/6/19/seymour_hersh_reveals_rumsfeld_misled_congress)> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>497</sup> Interview with Seymour Hersh on *Democracy Now!* June 19, 2007.

“Look, if I look at these, then I have knowledge of them, then I have to act. I don’t want knowledge.”<sup>498</sup> The conscious avoidance of seeing photographic images of atrocities demonstrates very clearly that these military personnel were aware of the role photographic images (are supposed to) have. As in the last example, the general avoided seeing the photos with his own eyes as it gave him an excuse not to act.

### ***The government & the torture and abuse photos***

The American government had fought for more than a decade against the release of any additional photographs showing alleged abuse of detainees in prisons in Afghanistan and Iraq by United States military personnel. The main argument had been that it would jeopardise national security and that the photos might incite others to violence against Americans and U.S. interests. Gates's certification states that the ‘public disclosure of these photographs would endanger citizens of the United States, members of the United States Armed Forces, or employees of the United States Government deployed outside the United States.’<sup>499</sup>

On May 13, 2009 President Obama told reporters that the detainee photos are associated with closed investigations and that involved individuals have been identified and appropriately sanctioned. ‘It’s therefore my belief that the publication of these photos would not add any additional benefit to our understanding of what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals. In fact, the most direct consequence of releasing them, I believe, would be to further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger.’<sup>500</sup> Another reason was the fear that the ‘terrorists will parade their victims around’ in the same manner US soldiers did with the detainees in their custody. In that regard, the US official said, the photographs become nothing more than a propaganda tool for terrorists.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Interview with Seymour Hersh on *Democracy Now!* June 19, 2007.

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in Leopold, J., (2014). Up to 2,100 Photos of US Soldiers Abusing Prisoners May Soon Be Released *VICE News* Sep 4 [online] Available from: <<https://news.vice.com/article/up-to-2100-photos-of-us-soldiers-abusing-prisoners-may-soon-be-released>> ; Gibbs, R., (2009). Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs. The White House, May 13 [online] Available from: <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/press-briefing-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-5132009>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>500</sup> Obama, B., (2009). Statement by the President on the Situation in Sri Lanka and Detainee Photographs. The White House, May 13 [online] Available from: <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/statement-president-situation-sri-lanka-and-detainee-photographs>>; Barack Obama quoted in Zeleny, J. and Shanker, T., (2009). Obama Moves to Bar Release of Detainee Abuse Photos, *New York Times*, May 13&14 [online] Available from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/us/politics/14photos.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/us/politics/14photos.html?_r=0)> [All accessed 22 Sep 2020]; Leopold, 2014.

<sup>501</sup> Quoted in Leopold, 2014.

The American government did not hold responsible the Bush administration officials who wrote torture policy memos that authorised the actions that were depicted in the photos. Instead Obama assured ‘those who carried out their duties relying in good faith upon legal advice from the Department of Justice that they will not be subject to prosecution.’<sup>502</sup> The narrative of a ‘few bad apples’ has been repeated over and over. Major General Antonio Taguba who lead the Pentagon’s investigation into Abu Ghraib was forced to retire because his report was too critical of the U.S.military.<sup>503</sup>

### **ACLU and the photos**

The photos are part of the documents ACLU requested to release through FOIA ‘seeking records related to the treatment and death of prisoners held by the United States custody abroad after September 11, 2001, and records related to the practice of “rendering” those prisoners to countries known to use torture.’<sup>504</sup> FOIA was filed in the public interest. It is regarded as the citizen’s democratic right to know and see what was done in her name. An attorney with the ACLU Amrit Singh reasoned that detainee abuse images and policy documents ‘shed light on who is ultimately responsible for the widespread abuse of detainees.’ ACLU publishes all that is known: released photos<sup>505</sup> and descriptions of withheld photos<sup>506</sup> on their website, as well as interprets released photographs.<sup>507</sup> With regard to still-withheld photos, ACLU Deputy Legal Director Jameel Jaffer said, that ‘the still-secret pictures are the best evidence of the serious abuses that took place in military detention centers. The government’s selective disclosure risks misleading the public about the true extent of the abuse.’<sup>508</sup> Their volume of more than 2,000 images is seen as additional evidence that ‘it is no longer tenable to blame abuse on a few bad apples.

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<sup>502</sup> Barack Obama, B., (2009). Statement of President Barack Obama on Release of OLC Memos. The White House, April 16 [online] Available from: <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/statement-president-barack-obama-release-olc-memos>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>503</sup> Interview with Seymour Hersh on *Democracy Now!* June 19, 2007.

<sup>504</sup> ACLU, 2008, ACLU V. DOD - Decision.

<sup>505</sup> Released photos can be seen on ACLU website: ACLU. Pentagon Releases Photos of Abused Detainees. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/gallery/pentagon-releases-photos-abused-detainees>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>506</sup> ACLU keeps the spreadsheet with all redacted and withheld photographs. It details what is known about them and posts it online, see Relman, 2016, Pentagon Releases 198 Abuse Photos in Long-running Lawsuit. What They Don’t Show Is a Bigger Story. ACLU.

<sup>507</sup> Relman, E., (2016).The Stories Behind the Government’s Newly Released Army Abuse Photos. [aclu.org](https://www.aclu.org), Feb 11[online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/stories-behind-governments-newly-released-army-abuse-photos>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>508</sup> ACLU, 2016, Pentagon releases 198 photos relating to detainee abuse in long-running ACLU lawsuit.

These were policies set at the highest level.<sup>509</sup> Thus highlighting that the withheld photos are negative evidence of serious crimes.

On the decision to release photographs, Executive Director of the ACLU Anthony D. Romero said, that 'these images convey on a visceral level the impact of the government's policies. Now that the government has agreed not to contest the release of further images, it should focus on the real issue, which is how and why these abuses were allowed to happen in the first place.' Thus releasing photos is part of the process. ACLU's main task is to hold accountable the top-ranking officials who are truly responsible for these abuses. Furthermore, the court ruling would apply to other images of detainee abuse withheld on the same legal grounds as the Abu Ghraib images paving the way to greater transparency and accountability.

### **Judge**

In ordering the release of the images, Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein maintained that the publication of the photographs is central to the purposes of FOIA because they initiate debate, not only about the improper and unlawful conduct of American soldiers, 'rogue' soldiers, as they have been characterised, but also about other important questions as well -- for example, the command structure whose failures in exercising supervision may make them culpable along with the soldiers who were court-martialled for perpetrating the wrongs.

The Abu Ghraib photos demonstrated the power that visual evidence has in holding public attention and concern. Consequently, President Obama's decision in 2009 to oppose court ruling and not to release the remaining photographs from more than two dozen different detention facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq instigated an exchange of arguments for and against censorship or further disclosure. In what follows I look at arguments expressed by American cultural critics and investigative journalists who have studied the AG photos extensively and have used those photos in lectures, books and in reports.

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<sup>509</sup> Anthony D. Romero, executive director of the A.C.L.U., quoted in Zeleny and Shanker, 2009.

## **Seeing is believing v. believing is seeing**

### **Seeing is believing**

Art and cultural critic David Levi Strauss had studied the photographs from Abu Ghraib prison from the moment they appeared in the public domain, first on the television news program *60 Minutes II* on April 28, 2004 and then in Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker*, posted online on April 30.<sup>510</sup> Strauss had given slide lectures on them accompanied by over a hundred images around the United States and in Europe.

Following the announcement on May 13, 2009, Strauss wrote an essay 'A New Lament of the Images. On President Obama's Decision Not to Release More Images from Abu Ghraib' arguing for the release of all remaining photos.<sup>511</sup>

In his essay Strauss disqualifies the rationale used by Obama pointing out that it is the same argument the Bush administration used before - that it would not provide further help to understand what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals, instead it would rather escalate anti-American violence. Strauss sides with ACLU and Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein of the U.S. District Court in Manhattan, who ruled that the public's right to know outweighed a vague and speculative fear of danger to the U.S. military. He adds two points that have also been used by ACLU. Firstly, that the quantity of photographs provides additional evidence that the actions depicted in the Abu Ghraib images cannot be regarded as isolated incidents performed by a 'few bad apples', but are the result of policy decisions made at the highest level. Therefore, 'now we need to hold accountable those who actually formulated them (what has been called in other jurisdictions "The Torture Team": George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Douglas Feith, Alberto Gonzales, John Yoo, David Addington, and William J. Haynes II). And the only way to do that is to view the evidence, including the images.'<sup>512</sup> Strauss concluded, by reminding us of consequences to the citizens, 'This means that these things were being done in our names, with our implicit support as participants in a democracy, and we need to know exactly what was done.'<sup>513</sup> So that those responsible for it could be brought to justice.

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<sup>510</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2014). Inconvenient Evidence: On the Images from Abu Ghraib. In: *Words not spent today buy smaller images tomorrow : essays on the present and future of photography*. New York : Aperture, p.139.

<sup>511</sup> Strauss, 2014, A New Lament of the Images. In: *Words not spent today buy smaller images tomorrow*, pp.146-148.

<sup>512</sup> Strauss, 2014, p.147.

<sup>513</sup> Strauss, 2014, p.147.

Secondly, Strauss points to the ability of the photographs to bring 'it home in a way that written accounts cannot.'<sup>514</sup> He reminds us that the torture policies of the Bush administration were already available in text documents before the first images were published. But seeing images helped to drive public political life.<sup>515</sup> Strauss puts it so that 'Seeing is believing, and unless people see what's been done in their name, they don't believe it in the same way.'<sup>516</sup> This train of thought has been furthered by Eliza Relman, Paralegal with the ACLU's National Security Project, stating that 'Suppressing the most powerful evidence (the photographs) of our government's abuses makes confronting those abuses impossible.'<sup>517</sup> (One of her texts is titled 'A Picture of Torture Is Worth a Thousand Reports'<sup>518</sup>) In other words, Strauss reveals the contradiction between Obama's electoral mandate to restore the rule of law and bring greater transparency into the process of governing and his decision to withhold evidence of abuse and torture by the U.S. military personnel.

When asked in 2014 about the yet to be released Abu Ghraib images and videos made by US military personnel, Strauss argues that it is 'because of the effectiveness of the images. They became the symbol of the change in US policy to include torture. Images are very powerful. That's why the US government has become very afraid of the effects of these images worldwide.'<sup>519</sup> As Specialist Sabrina Harman noted, they expose and 'prove that the U.S. is not what they think.'<sup>520</sup>

In 2011, Strauss reminded us that, 'history shows us that iconoclasm generally doesn't work. When you try to destroy or censor images, those images gain power rather than losing it and often come back to haunt their suppressors.'<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Strauss, 2014, p.148.

<sup>515</sup> Strauss, 2014, p.148.

<sup>516</sup> Strauss, 2014, p.148.

<sup>517</sup> Relman, E., (2016). Pentagon releases 198 abuse photos in long-running lawsuit. What they don't show is a bigger story. *ACLU*. February 5. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/pentagon-releases-198-abuse-photos-long-running-lawsuit-what-they-dont-show-bigger>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>518</sup> Relman, E., (2015). A Picture of Torture Is Worth a Thousand Reports. [aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org), April 28 [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/picture-torture-worth-thousand-reports>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>519</sup> In Pete Brook's interview with David Levi Strauss - Brook, P., (2014). The war over the US Government's unreleased torture pictures. *Wired*, December 12 [online] Available from: <<https://www.wired.com/2014/12/war-us-governments-unreleased-torture-pictures/>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>520</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.112.

<sup>521</sup> Strauss, D.L., (2011). Withholding Images. *Time*. May 9. [online] Available from: <<http://time.com/3777002/withholding-images/>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

### **Believing is seeing**

In 'A New Lament of the Images', Strauss referenced and disagreed with points made by American author and journalist Philip Gourevitch in an op-ed piece that the *New York Times* did publish after Obama's announcement. Philip Gourevitch argues in 'The Abu Ghraib We Cannot See' that Obama's decision not to release more photos was the right decision. A year before Gourevitch published the book *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008) that told the Abu Ghraib story from the American soldiers' perspective. It was a collaborative work with writer and filmmaker Errol Morris. It stemmed from a year and a half of continuous conversations with Morris about the hundreds of hours of interviews he conducted with American soldiers and military officials; and the thousands of documents that Morris collected for his motion picture *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). Gourevitch spent more than a year living with the photographs from Abu Ghraib while writing SOP. He says he has seen 'many more pictures than were ever published in the press, including, I believe, many - if not most - of the photos that the president would now prefer that you don't see.'<sup>522</sup>

Gourevitch argues together with Obama that new photos of abuse would 'enflame America's enemies and endanger our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq' and that they would not add to our knowledge.<sup>523</sup> 'With all that we know about the Bush administration's torture policy, the discussion about the release of more photos is a sideshow.'<sup>524</sup> But the sideshow by whom and for whom?

In the op-ed Gourevitch sets the scene by reminding us of two things. Firstly, M.P.'s that were assigned guard duty on the military intelligence cellblock at Abu Ghraib where prisoners were held pending and during interrogation had no military training as prison guards. They were told to do whatever the interrogators, that were from military intelligence, C.I.A. and civilian contractors, told them to do to the prisoners. Secondly, the photos M.P.'s took at Abu Ghraib prison were intended as evidence, as a form of "proof". Specialist Sabrina Harman was working on exposé. Cpl. Charles Graner showed his photos to his superior officers, medics, lawyers and was getting praised for his work.<sup>525</sup> Gourevitch admits 'it may be that without the photographs we still would not know the

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<sup>522</sup> Gourevitch, P., (2009). The Abu Ghraib We Cannot See. *The New Yorker*, May 23. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/opinion/24gourevitch.html>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>523</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>524</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>525</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

story,<sup>526</sup> nevertheless, he reminds us that 'most of the worst things that happened at Abu Ghraib were never photographed.'<sup>527</sup> The photographs dominated the Abu Ghraib story and they 'have a place in the story, but they are not the story.'<sup>528</sup> 'What those soldier-photographers revealed to us with their cameras was just a hint of what they have to tell us if only we would listen.'<sup>529</sup>

On account of the photographs soldiers were 'sentenced to punishments ranging from a reduction in rank and a loss of pay to ten years in prison. The only person ranked above staff sergeant to face a court-martial was cleared of criminal wrongdoing. No one has ever been charged with abuses at the prison that were not photographed.'<sup>530</sup> Thus Gourevitch argues that 'the photographs were used by the administration and the military to frame the soldiers who took and appeared in them as rogues acting out of their own individual perversity. In this way, the exposé became the cover up: the soldiers who revealed our corruption to us were made scapegoats and thrown in prison.'<sup>531</sup> Gourevitch sees that the focus of the debate about the release of additional photographs again would be on soldiers and not on the Bush administration policies at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. He argues that the Abu Ghraib photos were not only exposé. Simultaneously, those photos have served as 'a distraction, even deterrent, from precise understanding of the events they depict.'<sup>532</sup> Gourevitch is convinced that 'Photographs cannot show us a chain of command, or Washington decision making. Photographs cannot tell stories. They can only provide evidence of stories, and evidence is mute; it demands investigation and interpretation.'<sup>533</sup>

Instead Gourevitch draws attention to a recently released series of the Bush administration's torture policy memos that authorised the very methods for inflicting pain and suffering that the Abu Ghraib photographs represented; and that former Vice president Dick Cheney has taken credit for torture. Therefore the attention devoted to the release of more photos is a sideshow because it is used to take away focus from the fact that 'the real bad apples were at the top of the civilian chain of command in

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<sup>526</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.283.

<sup>527</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>528</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p.283.

<sup>529</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>530</sup> Gourevitch, 2008.

<sup>531</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>532</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>533</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

Washington.<sup>534</sup> Finally, Gourevitch points out that Obama instead ‘has revived the old “bad apples” theory that blames a few low-ranking “individuals” for doing what our highest leaders asked of them’<sup>535</sup> and is eager to move on. Thus, despite agreeing with Obama’s decision not to release more photos, Gourevitch reveals a more complex scene behind the motives of his decision. He links responsibility for the cover up not only to the government and the military. Gourevitch sees the long stretched passivity of the press and the public as ‘complicity on the issue.’ With regards to the demands to releasing more images Gourevitch describes this as an eagerness for ‘more sensational imagery.’ He claims that already-available photos and released memos provide enough information to know what has been going on. As his collaborator Errol Morris has put it elsewhere, ‘We don’t need advanced digital tools to mislead, to misdirect or to confuse. All we need is a willingness to uncritically believe.’<sup>536</sup>

The Abu Ghraib photographs have been many things. For American investigative journalist and political writer Seymour Hersh, they were part of the evidence, together with the Taguba report (result of a secret, internal investigation by the US army), needed to prove and report on abuses in prisons inside Iraq that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had been reporting already for months at the time.<sup>537</sup> Hersh questioned the chain of command already in the first reporting and stated that Taguba’s report ‘amounts to an unsparing study of collective wrongdoing and the failure of Army leadership at the highest level.’<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>535</sup> Gourevitch, 2009.

<sup>536</sup> Morris, E., (2008). Believing is Seeing. *The New Yorker*, July 13. [online] Available from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/opinion/13morris.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/opinion/13morris.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 4 June 2017]; and in Morris, E., (2004). Not Every Picture Tells a Story. *The New Yorker*, November 20. [online] Available from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/opinion/not-every-picture-tells-a-story.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/opinion/not-every-picture-tells-a-story.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 4 June 2017]. (That is a slightly modified version of the editorial published in *The New York Times*, November 20, 2004 - <<http://errolmorris.com/content/editorial/nytimes1104.html>>)

<sup>537</sup> Wittwer, R., (2014). Interview with Seymour Hersh: ‘Problem is not interrogation, it’s war itself.’ [dw.com](http://www.dw.com), April 28 [online] Available from: <<http://www.dw.com/en/problem-is-not-interrogation-its-war-itself/a-17592575>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>538</sup> Hersh, S.M., (2004). Torture at Abu Ghraib: American soldiers brutalized Iraqis. How far up does the responsibility go? *The New Yorker*, May 10. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib>> ; see also further reporting - Hersh, S.M., (2004). Chain of Command: How the Department of Defense mishandled the disaster at Abu Ghraib. *The New Yorker*, May 17. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/17/chain-of-command>>; Hersh, S.M., (2004). The Gray Zone: How a secret Pentagon program came to Abu Ghraib. *The New Yorker*, May 24. [online] Available from: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/24/the-gray-zone>> [All accessed 31 May 2017].

For Susan Sontag 'they were necessary to get our leaders to acknowledge that they had a problem on their hands.'<sup>539</sup> She doubted that the reports compiled by the Red Cross and other reports by journalists about the brutal punishments inflicted on "detainees" and "suspected terrorists" in prisons run by the American military in Afghanistan and in Iraq (that at the time had circulated for more than a year) were read by President Bush or Vice President Dick Cheney or Condoleezza Rice or Rumsfeld. She states that:

Apparently, it took the photographs to get their attention, when it became clear they could not be suppressed; it was the photographs that made all this "real" to Bush and his associates. Up to then, there had been only words, which are easier to cover up in our age of infinite digital self-reproduction and self-dissemination, and so much easier to forget.<sup>540</sup>

For Errol Morris photography makes it harder to see war as heroic and honourable. It makes it harder to deny that *something* - the shooting, the killing, happened. Pictures are physical evidence that 'provide a point around which other pieces of evidence collect.'<sup>541</sup> It is part of an attempt to understand what really happened because they force us to collect our thoughts and to think about motivation and intent. 'They make us think about how we interpret our experience, how we think about the world.'<sup>542</sup> They make us care. But as Morris argues despite the evidence of our own senses, 'If we want to believe something, then we often find a way to do so regardless of evidence to the contrary. Believing is seeing and not the other way around.'<sup>543</sup> People will interpret the Abu Ghraib photographs according to their ideological dispositions and same as Gourevitch he argues that they served both to expose and to coverup.<sup>544</sup>

For Pete Brook, Abu Ghraib is the pink elephant in the room. The Abu Ghraib photographs are the most important images of the War on Iraq. And they are many things for Brook. They are evidence of a corrupted system bereft of accountability in the Rumsfeld

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<sup>539</sup> Sontag, S., (2004). Regarding the Torture of Others. *New York Times Magazine*. May 23. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>540</sup> Sontag, S., (2004). Regarding the Torture of Others. *New York Times Magazine*. May 23. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>541</sup> Morris, E. (2004). Not Every Picture Tells a Story. *The New Yorker*, November 20. [online] Available from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/opinion/not-every-picture-tells-a-story.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/opinion/not-every-picture-tells-a-story.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>542</sup> Morris, 2004.

<sup>543</sup> Morris, 2004.

<sup>544</sup> Morris, E., (2008). Film: Standard Operating Procedure. [errolmorris.com](http://errolmorris.com) [online] Available from: <<http://errolmorris.com/film/sop.html>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

Department of Defense. They are the most shared images of global culture in which the hooded prisoner has become a twenty first century icon. Brook finds it important to remind us that the Abu Ghraib photographs can and should be understood only in the context of their production, namely, they were created by a group of individuals trained as soldiers that were ordered to guard prisoners in a decrepit prison facility. These photographs were made by photographers keen to document precisely what was going on because they could not grasp the atrocities they took part in and therefore they found it important to document it. They were 'a group of soldiers influenced and hardened by one another; soldiers under no direct or pre-written guidelines. A group of soldiers with complex thoughts, manipulations and haunted memories.'<sup>545</sup>

To sum up, in the book version of *Lament of the Images* (2009), Jaar again embodies withdrawn images in order for them to acquire visibility. This time he uses only the colour black and (again) ekphrastic texts that provide vivid descriptions creating absented photos in the reader's mind. Though the censored image will possibly never be accessible, the image frame makes its absence visible. The empty frames restore the images back into existence. Despite the fact that there is no rich retinal experience (apart from seeing black rectangle and reading the text), it does not hinder the creation of new mental images that inform and update the existing mental images the spectator already carries within herself. Also, this case study reminds us that the spectator's body functions as a living media itself.<sup>546</sup> The spectator's body is central in the process of creation and the transmission of images, even absent images.

The prolonged scandal and related investigations disclosed nuanced reasonings that emphasised the power of the photos not only to expose but also to distract. Notably, it showed that despite the tremendous power the AG photos had to focus the public's attention, they 'ultimately lead to important, albeit insufficient, efforts at accountability<sup>547</sup> and reform.'<sup>548</sup> In the discourse following the release of the AG photos, from one side

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<sup>545</sup> Brook, P., (2008). Philip Gourevitch, Standard Operating Procedure, Abu Ghraib and the Long Form Interview. *Prison Photography*, December 6. [online] Available from: <<https://prisonphotography.org/2008/12/06/philip-gourevitch-standard-operating-procedure-abu-ghraib-and-the-long-form-interview/>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>546</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, p.3.

<sup>547</sup> Zernike, K., (2005). Ringleader in Iraqi Prisoner Abuse Is Sentenced to 10 Years. [nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/us/ringleader-in-iraqi-prisoner-abuse-is-sentenced-to-10-years.html?_r=0), Jan 16. [online] Available from: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/us/ringleader-in-iraqi-prisoner-abuse-is-sentenced-to-10-years.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/us/ringleader-in-iraqi-prisoner-abuse-is-sentenced-to-10-years.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

<sup>548</sup> Relman, 2016, Pentagon Releases 198 Abuse Photos in Long-Running Lawsuit. What They Don't Show Is a Bigger Story. [aclu.org](http://aclu.org).

there are continuous (and still ongoing in 2016) attempts to follow the law and proceed with the legal battle, but from another side of the argument there is an awareness that the narrative has been managed and subverted by the government. Therefore I want to suggest that the argument exchange on why to release or not to release the remaining torture and abuse photos, that can be expressed in the following comparison 'Believing is seeing v. seeing is believing', is related not only to the assumption that the photos are crucial evidence, but also that the assumption is about democratic process itself. The release of withheld documents, including photos, is seen as an essential part of a functioning democracy. Therefore, their access is evidence of a different kind. Releasing all photos would demonstrate that democratic rights and transparency are working. This realisation is an additional function of the atrocity photographs.

Thus frustration with the Abu Ghraib abuse photos and their censorship by the military and the government represents frustration with the handling of the Abu Ghraib scandal, with the continual lies told by some government and army officials (as Seymour Hersh's reporting has exposed) and the unwillingness to prosecute high ranking officials who created memos & implemented policies, therefore creating conditions for abuse and torture. Instead those who criticised the higher command for their failures and ascribed responsibility for the abuses, were forced to retire (Gen. Taguba was forced to leave) and some low-ranking soldiers at the other end of the chain of command were prosecuted.

With this case study I aim to point out that there is a line of thought that does not isolate photos from their context but rather carefully puts photographs in a bigger infrastructure, in this case that of the army and the government efforts to wage a war on terror. And this approach to the AG photographs is used on both sides of the debate about the relevance of their release.

The AG photos should not be seen as the overarching evidence of what happened, because, as Gourevitch had made it clear in the book *Standard Operating Procedure*,<sup>549</sup> the most terrible things done to certain prisoners were not photographed, therefore these photos cannot be regarded as a systematic representation of all that took place in detention centres in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, an increased amount of photos would show that the problem was much more widespread and therefore would provide additional evidence of those policies that were implemented at many prison sites.

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<sup>549</sup> Gourevitch and Morris, 2008.

If we look at the facts of who has been prosecuted and held responsible for the deeds depicted in the AG photos, then one might agree with Gourevitch and Morris that the photos are a side show, that they are used to distract attention from the wider context and chain of command, as well as focus attention on the narrative proposed by the government that those were a 'few bad apples,' to quote Obama on those who have already been prosecuted and punished. No one who issued torture memos was held responsible despite the fact that the chain of command has already been put at the centre of the scandal at its very beginning as starting with: the Taguba report, the Hersh investigative reports, the Morris and Gourevitch movie and the book *Standard Operating Procedure*. Nevertheless the chain of command was never put under the spotlight by the government and held responsible.

Finally, I want to suggest that this work can already be regarded as illuminating the levels of secrecy. The discourse surrounding the AG photographs revealed that secrecy or more precisely levels of access to the censored photographs are more nuanced and varied. It revealed that it was not only the military and the government personnel who had access to the AG photographs and also their descriptions. It became clearer that there are many more levels of secrecy in existence. There are more people who do see images that the general public is not allowed to see.

### **2.3. Alfredo Jaar. *May 1, 2011* (2011)**

In the artwork *May 1, 2011* Alfredo Jaar explicitly exposes different levels of access to the destruction of the body of an enemy. In this installation work, he displays a level of access that is denied to ordinary citizens, but available to a narrow spectatorship of the government and military personnel.

On May 2, 2011 then-American President Obama announced that the United States had killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al Qaeda.<sup>550</sup> In an interview with Steve Kroft on 5 May for the *60 Minutes*, President Obama claimed that he had seen the photos following the raid on the compound and that he knew that bin Laden had been killed, but he would

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<sup>550</sup> President Obama announced that the United States has killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al Qaeda - Phillips, M., (2011). Osama Bin Laden Dead. obamawhitehouse.archives.gov , May 2 [online] Available from: <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

not release the post-mortem images of Osama bin Laden taken to prove his death.<sup>551</sup> "It is important to make sure that very graphic photos of somebody who was shot in the head are not floating around as an incitement to additional violence or as a propaganda tool," said the president. "We discussed this internally", he said. "Keep in mind that we are absolutely certain that this was him. We've done DNA sampling and testing. And so there is no doubt that we killed Osama bin Laden."<sup>552</sup> The White House Press Secretary Carney said: "It is not in our national security interests to allow those images, as has been in the past been the case, to become icons to rally opinion against the United States. The president's number one priority is the safety and security of American citizens at home and Americans abroad. There is no need to release these photographs to establish Osama bin Laden's identity. And he saw no other compelling reason to release them, given the potential for national security risks. And further, because he believes, as he said so clearly, this is not who we are."<sup>553</sup> Thus, the main reasons for withholding the images is that the graphic nature of these photos would create a national security risk, and that it would be associated with American identity.<sup>554</sup>

Following this announcement of the withholding of the images, Jaar made *May 1, 2011* (2011) where he continued to explore censorship in the media coverage, this time exploring the execution of Osama bin Laden. A mixed media installation that consists of two LCD monitors and two framed works on archival paper was first exhibited at SCAD Museum of Art in USA in 2011 from October 29 to February 12, 2012. On one monitor Jaar puts an image taken from the White house website, that is taken by official White House photographer Pete Souza. It shows the American president sitting among his national security team in the Situation Room of the White House<sup>555</sup> receiving an update on the mission against Osama bin Laden. They look fixedly at what is described as a large screen outside the image. This photograph supposedly depicts all persons while they are watching Live footage of the assault on the hideout of Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011. Operation Neptune Spear was broadcast to the White House, but it was not made available to the wider public.

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<sup>551</sup> Montopoli, B., (2011). Obama: I won't release bin Laden death photos. CBS News, May 5 [online] Available from: <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-i-wont-release-bin-laden-death-photos/> [Accessed 21 Sep 2020].

<sup>552</sup> Montopoli, 2011.

<sup>553</sup> Montopoli, 2011.

<sup>554</sup> Montopoli, 2011.

<sup>555</sup> The White House, President Barack Obama. Photo Galleries: May 1, 2011 [online] Available from: <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/photogallery/may-1-2011>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

The second screen next to this promoted media image is left white. The monitor is turned on to radiate white light. It represents 'a large screen outside the image' on which the absent images of the extermination of Osama bin Laden had been transmitted. This idea is emphasised by monitors being slightly turned towards each other. In a smaller frame next to the screen there are names of all the political figures depicted in the media photograph. The other smaller frame situated next to the white screen is blank. Jaar did not identify anyone, although spectators were led to believe that the main person, the only one that is named, is Osama bin Laden. Thus, not only are the withheld images left to the imagination and belief, but so is the event itself.

To make visible redaction of the image, of so-called 'legal violence', Jaar employed a different strategy. He chose to use a white screen and left a description of the participants blank. This atrocity does not have a description. He did not use the black colour that is usually used to redact secret data. He shows U.S. government officials looking at the withheld images. One interpretation would be to point out the absence of the images of an extermination from the public space, but I think Jaar perhaps does something else with this installation. He gives the spectator different evidence. It is not just about withholding the depiction of atrocity from the public space, but also about unequal access to representation. The spectator is faced with a layer of secrecy she is not invited to join. Jaar exhibited spectators who can view secret images and these people have access to events and their depiction that most do not have.



22. Alfredo Jaar, *May 1, 2011, 2011*

This installation was exhibited at the SCAD museum of art in America<sup>556</sup> six months after the announcement of this event. Jaar chose an American audience, spectators who most probably experienced the media coverage of Operation Neptune Spear half a year earlier. He addressed and exposed the issue of unequal access to the depiction of atrocity that was performed in the name of American citizens. This event is regarded as the U.S. government's break with the long historical and cultural-political tradition of publicly displaying the slain war opponent. Not that long ago, in 2003 Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay were killed by the U.S. military and the photos of their damaged corpses were disseminated in the press<sup>557</sup>; on 8 June 2006 an image of the body of Al-Qaeda

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<sup>556</sup> SCAD Museum of Art. Alfredo Jaar, 'May 1, 2011.' [scadmoa.org](http://www.scadmoa.org) [online] Available from: <<http://www.scadmoa.org/art/exhibitions/2011/alfredo-jaar>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

<sup>557</sup> Agencies, (2003). US releases photos of Saddam sons. *The Guardian*. July 24. [online] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/24/iraq.usa2>> [Accessed 4 June 2017]; Strauss, D.L., (2011). Withholding Images. *Time*. May 9. [online] Available from: <<http://time.com/3777002/withholding-images/>> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

leader in Iraq Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi was displayed by the American military in a news conference in Baghdad.<sup>558</sup>

In addition, this artwork prompts us to consider the following issue. In 2016 American investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh published a book *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*<sup>559</sup> where he revealed the results of his long investigation and offered a different version of how Osama bin Laden was tracked and killed. It departs from both, the official version that was given by the Obama administration and the version that was depicted in the movie *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) written by Mark Boal and directed by Kathryn Bigelow that chronicled the decade-long hunt for al-Qaeda terrorist leader Osama bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks, and Bin Laden's death at the hands of the Navy S.E.A.L.s Team 6 in May 2011.<sup>560</sup> Following Hersh's revelations, the official version of how Osama bin Laden was killed had not been amended, nor Bigelow's movie had been (or can be) updated. I would suggest that the exploration of the issue of factual changes that alter the interpretation of the event and consequently affect the artwork made about this event, would be a relevant research topic to pursue in more depth.

To conclude and sum up, in all artworks that Jaar (himself and in collaboration with David Levi Strauss) created, he focused on the censorship and the spectator's role in viewing atrocity. This theme he had explored for years starting with *The Rwanda Project*. In *Lament of the Images* (2002, v.1) he used a white light in the darkened space to focus the spectator's attention on censorship exercised by the media; and hinting at the spectators 'blindness,' distractedness from atrocities that are redacted from the public space. He created slower viewing situations by creating installations that hinder fast movement and consequently create slower viewing possibilities. The installation consisted of darkened spaces which one cannot rush through. In the 2009 version of *Lament of the Images* Jaar utilised the black colour that usually represents redaction. In *May 1, 2011* Jaar introduced a new strategy by rendering visible levels of secrecy in censorship. He framed and

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<sup>558</sup> Burns, J., (2006). U.S. Strike Hits Insurgent at Safehouse. *New York Times*. June 8. [online] Available from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/08/world/middleeast/08cnd-iraq.html>> [Accessed 11 June 2017]; Williams, L., (2010). Cluster Fuck: The Forcible Frame in Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure*. *Camera Obscura* 73, 25 (1), pp.29-67.

<sup>559</sup> Hersh, S.M., (2016). *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. Verso. For earlier version of the investigative results see Hersh, S.M., (2015). *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. *London Review of Books*, 21 May. 37 (10). [online] Available from: <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n10/seymour-m-hersh/the-killing-of-osama-bin-laden>> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>560</sup> Bigelow, K., (2012). *Zero Dark Thirty*. imdb.com [online] Available from: <[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1790885/?ref\\_=nm\\_knf\\_i2](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1790885/?ref_=nm_knf_i2)> [Accessed 22 Sep 2020].

exposed spectators that authorised redaction of the images, so that they are supposedly looking at themselves. These installations allow the spectator to consider subjects chosen to be secret and the processes that create secrecy, and execute censorship.

None of these works could be 'read' just by looking only at the artwork itself. I suggest that all these works have taken part in a 'deconstruction' of the expectation that the photo can or should tell the story in its entirety, in other words, represent the whole event. It becomes more obvious that the image or frame representing its absence is part of a wider frame. That the process of interpretation/'reading' demands much more from the spectator than looking at the installation. It is due not only to the spectator's previous ignorance. Some cases demonstrated that it might take a long time for information that illuminates the event to be made public simply because investigations exploring these events and ongoing trial results continue to be drip fed and still today not all the evidence is present. Investigative reporting results have been published in books. And with all the gained knowledge and awareness I continue to agree with John Berger that 'the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.'<sup>561</sup> There is hope that more withheld photographs will be released or leaked. That there will be more transparency gained and new investigations would shed light onto secrets that we possibly pass by un-noticing.

There are two points I want to make in regard to mental images. Jaar presented to the spectator empty frames, either white or black with an exception of *May 1, 2011* where he added an official image from the White house website. There are longer or shorter ekphrastic descriptions providing some contexts. There are no visual references presented. These un-immersive works with white screen as in *Lament of the Images* literally shed light on the viewer and her condition of spectatorship. The spectator in the absence of an image-maker's perspective cannot/might not immerse and empathise with depicted victims. Nevertheless the spectator creates images in herself. Thus only mental images are evoked or generated (imagined, assembled from already seen images) by the spectator. These installations created situations where the spectator can explore the creation of or absence of mental images in herself. The second point was highlighted by some American army and government personnel who had a peculiar assumption about the relationship between the knowledge of the event and the photograph. They separated description of the photograph and the actual physical act of seeing the photograph. It showed the power some of the military personnel attach to the photographic image, while

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<sup>561</sup> Berger, et. al, 1977, p.7.

at the same time ignore same atrocity if it is conveyed by different means, such as verbal description.

Jaar's early *Lament of the Images* (2002, v.1) can be seen as a background, a stage for the spectator. Jaar created space that introduces the spectator to the complexity of controlled visibility of different events and then brings her into brightly enlightened dark space. Though the white screen can be regarded as the end point of these installations and the spectator is often shown as being attracted to it in exhibition displays, the installation puts light on the spectator that cannot see the image, because the image is privatised, absented, or censored by the absence of documentation (image was never taken, there is only factuality of the event and its description as in the case of Mandela's un-prisonment or as in case of purchased satellite images). These works actualise and stage the spectator and perhaps expose inadvertent inaccessibility of visual evidence and possibly highlight the role of verbal narrative and storytelling, and public experience - sharing and questioning the situation in an art environment.

Furthermore, In the *Lament of the Images* Jaar rendered public themes that were censored and consequently enacted a disobedient act of seeing. He considered the forms of social and state power that are "embedded" in the frame, including the state and the military regulatory regimes. Thus, the viewer is led to interpret the interpretation that has been imposed upon the public, resulting in the possibility of critique of regulatory and censorious power.<sup>562</sup> Lastly, in *May 1, 2011* Jaar introduced a new strategy by rendering visible levels of secrecy (in censorship). He framed and exposed spectators that authorised redaction of the images that they themselves were supposedly observing. These exposures highlight the deficiency of the democratic process and corruption of the system that executed censorship in the first instance. Levels of secrecy will be further explored and rendered visible in more detail in two case studies that address and expose the CIA's extraordinary rendition programme (2001 - 2009) that is part of the U.S. war on terror that I consider in the next chapter.

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<sup>562</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of war : when is life grievable?* London : Verso, p.72.

### **Chapter 3. Extraordinary rendition and disappeared bodies: exposing infrastructures**

In this chapter I consider two works that address and expose the CIA's extraordinary rendition programme that is part of the U.S. war on terror. These case studies focus on the infrastructure of the secret programme (2001 - 2009) that was designed to disappear and torture suspected terrorists. Both are long term collaborative projects that investigated the illegal covert programme and published their findings in book formats, next to newspaper articles, scientific paper<sup>563</sup> and exhibitions in museums, galleries and online on their websites. The first book that systematically investigated and documented the U.S. government practice of extraordinary rendition was published in 2006. It was called *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*. The book's authors are American investigative journalist A.C. Thompson and "military geographer", artist and photographer Trevor Paglen (1974). Paglen also made a photo series *The Black Sites* (2006). The second book, *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition*, was published in 2015 and is a collaboration between counterterrorism investigator Crofton Black and British artist Edmund Clark (1963). It explores the processes, paper trail and locations of the CIA's secret prison programme in Europe. Moreover, both case studies expose how this secret programme (its censorship and also parts that have been made public) has affected and continues to affect democratic process (and law). Notably, the politics of production and the politics of viewing or spectatorship are central to these collaborative investigations.

I start by drawing up a background for these books and artworks by providing a concise history of the CIA extraordinary rendition programme (known so far); and continue by looking at the representational strategies utilised and developed by Paglen (and Thompson) and Clark and Black to render visible the extraordinary renditions that go beyond the strategy of exposure of censorship that hides these atrocities. I pay particular attention to the role and use of the photographs. I also consider the photographs of rendition victims and mental images of atrocities endured provided by detainee testimonies that are part of the story. Lastly, at the end of this chapter, I consider some observations

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<sup>563</sup> Raphael, S., Black, C., Blakeley, R. and Kostas, S., (2016). Tracking rendition aircraft as a way to understand CIA secret detention and torture in Europe, *The international journal of human rights*. Volume 20: Issue 1, 78-103. [online] Available from: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2015.1044772>> [Accessed 19 February 2020].

and concerns raised by Paglen in his recent research on machine vision<sup>564</sup> because they bear consequences for the human visual culture and envisage tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action. Some of the developments described also have consequences for investigative and politically active artists who address and expose the state violence in their work. The (current) conditions and circumstances are highlighted by Paglen's and Clark's conscious and careful political performances. Nevertheless, the most recent example provided by Eyal Weizman (Forensic Architecture) reveal and shed light onto further developments that have taken place; I find these developments (and incidents) essential to the field of violence representation and particularly for the 'negative' approach.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how artists rendered visible censored information (covert programme) and particularly (visual) depictions of atrocities (rendition and torture). What representational strategies have been utilised and devised to counter the absence of photographic evidence (of atrocity)? What assumptions about the photographic image and spectatorship have been embodied? What language is used to describe the image and spectator's activity? Moreover, I examine assumptions held about depiction of the vulnerable/violated body. How does the 'negative evidence' challenge the common perception/notion of photographic image of atrocity as evidence of atrocity?

I draw on the ideas of visual and conceptual frames that distribute the recognisability elaborated by Butler; the reconstruction of the event of the photograph (the photographic event) as a civic skill developed by Azoulay; civic spectatorship explored by Hariman and Lucaites; the relevance of the perspective of the story and whose story it is addressed by Solnit (also Girard on the importance of victim's perspective). Also, I draw on the notion of the "mental image" developed by Belting.

This section of the thesis argues that artists (with their collaborators) have developed elaborate representational strategies to expose the infrastructure of atrocity. These strategies go beyond pointing to and exposing the fact of censorship. These are longterm collaborations with investigators and researchers (and artists themselves doing research)

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<sup>564</sup> Paglen, T., (2016). *Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)*. *The New Inquiry*. [online] Available from: <<https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>> [Accessed 27 July 2020]; Crawford, K. and Paglen, T., (2019). *Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets*, Published by The AI Now Institute, NYU September 19, 2019. [online] Available from: <<https://www.excavating.ai/>> [Accessed 27 July 2020]; and in other talks and conversations on the subject.

that expose the infrastructure of the 'black world' where atrocities were/are hidden in plain sight. They render it visible through a variety of means - testimonies of former detainees, reports of the investigative journalists, corporative paper trails, flight records, declassified documents (image texts created by power structure itself), different types of redaction as evidence itself, satellite images, photographs etc. Thus, they focus on and emphasise the politics of production. Also, I suggest that both collaborations, although in slightly different ways, have developed approaches to the photographic evidence and spectators role in the process of viewing.

Moreover, I point out that by accumulating, exposing and disseminating the knowledge about censored and covert atrocities artists have not only illuminated its infrastructure but also created a vocabulary (Paglen) and written history (Clark) that otherwise would not be available. They tell an alternative story and thus disrupt the state controlled narrative and therefore join and amplify the critique of war and atrocities and their (absent) coverage in the (corporate and establishment) media.

Furthermore, by exploring the covert state operations and shedding light into the workings of the infrastructures of secrecy, they expose its influence on democratic systems (and domestic and international law) in the form of human rights violations and subverted democracy. Growing awareness of the structures of secrecy exercised by the Western democratic (American and European) governments and military has complicated viewing strategies - there is less expectation that the image will provide the whole story. Instead, the viewer, in order to read the photograph or its redacted presence/absence respectively, is demanded to know the background, to do/read research ("to work harder"). The photograph and its manifested absence is a small part of a big puzzle (part of a mosaic). Moreover, in the context of absence of information, the act of seeing is linked to familiarisation and not making strange as traditionally exercised by an avant-garde approach (explored in more detail in previous chapter devoted to artists themselves censoring atrocity depiction). (Nevertheless, the second case study (Clark) also uses the strategy of making strange and unusual, thus trying/intending to reconfigure existing and dominating visual depictions of the subject).

Though Paglen and Clark have slightly different approaches to the function and role of the photographs, I suggest that both approaches further/continue to reveal the importance of, and role played by, the mental images. I point out that these case studies demonstrate

increasing importance played by the mental images that in some cases 'replace' photographic evidence with detainees' accounts (verbal and drawn testimonies); interviews with former or current detainees; the drawings of torture devices; verbal descriptions of torture techniques. They offer the spectator necessary tools to imagine for herself and familiarise with these torture techniques. Furthermore, the mental images potentially prepare the spectator for a better understanding of the torture techniques that do not leave any visible sign that have been developed by and are used in contemporary Western democracies.

In addition, I suggest that both case studies demonstrate another relevant development - the increasing importance of the role of law and human rights not only in regards to their subjects but also for artists own safety. Artists regard their work as political performance and consult the law.

Lastly, despite its absence the photographic image has not lost its importance as evidence, the opposite is true. But in its absence, there has been notable development. Due to more informed and nuanced understanding of the state secrecy and democratic system, spectators are less (or no more) accused of voyeurism and complicity in the atrocity. (Though Clark expresses contrasting views - he does not expect big changes, nevertheless he implicates Western citizens). The spectator is rather expected to be less trusting and more suspicious of what she is looking at, or is presented to view.

### Historical background

Extraordinary rendition is an extra-judicial and covert practice of disappearing an individual and transferring him/her from one jurisdiction or state to another where there is a real risk of torture or improper treatment<sup>565 566</sup> as opposed to legally authorised methods of transfer such as extradition, deportation or removal - processes which are subject to some judicial

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<sup>565</sup> Gibson, P. et.al., (2013). *The Report of the Detainee Inquiry*. UK Government. [online] Available from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-detainee-inquiry>>

<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/267695/The\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Detainee\\_Inquiry\\_December\\_2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/267695/The_Report_of_the_Detainee_Inquiry_December_2013.pdf)> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

<sup>566</sup> Suspects are interrogated either by U.S. personnel at U.S.-run detention facilities outside U.S. sovereign territory or, alternatively, are handed over to the custody of foreign agents for interrogation. In both instances, interrogation methods are employed that do not accord with federal and internationally recognised standards. ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). Fact Sheet: Extraordinary Rendition. [online] Available from: <<https://www.aclu.org/fact-sheet-extraordinary-rendition>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

process or right of appeal.<sup>567</sup> When a person that has been suspected of involvement in terrorism is rendered, no one informs the rendered person's family or legal representatives, because it was not an arrest; no one tells the Red Cross, because the rendered person is not a prisoner of war.<sup>568</sup> These persons are held without charge, without legal oversight and without access to the outside world. Such conditions constitute disappearance.<sup>569</sup> Disappearing people is banned by international and domestic laws of almost every country in the world, but since September 2001 many countries have been revealed as complicit in such disappearances.

From the early 1990's the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) together with other U.S. government agencies, has used an intelligence-gathering programme involving the kidnap and transfer of foreign nationals suspected of involvement in terrorism to detention and interrogation in countries where the CIA has assumed the federal and international legal safeguards did not apply. Suspects are detained and interrogated either by U.S. personnel at U.S.-run detention facilities outside U.S. sovereign territory or handed over to the custody of foreign agents for interrogation. In both instances, interrogation methods are employed that do not accord with federal and internationally recognised standards, thus violating the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, ratified by the United States in 1992.<sup>570</sup>

The current policy traces its roots to the administration of former President Bill Clinton<sup>571</sup> but following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and with the beginning of the "war on terror," the scope of the programme expanded dramatically.<sup>572</sup> In addition, renditions after 9/11 no longer required presidential approval, and it was no longer a requirement that a prisoner be 'wanted' for some offence in the country where he or she was sent.<sup>573</sup> With the beginning of the War on Terror, the CIA set up a network of secret prisons - "black sites",

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<sup>567</sup> Gibson, P. et.al., (2013). *The Report of the Detainee Inquiry*, UK Government.

<sup>568</sup> Black, C. and Clark, E., (2015). *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition*. New York: Aperture/Magnum Foundation.

<sup>569</sup> Negative Publicity.

<sup>570</sup> ACLU, Fact Sheet: Extraordinary Rendition.

<sup>571</sup> Covert extraordinary rendition began as a systematic tactic on September 22, 1995, with the capture of terrorist Abu Talal al-Qasimi in Croatia. He was later transferred to Egypt for execution. The largest pre-9/11 CIA rendition occurred in 1998, when five suspects in Albania and Bulgaria were captured and rendered to Egypt. Two were hanged without trial. All were brutally tortured. Grey, S., (2006). *Ghost Plane: The True Story of the CIA's Rendition and Torture Program*. London: Hurst.

<sup>572</sup> ACLU, Fact Sheet: Extraordinary Rendition.

<sup>573</sup> Woodward, B., (2002). *Bush At War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp.76-78. (cited in Torture Taxi, 2006, p.23); Grey, 2006.

used to detain and interrogate “ghost” (unacknowledged) prisoners in Afghanistan, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Diego Garcia, Guantánamo, and elsewhere around the world. The CIA was authorised to kidnap anyone it suspected of having terrorist affiliation. Hundreds of ‘ghost prisoners’ have gone through this system.

The CIA did inform its allies, but did not disclose the location of its black sites. The U.S. administration, after 9/11, gave full warning to the world that it was holding prisoners at secret locations and that it had chosen not to apply the Geneva Conventions. America’s closest allies, including most NATO members, were also fully informed that a programme of covert rendition was in use.<sup>574</sup>

The outlines, form and structure of this covert network was unveiled by journalists and investigators working co-operatively in ‘a piece-meal fashion’ by ‘picking up pieces of the jigsaw puzzle disclosed by others, and then adding new pieces to the picture of what we know so far,’<sup>575</sup> knowing that much more still remains to be discovered. They compiled dossiers with material accumulated from aircraft movements, government archives, NGO and media investigations, contractual paperwork, invoices, former CIA employees and former detainee testimonies.<sup>576</sup>

On 7 November 2005, following reports in the Washington Post and other US media,<sup>577</sup> the European Parliamentary Assembly initiates a parliamentary inquiry into “alleged secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers of detainees involving Council of Europe member states”.<sup>578</sup> On 24 January 2006 PACE’s interim assessment declared that it is “highly unlikely” that European governments, or at least their intelligence services, were unaware of secret renditions affecting Europe. It stated that a great deal of coherent, convergent evidence points to the existence of a system of “outsourcing” of torture. On 7

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<sup>574</sup> Grey, S., Five Facts and Five Fictions About CIA Rendition. [online] Available from: <<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/rendition701/updates/updates.html>> [Accessed 12 Sep 2020].

<sup>575</sup> Grey, 2006.

<sup>576</sup> All media articles about the CIA RDI programme can be found in the Rendition Project document archive. [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/index.html>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]. In July 2019 The Rendition Project, after a four-year long joint investigation with The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, published their report ‘CIA Torture Unredacted.’ Their report, together with the other resources on their website, is a comprehensive public account to date of the CIA torture programme. Investigator and writer Crofton Black is part of the Rendition Project team. He is co-author, with artist Edmund Clark, of *Negative Publicity* (2015).

<sup>577</sup> The Rendition Project document archive <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/index.html>>

<sup>578</sup> Parliamentary Assembly, Timeline: the Council of Europe's investigation into CIA secret prisons in Europe. [online] Available from: <<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-en.asp?newsid=5722&lang=2>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

June 2006 the findings of the first report are made public. The report states that they exposed a global “spider’s web” of illegal US detentions and transfers, and alleges collusion in this system by 14 Council of Europe member states.<sup>579</sup>

The UK government had its own inquiries. On 6 July 2010 UK Prime Minister (David Cameron) ordered an independent, judge-led inquiry - The Detainee Inquiry - that would “...look at whether Britain was implicated in the improper treatment of detainees, held by other countries, that may have occurred in the aftermath of 9/11.”<sup>580</sup> It covered the years 2001 - 2010. This inquiry faced many obstructions to properly investigate the issue<sup>581</sup> and was discontinued in 2012.<sup>582</sup> Because they (ISC<sup>583</sup>) were not able to undertake a thorough investigation they decided to bring the work of The Detainee Inquiry to a conclusion and provide the government with a report on its preparatory work to date that also “highlights particular themes and issues that might merit more investigation.”<sup>584</sup> This unfinished (or preparatory) report saw the daylight on 19 December 2013. The following investigation by the ISC also faced obstruction by the current Government.<sup>585</sup> The ISC reports were published in June 2018 and the UK government committed to give careful consideration to calls for a full judge-led inquiry and the ISC’s recommendations, promising to report to Parliament within 60 days.<sup>586</sup> Nevertheless, the UK government missed its own deadline.

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<sup>579</sup> The full timeline of Council of Europe’s investigation into CIA secret prisons in Europe can be found on their website. [online] Available from: <<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-en.asp?newsid=5722&lang=2>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; All documents relating to the CIA's rendition, detention and interrogation (RDI) programme, including investigations done in Europe, can be found in The Rendition Project’s Document Archive.

<sup>580</sup> *Report of the Detainee Inquiry*, UK Government. [online] Available from:

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-detainee-inquiry>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

<sup>581</sup> More on the obstructions see Kenneth Clarke on <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-detainee-inquiry>>; O’Mara, N., (2018). The UK Government’s Weak Response to Torture Reports, *www.justsecurity.org*, December 11. [online] Available from: <<https://www.justsecurity.org/61809/uk-governments-weak-response-torture-reports/>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; The Guardian Editorial, (2019). The Guardian view on rendition and torture/ a shame that Britain cannot erase, *The Guardian*, 28 Jul, [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/28/the-guardian-view-on-rendition-and-torture-a-shame-that-britain-cannot-erase>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; Bowcott, O., (2019). Rendition: refusal to hold UK public inquiry to face judicial review, *The Guardian*, 2 Dec. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/02/rendition-refusal-uk-public-inquiry-judicial-review>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

<sup>582</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-16614514> referenced in O’Mara, 2018, The UK Government’s Weak Response to Torture Reports, *www.justsecurity.org*.

<sup>583</sup> The UK Parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC).

<sup>584</sup> *Report of the Detainee Inquiry*, UK Government.

<sup>585</sup> For the brief description how inquiries are initiated in the the UK and relating issues: “the comparatively limited powers of parliamentary committees to carry out robust oversight and to undertake inquiries which may not be popular with the government of the day, but which are vital in the public interest.” see O’Mara, 2018, The UK Government’s Weak Response to Torture Reports, *www.justsecurity.org*.

<sup>586</sup> House of Commons Hansard, (2018). Detainee Mistreatment and Rendition. Volume 644, [online] Available from: <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-02/debates/5FDC06A8-00A0-40C3-9153-8867E07164A1/DetaineeMistreatmentAndRendition>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

Eventual response to two reports into Detainee Mistreatment and Rendition<sup>587</sup> published in late November 2018 failed to meet even basic expectations. On a number of key points the response was lacking.<sup>588</sup> The government's response is described as an "exercise in evasion" for its failure to properly engage with the report's findings.<sup>589</sup> It has been reported that, 'overall the UK government's response suggests an executive branch overly protective of its agencies at the expense of transparency and accountability.'<sup>590</sup> Kenneth Clarke (an influential MP and chair of a cross-parliamentary group on extraordinary rendition) described the response as "woeful" and "an attempt to whitewash the past."<sup>591</sup> Clarke also points out, that the Government's claim in its response that "all detainee-related cases of potential concern have been scrutinized" is simply wrong.<sup>592</sup> The overarching conclusion drawn from the UK government's response 'means that the full truth about the UK's role in post-9/11 torture and rendition remains unknown and those responsible have not yet been held to account.'<sup>593</sup> <sup>594</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Prime Minister, (2018). Government response to the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament Reports into Detainee Mistreatment and Rendition. [online] Available from:

<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/758224/HMG\\_ResponseToISCDetaineeReports.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/758224/HMG_ResponseToISCDetaineeReports.pdf)> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; O'Mara, 2018:

<<https://www.justsecurity.org/61809/uk-governments-weak-response-torture-reports/>> The [first report](#) from the ISC – a committee tasked with oversight of the UK intelligence services – covers UK complicity in U.S. torture and ill-treatment of detainees between 2001-2010 while the [second report](#) looks at current policy and practices on the interviewing of detainees overseas and the exchange of intelligence on detainees.

<sup>588</sup> O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>589</sup> APPG Press release, (2018). [online] Available from:

<<https://www.extraordinaryrendition.org/documents/press-releases/send/29-2018/382-2018-11-28-ken-clarke-criticises-government-response-to-isc-reports.html>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>590</sup> O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>591</sup> APPG Press release, (2018). [online] Available from:

<<https://www.extraordinaryrendition.org/documents/press-releases/send/29-2018/382-2018-11-28-ken-clarke-criticises-government-response-to-isc-reports.html>> cited in O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>592</sup> As O'Mara writes: It ignores the controversial Belhaj case – where a man and his pregnant wife were rendered with MI6 to Libya where they were tortured by the Gaddafi regime – which has not been scrutinized by any independent body at all. And new revelations keep coming – in mid-November this year further details [emerged](#) about MI6's role in CIA torture of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi. O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>593</sup> O'Mara, 2018, The UK Government's Weak Response to Torture Reports, [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org).

<sup>594</sup> The following research article argues that British government's consistent denials of involvement in prisoner abuse during counterterrorism operations as part of the US-led 'war on terror' are untenable. Authors state: "We have established beyond reasonable doubt that Britain has been deeply involved in post-9/11 prisoner abuse, and we can now provide the most detailed account to date of the depth of this involvement. We argue that it is possible to identify a peculiarly British approach to torture in the 'war on terror', which is particularly well-suited to sustaining a narrative of denial. To explain the nature of UK involvement, we argue that it can be best understood within the context of how law and sovereign power have come to operate during the 'war on terror'. We turn here to the work of Judith Butler, and explore the role of Britain as a 'petty sovereign', operating under the state of exception established by the US executive." Blakeley, R. and Raphael, S., (2016). British torture in the 'war on terror.' *European Journal of International Relations*, June 16, 23 issue: 2, 243-266. [online] Available from: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1354066116653455>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; published also in The Rendition Project's Document Archive.

The US government ordered its own comprehensive investigation into the CIA's post-9/11 programme of detention, torture, and other abuse of detainees in 2009.<sup>595</sup> The report was produced by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI). It took six years to complete,<sup>596</sup> and it is based on the review of millions of CIA and other records. In 2014 a heavily-redacted (499-page) summary of a 6,900-page SSCI report was released on the CIA programme. The full report still remains classified.<sup>597</sup> The summary confirmed much that had already become public, but did not disclose names of countries involved. It describes horrific human rights abuses by the CIA. It also chronicles the agency's evasions and lies to Congress, the White House, the media and the public. It details the detention and interrogation of 119<sup>598</sup> CIA detainees in secret CIA facilities overseas, from

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<sup>595</sup> On December 11, 2007, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (The Committee) initiated a review of the destruction of videotapes related to the interrogation of two CIA detainees (Abu Zubaydah and 'Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri). On February 11, 2009, after the Committee was presented with a staff-prepared summary of the operational cables detailing these interrogations, the Committee began considering a broader review of the CIA's detention and interrogation practices. On March 5, 2009 the Committee approved Terms of Reference for a study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Programme. Available from:

<<https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/senate-intelligence-committee-study-on-cia-detention-and-interrogation-program>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; All related documents and media can be found also in The Rendition Project archive: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/RDI/141209-SSCI-Torture-Report-Executive-Summary-Redacted.pdf>> [Accessed 9 September 2020].

<sup>596</sup> The report was the result of six years of the Senate intelligence committee staff investigator Daniel Jones' work, and as American journalist Spencer Ackerman states: "The seventh year was consumed by two tasks: defending the torture report against its CIA and Republican critics; and attempting to entrench its purpose - preventing torture - into law." On the CIA response (and criticism by Republicans) to the Report and obstructions faced by the lead investigator Mr Jones see Ackerman, S., (2016). No looking back: the CIA torture report's aftermath, *The Guardian*, 11 Sep. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/11/cia-torture-report-aftermath-daniel-jones-senate-investigation>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]; Comprehensive archive of the SSCI report and related documents can be found on the website of the United States Senator for California Dianne Feinstein:

<<https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/senate-intelligence-committee-study-on-cia-detention-and-interrogation-program>> [Accessed 9 September 2020]. Also, In 2019 was released a movie *The Report* (director Scott Z. Burns). It follows the Senate staffer Daniel J. Jones investigation into the CIA's post 9/11 Detention and Interrogation Programme.

<sup>597</sup> ACLU filed FOIA lawsuit demanding the full investigative report to be released, but their case had been repeatedly refused and declined, see ACLU, Senate Torture Report - FOIA. [online] Available from:

<<https://www.aclu.org/cases/senate-torture-report-foia?redirect=national-security/senate-torture-report-and-cia-reply-foia>> ; see also <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/11/cia-torture-report-aftermath-daniel-jones-senate-investigation>> ; <<https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/senate-intelligence-committee-study-on-cia-detention-and-interrogation-program>> ;

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/10/us/politics/classified-report-on-the-cias-secret-prisons-is-caught-in-limbo.html>> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>598</sup> The SSCI report mentions 119 prisoners who have been detained at the CIA prisons. It also points out that poor record keeping by the CIA made it impossible to know exactly how many people had been held, and that the figure of 119 was almost certainly an under-recording. The Rendition Project points out that not all those rendered, detained and tortured by the CIA were actually held in a CIA-run prisons. Some were instead rendered by the CIA to one of its counterterrorism allies for secret detention and interrogation. Others were rendered to US military detention, either at Guantánamo Bay or in Afghanistan, without passing through a formal CIA prison. As the Senate Intelligence Committee investigation looked only at the operation of the CIA-run detention sites, these individuals did not appear in the published report as amongst the list of CIA prisoners. There is concrete evidence of CIA involvement in the rendition, detention and/or torture of at

the programme's authorisation on September 17, 2001, to its official end on January 22, 2009.<sup>599</sup> The report also provides an unprecedented level of detail about how the prisoners were treated, including an account of the use of torture by CIA interrogators and foreign government officials in order to exert control over prisoners, and in an attempt to gather actionable intelligence on future terrorist attacks.<sup>600</sup> The report's central conclusion was that the spy agency's interrogation methods — including waterboarding, sleep deprivation and other kinds of torture — were far more brutal and far less effective than the C.I.A. acknowledged to policy makers, Congress and the public.<sup>601</sup>

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least 12 prisoners in addition to the 119 listed by the Senate Committee. There also exists evidence of CIA involvement in the case of further prisoners. The Rendition Project document archive. [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/index.html>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>599</sup> The use of torture was banned and CIA administered secret prisons were ordered to close, nevertheless as media reports evidenced the capture and disappearing of individuals to a secret prison facility in Afghanistan continued. Johnston, D., (2009). U.S. Says Rendition to Continue, but With More Oversight, *The New York Times*, Aug. 24. [online] Available from: <[https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/25/us/politics/25rendition.html?\\_r=1&hpw](https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/25/us/politics/25rendition.html?_r=1&hpw)> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>600</sup> The Rendition Project document archive. [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/RDI/141209-SSCI-Torture-Report-Executive-Summary-Redacted.pdf>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>601</sup> The Rendition Project document archive. [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/documents/RDI/141209-SSCI-Torture-Report-Executive-Summary-Findings-Conclusions.pdf>> [Accessed 10 September 2020]; see also Rushe, D. *et al.*, (2014). Rectal rehydration and waterboarding: the CIA torture report's grisliest findings. *The Guardian*, Dec. 11. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/dec/09/cia-torture-report-worst-findings-waterboard-rectal>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

Despite the CIA's RDI programme being shut down in 2009,<sup>602</sup> no-one involved has been prosecuted.<sup>603 604 605</sup>

Moreover, current American president Trump during his election campaign of 2016 promised to reopen the CIA's black sites and bring back torture. It has been revealed that shortly after his inauguration a draft executive order surfaced that would roll back a series of restrictions President Barack Obama set on the handling of detainees.<sup>606</sup> The draft

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<sup>602</sup> Johnston, D., (2009). U.S. Says Rendition to Continue, but With More Oversight, *The New York Times*, Aug. 24.

<sup>603</sup> Van Buren, P., (2014). Secret Prisons and "Black Sites", Rendition: Torture and the Myth of Never Again. The Persecution of John Kiriakou, *Global Research* (The original source of this article is The Ron Paul Institute), December 13. [online] Available from: <<https://www.globalresearch.ca/secret-prisons-and-black-sites-rendition-torture-and-the-myth-of-never-again-the-persecution-of-john-kiriakou/5419618>>. Moreover, it has been noted that "Instead of being punished, the bureaucrats who oversaw the programs, including current CIA Director John Brennan, are now ensconced in powerful offices at the highest levels of government." Gaist, T., (2015). US Government Covered Up 14,000 Photos Documenting CIA Secret Prisons, *Global Research* (The original source of this article is World Socialist Web Site), June 29. [online] Available from: <<https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-government-covered-up-14000-photos-documenting-cia-secret-prisons/5459030>>. Also The Rendition Project report 'CIA Torture Unredacted' that was published in July 2019 draw the same conclusion: "The perpetrators have never been held to account." [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/unredacted/index.html>> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>604</sup> As a result of the Obama Administration's efforts to prevent accountability for the past crimes and by concealing evidence of the RDI abuses under the Bush Administration, concerned citizens/constituents after addressing their government ([http://www.ncstn.org/PDF\\_Archives/ScorecardOnTorture20100201.pdf](http://www.ncstn.org/PDF_Archives/ScorecardOnTorture20100201.pdf)) formed public hearings to hear testimony from victims, former interrogators, religious leaders, and others on the state's role in the CIA's post-9/11 RDI programme. The North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture (NCCIT) is the first nongovernmental and state-level inquiry on the topic. The key question is how it can best contribute to accountability when other tools such as government investigation (the 2014 Senate report on RDI programme) and prosecutions have fallen short. See <http://www.nccit.org/> - NCCIT is discussed in the following article: Huckerby J. and Fujimura-Fanselow A., (2017). The Truth About Rendition and Torture: An Inquiry in North Carolina. *justsecurity.org*, December 14. [online] Available from: <[www.justsecurity.org/49343/truth-rendition-torture-nongovernmental-inquiry-north-carolina/](http://www.justsecurity.org/49343/truth-rendition-torture-nongovernmental-inquiry-north-carolina/)> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>605</sup> John Kiriakou is a former CIA analyst and case officer who was involved in counterterrorism missions following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and refused to be trained in so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques." After leaving the CIA, in the 2007 interview on ABC News, Kiriakou confirmed that the agency waterboarded detainees and labeled waterboarding as torture. Kiriakou's interview revealed that this practice was not just the result of a few rogue agents, but was official U.S. policy approved at the highest levels of the government. Kiriakou is the sole CIA agent to go to jail in connection with the U.S. torture program, despite the fact that he never tortured anyone. Rather, he blew the whistle on this horrific wrongdoing. Government Accountability Project, [whistleblower.org](http://whistleblower.org), [online] Available from: <<https://whistleblower.org/bio-john-kiriakou/>>; see also Van Buren, P., (2014). Secret Prisons and "Black Sites", Rendition: Torture and the Myth of Never Again. The Persecution of John Kiriakou, *Global Research*; Ackerman, S. and Pilkington, E., (2015). Obama's war on whistleblowers leaves administration insiders unscathed. *The Guardian*, March 16. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/16/whistleblowers-double-standard-obama-david-petraeus-chelsea-manning>> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>606</sup> Savage, C., (2017). Trump's Draft Executive Order on Detention and Interrogation. *The New York Times*, Jan. 25. [online] Available from: <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/25/us/politics/document-Trump-draft-executive-order-on-detention-and.html>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

order calls for lifting a ban on CIA prisons and directing the Pentagon to bring newly captured detainees to the Guantanamo Bay prison.<sup>607</sup>

Notably, in 2015 it was revealed that the US government has concealed the existence of some 14,000 images/photographs documenting the CIA network of secret “black site” torture and interrogation centres established after September 11.<sup>608</sup> The existence of the photographs was known to the US military prosecutors involved in ongoing military commission cases. Images from black sites in Thailand, Afghanistan, Poland, Lithuania, Romania and possibly others were included in the photo collection that the Obama administration refused to disclose. The photos include images of naked prisoners taken during transportation to the torture sites. There are also reportedly photos of a wooden board used for waterboarding detainees at a black site in Afghanistan as well as photos of the small confinement boxes which a number of detainees were forced into for hours on end.<sup>609</sup>

Importantly, it was pointed out that overt classification of information and obstruction on FOIs is a major setback for government transparency and accountability.<sup>610</sup> Because governments over-classify and keep secret information that should be subject to public scrutiny and debate, the public depends on leaks to the news media and whistleblowers to know what the government is doing in their name. Whistleblowers’ disclosures to the media and Wikileaks show that “information is often classified not for legitimate security reasons, but for political reasons — to protect the government from embarrassment, to manipulate public opinion or even to conceal evidence of criminal activity.”<sup>611</sup> A Wikileaks-released diplomatic cable reveals improper government conduct, it describes a US official’s efforts to prevent international accountability, as other countries are pressured not

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<sup>607</sup> Gordon, R., (2017). Resurrecting the Unholy Trinity: Torture, Rendition and Indefinite Detention Under Trump. *truthout.org*, April 6. [online] Available from: <<https://truthout.org/articles/resurrecting-the-unholy-trinity-torture-rendition-and-indefinite-detention-under-trump/>>. [Accessed 10 September 2020]. Rebecca Gordon is an American philosopher, activist in peace and justice movements and the author of *Mainstreaming Torture* (2014).

<sup>608</sup> Gaist, T., (2015). US Government Covered Up 14,000 Photos Documenting CIA Secret Prisons, Global Research (The original source of this article is World Socialist Web Site), June 29. [online] Available from: <<https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-government-covered-up-14000-photos-documenting-cia-secret-prisons/5459030>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>609</sup> Gaist, 2015.

<sup>610</sup> ACLU, Senate Torture Report - FOIA, <<https://www.aclu.org/cases/senate-torture-report-foia>> ; Shamsi, H., (2010). Wikileaks Doc: U.S. Tried to Stop Accountability Abroad. *ACLU*, November 29. <<https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/secretcy/wikileaks-doc-us-tried-stop-accountability-abroad>> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>611</sup> Shamsi, 2010, Wikileaks Doc: U.S. Tried to Stop Accountability Abroad.

to prosecute CIA officers responsible for kidnapping, extraordinary rendition and torture of German national Khaled El-Masri.<sup>612</sup> Thus, the Wikileaks document releases reveal the government wrongdoing and efforts to shield it from judicial and public view.

Former US president Barack Obama was committed to transparency and accountability ideals and, when he first came to office, stated that “The government should not keep information confidential merely because public officials might be embarrassed by disclosure, because errors and failures might be revealed, or because of speculative or abstract fears.”<sup>613</sup> Nevertheless, the Obama administration (2009-2017) has shielded the Bush administration (2001-2009) officials and its own administration from accountability and has waged a war against whistleblowers and official leakers. The Obama administration has charged more people with violating the 1917 Espionage Act than any other U.S. President.<sup>614</sup>

### 3.1. Trevor Paglen. Black world and production of space

American artist, writer, investigator and experimental geographer Trevor Paglen (1974) explores things that are invisible, but that exert enormous influence on the visible world. From the late 1990s he has been interested in bases, military installations and infrastructures that are either secret (their existence is secret) or facilities that are primarily funded through classified funding and where classified research or classified development takes place. He has researched and photographed the U.S. government’s network of secret facilities and programmes (domestic and abroad), secret prisons, spy satellites, drones, surveillance infrastructure, etc. Thus, his focus is on the state secrecy, covert military projects, including those that are part of the ‘war on terror,’ their infrastructure and how these developments affect culture and politics. He states that his work is ‘not so much trying to fill in these metaphorical blank spots as it is trying to understand how they’re

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<sup>612</sup> Shamsi, 2010.

<sup>613</sup> Cited in Shamsi, 2010.

<sup>614</sup> There have been eight prosecutions under the 1917 Espionage Act. It is more than double those under all previous presidents combined. Ackerman, S. and Pilkington, E., (2015). Obama’s war on whistleblowers leaves administration insiders unscathed. *The Guardian*, March 16. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/16/whistleblowers-double-standard-obama-david-petraeus-chelsea-manning>> ; Also “profound double standard” of the Obama administration when it comes to leakers has been revealed by the leniency shown to some high-level officials (such as General Petraeus and Leon Panetta) and sentencing of lower-level employees. Ackerman, S., (2015). Petraeus leaks: Obama’s leniency reveals ‘profound double standard’, lawyer says. *The Guardian*, March 16. [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/16/obama-double-standard-petraeus-leaks>> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

produced and what sort of state capacities and powers have to be developed in order to create and sustain such a system.<sup>615</sup> Also, he worked on Laura Poitras' documentary *Citizenfour* (2014) about the Snowden revelations, doing research on the documents and developed visual language for the film.

In more recent projects he explores computer vision ("machine vision"), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the changing status of images. The findings of this research appear in an important essay 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)<sup>616</sup> (2016) where Paglen explores vast invisible landscape of computer vision and artificial intelligence and marks tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action; he points out the shift that has (invisibly) taken place over recent years - the shift from representational images to operational images. The exhibitions that followed such as *A Study of Invisible Images*<sup>617</sup> (2017) and *From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels) Selections from the ImageNet dataset for object recognition*<sup>618</sup> (2020) explore and demonstrate some of the issues at stake.

Paglen's primary focus is on 'learning how to see the historical moment we live in and developing the means to imagine alternative futures.'<sup>619</sup> His practice spans image-making, sculpture, investigative journalism, writing, engineering, and other disciplines. Paglen is the author of numerous books and articles on subjects including experimental geography, state secrecy, military symbology, photography, and visibility. In 2014, he received the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Pioneer Award for his work as a "groundbreaking investigative artist"<sup>620</sup> and he is the first visual artist to receive it. He also received the 2016 Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize.

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<sup>615</sup> Simon, L., (2013). Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*, December 12. [online] Available from: <<https://dronecenter.bard.edu/interview-trevor-paglen/>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>616</sup> Paglen, T., (2016). Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You). *The New Inquiry*. [online] Available from: <<https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>> [Accessed 27 July 2020]; (There are more subsequent essays and interviews on the subject).

<sup>617</sup> Metro Pictures, Press release. Trevor Paglen: A Study of Invisible Images. [online] Available from: <<https://www.metropictures.com/exhibitions/trevor-paglen4/press-release>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>618</sup> The Barbican Centre, Press room. Trevor Paglen: From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels). Selections from the ImageNet dataset for object recognition. [online] Available from: <<https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room/trevor-paglen-from-apple-to-anomaly>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>619</sup> Trevor Paglen: Biography. paglen.com [online] Available from: <<http://www.paglen.com/?l=biography>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>620</sup> [eff.org](https://www.eff.org) Press release, August 20, 2014. [online] Available from: <<https://www.eff.org/press/releases/un-free-expression-champion-congressional-internet-defender-and-groundbreaking>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

In what follows I consider Paglen's work on the CIA's rendition, detention and interrogation (RDI) programme and focus on representational strategy devised to expose and represent it. I explore photographic series *The Black Sites* (2006) and the book *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights* that he co-authored with investigative journalist A.C. Thompson and published in 2006. Also, I consult his book *Blank spots on the map* (2009) where he further investigates the relational geography of the black world. I pay particular attention to the role and use of the photographs. I also consider the photographs of rendition victims and mental images of atrocities endured provided by detainee testimonies.

### *Representational strategy - production of space, creating vocabulary and political performance*

There are two components to the work that Paglen does. The first is writing and speaking, where he makes arguments about the places he explores, about their infrastructures, the economies and the legal regimes that they are a part of. The second component are images where he learns how to see things that are intentionally made obscure and invisible.<sup>621</sup> He explores the 'line between vision and knowledge.'<sup>622</sup> He states that, 'I am showing you something that is what you do not know what it is and that is kind a point of it.' Behind every art work that he makes there is a tremendous amount of research that goes into it. It is 'the product of countless hours spent in libraries, sifting through documents, conducting interviews, repeated site visits, careful planning and project management, and personal relationships developed over years of dedication to the material.'<sup>623</sup> It is an intensely empirical practice.<sup>624</sup> Paglen points out that in most of his artwork, 'the research, methods, and processes happening "outside the frame" are just as

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<sup>621</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>622</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>623</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). Sources and Methods. In: *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*. New York: Aperture, p.144; Paglen, T., (2015). Clarice Smith Distinguished Lecture: Artist Trevor Paglen, Smithsonian American Art Museum, SAAM's youtube channel, Streamed live on 9 Sep 2015. [online] Available from: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=DnwfZOzzyWg&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=DnwfZOzzyWg&feature=emb_title)> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>624</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). Sources and Methods. In: *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*. New York: Aperture, p.144; Paglen, T., (2015). Clarice Smith Distinguished Lecture: Artist Trevor Paglen, Smithsonian American Art Museum, SAAM's youtube channel, Streamed live on 9 Sep 2015. [online] Available from: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=DnwfZOzzyWg&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=DnwfZOzzyWg&feature=emb_title)> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

important (and often more) as what ends up being shown in a particular image or installation.<sup>625</sup>

The work on the CIA's RDI programme follow this pattern. There is an investigative, research side that is made available in the book *Torture Taxi* (2006) and the book *Blank Spots* (2009) where Paglen continued to explore the black state and its CIA's RDI programme focusing on 'how in order to make a place "disappear," you have to develop an alternative state, an alternative economy, an alternative legal structure, and what the ramifications of doing that are'<sup>626</sup>; and numerous talks and interviews. And there are photographic series *The Black Sites* (2006), that were exhibited as part of a larger project on black state - "Black World" in 2006.

Secrecy for Paglen is not about what you get to know versus what you do not get to know. He sees secrecy as a way of doing things, as a way of organising human institutions and human activities in such a way as to render them silent and invisible. Its goal is invisibility, silence and obscurity. Nevertheless, those are a series of material practices, and they have political, economical, legal and cultural aspects.<sup>627 628</sup> In real life secrecy is composed of infrastructures and institutions (The CIA, NSA), economic institutions (black budget in the US), social engineering institutions (security classification system), legal institutions (state secrets precedent in US) and so on. Paglen thinks about secrecy as a specific set of state powers and institutions within government that operate according to a very different logic to that of a democratic state.<sup>629</sup> In the US that secrecy infrastructure is vast. The so called "black budget" which funds much of it, is about 50 to 60 billion dollars a year. With that kind of spending it is as a kind of mini state, a state within the state.<sup>630</sup> And this secret 'state has a tendency to continually transform the more democratic institutions

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<sup>625</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). Sources and Methods. In: *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*. p.144.

<sup>626</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>627</sup> Paglen, T., (2013). Talk: Seeing The Secret State: Six Landscapes. [online] Available from: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=j56s46e97Lo&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=j56s46e97Lo&feature=emb_title)> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>628</sup> He uses the metaphor of dark matter - 97 % of the universe is made of black matter, the influence that it exerts upon visible world indirectly detects it. Paglen, 2013, Talk: Six Landscapes.

<sup>629</sup> Paglen, 2013, Talk: Six Landscapes; Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>630</sup> The Creators Project. Trevor Paglen: Photographing Secret Sites and Satellites. *Vice video*. [online] Available from: <[https://video.vice.com/en\\_uk/video/photographing-secret-sites-and-satellites-meet-trevor-paglen/5601832c3b2c39ba307a9225](https://video.vice.com/en_uk/video/photographing-secret-sites-and-satellites-meet-trevor-paglen/5601832c3b2c39ba307a9225)> ; Pasternack, A., (2013). The Art of Looking at Government Secrets: From clandestine military bases to spy satellites, Trevor Paglen photographs invisible America. *vice.com*, December 8. [online] Available from: <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/kbzqkw/the-art-of-looking-at-government-secrets](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/kbzqkw/the-art-of-looking-at-government-secrets)> [All accessed 10 September 2020].

that surround it in its own image.<sup>631</sup> Paglen makes it clear, the secret state surrounds us all of the time but we really generally have not trained ourselves to see it very well. This secret/black state needs logistical infrastructure, and it involves airplanes, front companies etc. Methodologically Paglen tries to find where that secret world intersects with something he can find and see.

While working on a project on secret military bases, Paglen came across four unusual planes that were spotted by an air traffic controller with a particular interest in 'black' military projects landing at Desert Rock Area near the Nevada Test Site in December 2002. After a small subgroup of researchers and aviation enthusiasts did their research, it emerged that all of these planes were linked to the CIA. As Paglen and Thompson point out in the book, these planes represented, on one hand, a legacy of secret wars from Africa to South America. On the other hand, they represented a new secret war, that was scarcely a year old. It was the so called 'war on terror.'<sup>632</sup> It slowly became known that these planes were connected to a programme called 'extraordinary rendition.' Eventually, these planes would become collectively known, first to aviation enthusiasts and then to the public at large, as the 'torture planes.'<sup>633</sup> When Paglen and Thompson started working on their book, the Bush administration refused to discuss the CIA RDI programme. There were only the vaguest indications of CIA kidnappings, of torture-as-policy, of secret 'black sites', and of the unmarked planes that connected all of these things to one another. There existed only the faintest rumour of CIA-instigated abductions and torture. 'Extraordinary rendition' had yet to become a recognisable phrase.<sup>634</sup> In nearly five years of investigation since 2001 the outlines of the extraordinary rendition was no longer a secret. Just before they finished their book on 6 September 2006, President Bush acknowledged the existence of the programme.<sup>635</sup>

The authors make it clear that the CIA cannot operate entirely in a vacuum or "black world", the CIA needs a domestic infrastructure to carry out the covert missions abroad.<sup>636</sup> Thus, despite extraordinary rendition being a secret programme, they discovered that the

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<sup>631</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>632</sup> Paglen, T. and Thompson, A.C., (2007). *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*. Thriplow, Cambridge: Icon Books, p.5.

<sup>633</sup> *Torture Taxi*, pp.6-7.

<sup>634</sup> *Torture Taxi*, p.7.

<sup>635</sup> The White House. News & Policies: September 6, 2006. President Discusses Creation of Military Commissions to Try Suspected Terrorists. [online] Available from: <<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060906-3.html>> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>636</sup> *Torture Taxi*, pp.49-50.

CIA left footprints all over the country, along with paper trails, that provide the opportunity to 'figure these things out.'<sup>637</sup> They focused on an infrastructure of the network that the CIA created and, as Thompson put it, reverse-engineered and took apart the whole programme.<sup>638</sup> Paglen points out that 'much of the research involved countless hours of scrupulous work piecing together fragments of information from telephone-book-sized stacks of raw documents culled from aviation records, corporate records of front companies, various declassified reports, and documents obtained from lawyers representing prisoners of Guantanamo Bay.'<sup>639</sup> In addition to the RDI programme's global structure, they researched domestic infrastructure: the interlocking webs of front companies, fake identities, drop boxes, airfields, law offices, flight records, and numerous other pieces of information that constituted the rendition programme's basic infrastructure.<sup>640</sup> From the corporate documents and aviation filings a landscape emerged that was 'stealthily and subtly woven into the fabric of everyday life in the United States.'<sup>641</sup>

The book provides a concise history of the CIA RDI programme from its beginnings in the Clinton administration. It offers the reader a series of journeys in which, like an ongoing police investigation, they try to move closer to the RDI programme by tracking its torture planes. The core chapters of this book are modelled on the pattern of investigation. The two authors focused most of the explanatory efforts on the transport system used to ferry suspected terrorists around the globe - the planes, the companies who own them, and the people who fly them. They reveal, that these unmarked civilian planes were operated by a handful of 'civilian' companies, but their flight plans were chosen by the CIA. Paglen and Thompson point out that 'the commercially available planes were far stealthier than even the most cutting-edge military jets. They didn't need state-of-the-art polymers or precision-designed shapes to hide their identities from enemy radar. Instead, their tactics involved hiding in plain sight. They achieved stealth by looking so boring that no one would bother paying them much attention.'<sup>642</sup> In addition, civilian planes could land in places where the United States military would never be welcome. Places like Karachi, Pakistan, Tripoli, Libya, and Banjul, Gambia. But the paper trail that these aircraft created also helped trace

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<sup>637</sup> A.C. Thompson in an interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now* on September 15 2006. Goodman, A., (2006). Interview with Trevor Paglen and A.C. Thompson: Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights. [democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org), September 15. [online] Available from: <[http://www.democracynow.org/2006/9/15/torture\\_taxi\\_on\\_the\\_trail\\_of](http://www.democracynow.org/2006/9/15/torture_taxi_on_the_trail_of)> [Accessed on 10 September 2020].

<sup>638</sup> A.C. Thompson, interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*.

<sup>639</sup> Paglen, 2010, *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*, p.150.

<sup>640</sup> Paglen, 2010, *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*, p.150.

<sup>641</sup> Torture Taxi, p.44.

<sup>642</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.5-6.

the outlines of the extraordinary rendition programme and hint at secret collaborations in the 'war on terror.'<sup>643</sup>

Thompson and Paglen exposed part of the 'war on terror' (logistics, infrastructure, history) that was previously hidden and it was made possible by collaboration with large network of people all over the world. They collaborated with aviation enthusiasts, researchers, lawyers, former prisoners, human rights activists, the UN, etc. They interviewed people in Afghanistan and other places. They correlated the information accumulated by community of aviation enthusiasts and activists against former prisoners' accounts and their own investigations. Thompson and Paglen showed how citizens either with political reasons or without are able to bring to light huge and hidden structures of covert operations. Their work is based on assumptions of democratic society that citizens should know what is done in their name and with their tax money. Paglen has described their investigation as an attempt to create a vocabulary so that people could start thinking and talking about these things. His own challenge being 'how to point to, engage with, and represent something that I don't quite understand?'<sup>644</sup>

I suggest that Paglen's work - research and image making - can be discussed also in the terms developed by Azoulay, namely, "to watch" the photograph and practise civic skill.<sup>645</sup> As Paglen deals with covert atrocities that are designed to stay invisible, he at first reconstructs the events and only afterwards makes photographs. Thus, he reverses the process of reconstructing the photographic event that Azoulay argues as a necessary activity to pursue political agency and resistance through photography. And clearly, Paglen's working method highlights the importance of the photographic image. I discuss Paglen's take on art and policy below in the section on photographs.

Also, Paglen states that 'Photographing a secret military base means insisting on the right to do it, and enacting that right. Thus, we have a sort of political performance.'<sup>646</sup> He is well informed about his rights as a citizen and he is 'interested in exercising the rights that all of us have as people living in a relatively democratic society.'<sup>647</sup> He points out that 'you can

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<sup>643</sup> Torture Taxi, p.6.

<sup>644</sup> Stallabrass, J. (ed.) (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and the War of Images*. Photoworks, p.215.

<sup>645</sup> Azoulay, A., (2008). *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York ; London : Zone, p.14.

<sup>646</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.209.

<sup>647</sup> Paglen, T., (2016). Trevor Paglen's Deep Web Dive, The Creators Project Behind the Scenes. [online] Available from: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7guR5ei30Y&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7guR5ei30Y&feature=emb_title)>; The Creators Project. Trevor Paglen: Photographing Secret Sites and Satellites. *Vice video*. [online] Available from:

stand on public land and take a picture of whatever you want. It is pretty fundamental right not only in the US, but in many countries.<sup>648</sup> Thus, he exercises his right to expose and not to get in trouble for that. Nevertheless, he has gotten 'plenty of death threats along with angry military and intelligence officers.'<sup>649</sup>

### *The photographs as questions and opportunities to think*

Though Paglen states that 'In the vast majority of my artwork, the research, methods, and processes happening "outside the frame" are just as important (and often more) as what ends up being shown in a particular image or installation.' Nevertheless, the image is a necessary means, a tool to learn to see for himself and to help others to see, to notice, to focus attention. For example, to take NSA surveillance or the espionage act, Manning trial and try to learn how to see it, how to change his own vision so that when he walks around every day he can see the fact that this is happening; and then try to show people how to see them.<sup>650</sup> For Paglen 'seeing and images are a way to point towards things, but there is very little evidentiary material in the images' that he creates.<sup>651</sup> A lot of his images are very impressionistic and not self-explanatory. He is interested in 'the line separating vision from knowledge,' 'in what the limits of vision are as an aesthetic question as well as an epistemological question,' and in 'images that don't necessarily speak for themselves, images that ask questions and, in many cases, create paradoxes.'<sup>652</sup> He points out that in his images:

There are two things going on at the same time. On one hand, there is an image of a particular site, in which I am asking questions about that site. But on the other hand, the images are taken from so far away, through so much dust and haze and heat, that while it's a photograph of a site, it's also a photograph of what it looks like when you've pushed the physical properties of vision as far as they will go. It's a

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<[https://video.vice.com/en\\_uk/video/photographing-secret-sites-and-satellites-meet-trevor-paglen/5601832c3b2c39ba307a9225](https://video.vice.com/en_uk/video/photographing-secret-sites-and-satellites-meet-trevor-paglen/5601832c3b2c39ba307a9225)>; Pasternack, 2013.

<sup>648</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). Sources and Methods. In: *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*. p.145; Paglen, 2015, SAAM lecture. Nevertheless, as Paglen has revealed in his talks, he often had to spend many hours with police that always turned up when he was taking pictures of secret military sites while standing on the public land. (That is discussed in the context of research and filming done for *CitizenFour* movie.)

<sup>649</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.216.

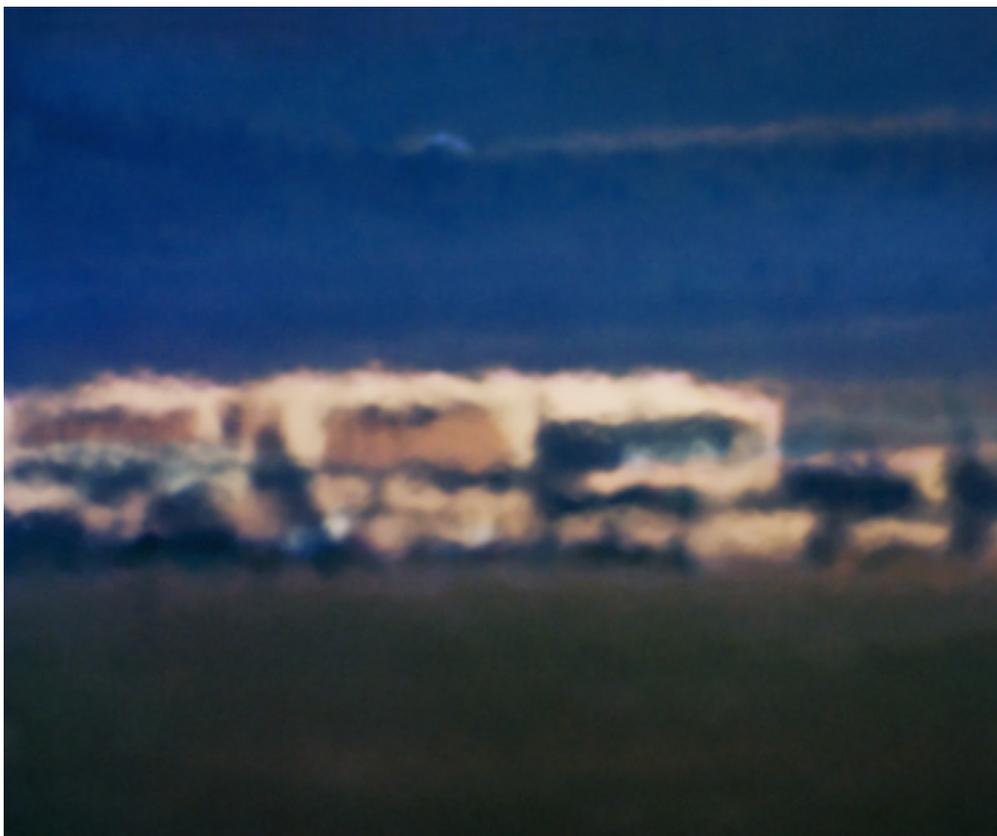
<sup>650</sup> The Creators Project. Trevor Paglen: Photographing Secret Sites and Satellites. *Vice video*; Pasternack, 2013.

<sup>651</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>652</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

photograph of a place, but it's literally a photograph of what it looks like when your physical capacity to see collapses, or begins to collapse.<sup>653 654</sup>

For example, those two aspects are well demonstrated in his project 'Limit Telephotography.' Some of the works from it were also exhibited as part of the project "Black World" in 2007.



23. Trevor Paglen, *Open Hangar, Cactus Flats, NV, Distance ~ 18 miles, 10:04 a.m., 2007*

While researching the CIA RDI programme Paglen took photographs of the domestic infrastructure - places and people involved in rendition programme that were revealed in the documents, such as buildings of front companies and people working in these companies. Some of those images are published in the book, others, those of people identified on the documents of companies involved in the RDI programme, are shown only in some of the talks he gave. Paglen observed that this incredibly secret and evil covert

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<sup>653</sup> Simon, 2013, Interview: Trevor Paglen, *drone centre*.

<sup>654</sup> Paglen talks about four step dialectic that makes truth claim, then doubts that truth claim, suggest a form of practice that could give rise to such an image and lastly suggest all previous steps as an allegory for something about 21st-century images, knowledge, practice, aesthetics and politics (Stallabrass, (ed.), 2013, p.213).

operation 'does not look like anything, it looks like the rest of the world around us all of the time, and for me there is something terrifying about that.'<sup>655</sup>

All photos in the book are black and white, and taken by Paglen himself apart from one photo of a plane with tail number N313P. Its photographer is Toni Marimon. All images can be seen as documents that accompany collaborative investigation Paglen conducted together with Thompson that illustrate different aspects of their discoveries. At the same time each image represents two important aspects of Paglen's work: the politics of production and the politics of viewing and spectatorship.<sup>656</sup> The politics of production entails all relational practices that are behind the work and go into its making. It is illustrated by description Paglen provides on his website. There he reveals that in order to find the Salt Pit, he used a collection of commercial satellite imagery, a compass, testimonies from former prisoners, and a map drawn by a former prisoner. Paglen points out that despite being blindfolded, hooded, and shackled, prisoners who spent time at the Salt Pit consistently described a ten-minute ride from the Kabul International Airport to the prison. He also had a map drawn by Khaled el-Masri of what he believed the interior of the prison looked like. Then he drew a circle around Kabul airport that represents the distance that one might travel in ten minutes, and compared that to el-Masri's map, the Salt Pit revealed itself. It was located in an old brick factory a few miles northeast of Kabul, along an isolated back-road connecting Kabul to Bagram.<sup>657</sup> Thus, the photo is a representation of the location that Paglen traced using different methods.

Paglen thinks about secrecy and analyses it in terms of geography - looking at spaces, landscapes, and practices of secrecy. He points out that 'geography theory tells us that it really isn't possible to make things disappear, to render things nonexistent.'<sup>658</sup> Images are just a reminder and a way to point, to show, to focus attention. If there would be no photo, that place would still exist. (Places are made visible by other means.) Paglen acknowledges that 'some forms of documentary constitute the best kind of images we could ask for, but there's no magic image or documentation that exists outside or beyond the limits of representation.'<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Paglen, 2013, Talk: Six Landscapes.

<sup>656</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.209.

<sup>657</sup> Paglen, T., (2006). Work: The Black Sites. [paglen.com](http://www.paglen.com). [online] Available from: <<http://www.paglen.com/?l=work&s=blacksites&i=0>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>658</sup> Paglen, T., (2010). *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World*. London: New American Library, p.16.

<sup>659</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.213.



24. Trevor Paglen, *The Salt Pit, Northeast of Kabul, Afghanistan*, 2006

The second “black site” site pictured below was brought to Paglen’s attention by Afghan journalists and human rights activists in Kabul. The code name of this site was unknown.<sup>660</sup>



25. Trevor Paglen, *Black Site, Kabul, Afghanistan, 2006*

Another relevant aspect of Paglen’s work is that the photographs from this project are used in different contexts. For example, a photo that is used in the book *Torture Taxi* as a black and white illustration of one of the black sites (pictured above), is also part of the series *The Black Sites* displayed as a colour photograph online on his website and displayed as a colour photograph in the exhibition; and again used as a small black and white image in another book by Paglen *Blank Spots on the Map*, and other books and essays. The minimal use of photos (and their re-use in different contexts) corresponds to Paglen’s sympathy ‘with a revised form of negative dialectics as a response to an image-saturated society.’<sup>661</sup>

The photographs showing two CIA secret prisons in Afghanistan constitute *The Black Sites* series that were exhibited at Bellwether Gallery in 2006 as part of an exhibition

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<sup>660</sup> Paglen, T., (2006). Work: The Black Sites. [paglen.com](http://paglen.com). Despite very tight security surrounding secret jails, in Afghanistan they were told about other possible American prisons, for example ‘a place near Kabul’s District 10 police station, not far from the Haji Yaquob crossroads.’ (*Torture Taxi*) That prison appears on the second photograph from *The Black Site* series.

<sup>661</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.212.

“Black World.”<sup>662</sup> These photographs of secret prisons were shown together with other photographs of secret military infrastructures in the US. The book *Torture Taxi* was published in September 2006 and it documented much of the factual background behind the works on display of the project “Black World.” His art and “cultural production” is guided by geography’s axioms. Following French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (and Marx) Paglen sees cultural production (like all production) as a spatial practice. By writing an essay, publishing a book and putting it on a shelf in a bookstore, producing images and displaying artworks in a museum or gallery, he is participating in the production of space.<sup>663</sup> The concept of the production of space ‘applies not only to “objects” of study or criticism, but to the ways one’s own actions participate in the production of space. Geography, then, is not just a method of inquiry, but necessarily entails the production of space of inquiry.’<sup>664</sup> Thus, every activity, every practice produces space. Paglen points out it is ‘very important to me in a way it is to give you permission to look at things that you might not otherwise look at.’<sup>665</sup>

Moreover, Paglen coined the term “experimental geography” and by that he means ‘practices that take on the production of space in a self-reflexive way, practices that recognize that cultural production and the production of space cannot be separated from each other, and that cultural and intellectual production is a spatial practice.’<sup>666</sup>

Furthermore, ‘If human activities are inextricably spatial, then new forms of freedom and democracy can only emerge in a dialectical relation to the production of new spaces.’<sup>667</sup>

From the point of view of experimental geography ‘there can be no “outside” of politics, because there can be no “outside” to the production of space (and the production of space is ipso facto political).’<sup>668</sup> But he also states:

I do not look for art to have that means ends relationship to policy, I feel like as an artist you can make images, you can try to make metaphors that help articulate certain things, you can draw attention to certain places and away from others

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<sup>662</sup> Trevor Paglen, "Black World," Nov. 16-Dec. 23, 2006, at Bellwether Gallery, 134 Tenth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001. See Davis, B. (2006). Black Site Specific, *artnet Magazine* 12-7-06 [online] Available from: <<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/davis/davis12-7-06.asp>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>663</sup> Paglen, T., (2008). *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*. In: Thompson, N., *Experimental Geography*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House; New York: Independent Curators International. [online] Available from: <<https://archive.org/details/experimentalgeog0000thom>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>664</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

<sup>665</sup> Paglen, 2015, SAAM lecture.

<sup>666</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

<sup>667</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

<sup>668</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

maybe, but artworks do not make linear arguments, it is not a policy paper, it is not even an op-ed, they are deeply strange things.<sup>669</sup>

The meaning of images depends on the background, on interpretive frameworks and own histories that the spectator brings to an encounter with images.<sup>670</sup> Creating an environment for those encounters to happen is for him a big part of what art is.<sup>671</sup>

Consequently, Paglen's work - research and images - creates an alternative storyline (Butler, Solnit) to that of the government and military. He creates the image and information circulation of the covert operation and, as Butler points out, creates new contexts as a result of its arrival. His cultural production creates a space/opportunity 'to think about how the world is changing.'<sup>672</sup> Clearly, Paglen's representational strategy enriches and also complicates spectatorial practice. By complication I mean the infrastructural insights that Paglen makes available through his research about the black state's influence on the democratic system. In particular, *Blank Spots on the Map* is devoted to understanding how, in order to make a place "disappear," there is need for an alternative state, an alternative economy, an alternative legal structure, and what the consequences of having that are.

### *Spectatorship ('Democracy is not a spectator sport')*

After 9/11 the United States was building a sector of state, 'a giant apparatus that was going to operate in secret and was going to have forms of power and coercion to it that would strongly shape the future.'<sup>673</sup> Paglen wanted to look at that and to 'understand how the state was changing, how the nation was changing, and how the world would change because of that.'<sup>674</sup> As a geographer Paglen sees the environments people live and work

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<sup>669</sup> Paglen, 2015, SAAM lecture.

<sup>670</sup> In a 2019 interview Paglen even states that he thinks that images (being strange things) 'have no inherent meaning at all; and the meaning of images is perhaps a kind of meeting point between what an audience brings to it and what is in the image itself and perhaps what the artist brings to it [...], and so i don't think that artists really have the power to determine what the meaning of their images or visual work that they make are going to be.' Bagheshirin Lærkesen, R., (2019). Trevor Paglen Interview: The Meaning of an Image. Editorial @ ASX, March 30. [online] Available from: <<https://americansuburbx.com/2019/03/trevor-paglen-interview-the-meaning-of-an-image.html>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>671</sup> Bagheshirin Lærkesen, 2019, Trevor Paglen Interview: The Meaning of an Image, ASX.

<sup>672</sup> Bagheshirin Lærkesen, 2019, Trevor Paglen Interview: The Meaning of an Image, ASX.

<sup>673</sup> Conger, K., (2014). Trevor Paglen: Pioneering Ways to View the Invisible. *SF WEEKLY*, October 2. [online] Available from: <<https://archives.sfweekly.com/exhibitionist/2014/10/02/trevor-paglen-pioneering-ways-to-view-the-invisible>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>674</sup> Conger, 2014.

in, from our secret prisons to our universities, as the present past.<sup>675</sup> The current institutions and spaces have been bequeathed to now by what came before. Similarly, geography also sculpts the future. 'The spaces we create place possibilities and constraints on that which is yet to come, because the world of the future must, quite literally, be built upon the spaces we create in the present. To change the future, then, means changing the material space of the present.'<sup>676</sup> As already mentioned above, his approach is informed by Lefebvre's (and Marx's) notion of space as a socially constructed system.<sup>677</sup> Examining the secret state that has grown and matured as a shadow part of the American government Paglen concludes that the black world has sculpted the United States in numerous ways:

Creating secret geographies has meant erasing parts of the Constitution, creating blank spots in the law, institutionalizing dishonesty in the halls of government, handing sovereign powers - what used to be the unlimited power of monarchs over their subjects and territories - to the executive branch, making the nation's economy dependent upon military spending, and turning our own history into a state secret.<sup>678</sup>

Moreover, Paglen argues that the black world and the hidden budgets that sustain it have changed American society in other, more subtle ways. At the time of his research, approximately four million people in the United States had security clearances to work on classified projects. To make a point, he contrasted this number to the number of federal government employees - approximately 1.8 million civilians. Paglen points out that 'each of those security-cleared workers spends their paychecks on clothes, housing, groceries, trips to Disneyland, restaurants, and all of the other things that people spend money on. This secondary spending, in turn, creates more jobs, an effect that economists call a "multiplier".'<sup>679</sup> He concludes that the black world is much more than 'an archipelago of secret bases. It is a secret *basis* underlying much of the American economy. The black world, in other words, means jobs. Lots of jobs.'<sup>680</sup>

Furthermore, already in the *Torture Taxi* Paglen writes that 'While the President insists the programme is 'lawful', others aren't so sure.' He points out that in 2004, lawyers at New York University and the New York Bar Association looked at what was known about the

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<sup>675</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.280.

<sup>676</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.280.

<sup>677</sup> Paglen, 2008, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*.

<sup>678</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.274.

<sup>679</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.277.

<sup>680</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.278.

programme and argued, that it violated numerous domestic laws and violated hundreds of international laws, regulations and treaty obligations (such as the UN Convention Against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Geneva Conventions, the Refugee Conventions of 1951).<sup>681</sup> 'Blank spots on maps begat dark spaces in the law.'<sup>682</sup>

In *Blank Spots on the Map* Paglen interrogates the assumption of transparency that underlies democratic process. That 'It's easy to imagine that the antidote to state secrecy is more openness, more transparency in state affairs.' But transparency, being a democratic society's precondition, is insufficient to guarantee democracy.<sup>683</sup> He argues that:

Justice Brandeis' famous maxim "sunshine is the best disinfectant" is often untrue with regards to secret projects: More often than not, when secret (and usually illegal) projects are made public the nonsecret parts of the state are transformed to accommodate them. Over time, the secret state continually transforms more democratic parts of the state in its own image at the expense of open democracy.<sup>684</sup>

Paglen asserts that to practise democracy involves confronting state secrets and actively working to prevent the secret state from spreading even further:

Just as the secret state has grown by creating facts on the ground, then sculpting the world around them in an attempt to contain the ensuing contradictions, the secret state only recedes when other facts on the ground block its path, when people actively sculpt the geographies around them. [...] I see people actively resisting what they see as unjust military courts, I see people actively working to prevent the secret state from spreading even further. In their efforts, I see people practising democracy.<sup>685</sup>

Nevertheless, Paglen's research on how secret state warps democracy, perhaps, also poses a difficult question about the political agency or in Azoulay's terms - the spectator's duty to use civic skill the moment she encounters photographs of injuries in 'order to negotiate the manner in which she and the photographed are ruled.'<sup>686</sup> How the spectator/reader can follow the ethical demand photographs/mental images of suffering

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<sup>681</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.33-34.

<sup>682</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.164.

<sup>683</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.281.

<sup>684</sup> Paglen, 2010, pp.xii-xiii.

<sup>685</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.281.

<sup>686</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

and atrocity might have on her, following Azoulay's assumption, that these people not only were there, but that they are still present there at the time of "watching" them.

Hariman and Lucaites explored civic spectatorship and described photography as 'a mode of experience, a medium for social thought, and a public art.'<sup>687</sup> And clearly Paglen's photographs and accompanying research 'provide vital resources for thinking about the problems of collective living.'<sup>688</sup> But importantly, when exploring the ways to 'help spectators think about what is there to be seen'<sup>689</sup> they use the term 'thinking' that includes feeling, talking, and acting in response to the problems of collective living. A relevant aspect of thinking is that we think with many 'things' and it includes words, numbers, sounds, objects and images.<sup>690</sup> They emphasise that we use both, words and images, as a means for constantly making sense of the world and for attuning one's place in it in relation to others.<sup>691</sup> Moreover, they compare spectatorship to literacy and define it as a civic capability that as well contributes to the public sphere. They describe such spectatorship as 'an extended social relationship that works more like a process of attunement or affective alignment than a logic of direct influence.'<sup>692</sup>

Similarly, Solnit points out that 'culture matters, that it's the substructure of beliefs that shape politics' and that it is 'the pervasiveness that matters most.'<sup>693</sup> That 'we live inside ideas'. We reside within overlapping structures that are assembled from ideas, visions and values, and 'these are collective projects that matter not when one person says something but when a million integrate it into how they see and act in the world.'<sup>694</sup> Subtle transformations remake the world by the 'accretion of small gestures and statements and the embracing of new visions of what can be and should be.'<sup>695</sup> And as Paglen pointed out, 'the act of torture affects not only the person being tortured, but the torturer as well. Both parties are irreversibly transformed by the experience. [...] societies that begin torturing their prisoners also transform themselves.'<sup>696</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> Hariman, R. and Lucaites, J.L., (2016). *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, pp.2-3.

<sup>688</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.3.

<sup>689</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.3.

<sup>690</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.3.

<sup>691</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, p.3.

<sup>692</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, 2016, pp.14-15.

<sup>693</sup> Solnit, R., (2019). *Whose Story Is This? Old Conflicts, New Chapters*. London: Granta. pp.2-3.

<sup>694</sup> Solnit, 2019, p.1.

<sup>695</sup> Solnit, 2019, p.1.

<sup>696</sup> Torture Taxi, p.195.

Clearly, Paglen's representational strategy highlights politics of spectatorship and the role of the spectator/reader. By making 'fine-art-gallery' work 'you're creating a space for people to pay a certain kind of attention to the image or work.'<sup>697</sup> While, as he points out, the meaning of images is a kind of meeting point between what an audience brings to it and what is in the image itself and what the artist brings to it (and that meaning depends on the background, on interpretive frameworks and own histories that the spectator brings to an encounter with images),<sup>698</sup> at the same time, he points out that when we talk about images, we're fundamentally talking about meanings, creation of meanings and about shared meanings.<sup>699</sup>

### *Depiction of the violated bodies and the mental images*

Paglen and Thompson point out that when the first-person testimonies started to appear in the public domain, 'These accounts provided a level of detail and drama that made many start paying attention.'<sup>700</sup> One of those testimonies is described in their book. They had the diary of Binyan Mohammed Al Habashi, a document supplied by his lawyer, British attorney Clive Stafford Smith. Mohammed was arrested in Karachi, Pakistan, on 10 April 2002, while trying to leave the country to go to his home in London, and handed over to American interrogators. From his diary we learn that he was stripped naked and photographed as he was transferred from one black prison to another. That he was told 'If you don't talk to me, then the Americans are getting ready to carry out torture. They're going to electrocute you, beat you, and rape you.'<sup>701</sup> And we learn about many of his experiences during imprisonment, including torture.

In addition to finding black prisons in Afghanistan where detainees were held, Paglen and Thompson were looking for other detainees, who as well were held in the Salt Pit, Dark Prison, or other secret facilities. They met with Afghan journalists of Pajhwok, one of the few independent news agencies in Afghanistan to find out about other non-Afghans who have been abducted by the CIA and transported to Afghanistan for questioning and torture. Thus, the authors use sworn testimonies, diaries of former CIA detainees as well

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<sup>697</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.206, pp.208-209.

<sup>698</sup> Bagheshirin Lærkesen, 2019, Trevor Paglen Interview: The Meaning of an Image, ASX.

<sup>699</sup> Jacob J.P. and Skrebowski L., (2018). *Trevor Paglen: Sites unseen*. Contributions by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Kate Crawford. London: D Giles Limited.

<sup>700</sup> Torture Taxi, p.32.

<sup>701</sup> Torture Taxi, p.22.

as interviews conducted with them by human rights organisations and also interviews they conducted themselves.

In May 2006 (while in Afghanistan) they found and interviewed Dr Rafiullah Bidar, the regional director for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, who had debriefed many ex-prisoners captured by the US.<sup>702</sup> Bidar stated that, 'In 2005, the Americans admitted they have twenty jails all over Afghanistan and five hundred detainees.'<sup>703</sup> He told them that The commission was not allowed to go to see these prisons, but they interviewed detainees released from jails and that is how they learned about the torture.<sup>704</sup> Dr. Bidar told them about one man who was forced to sit on a chair, 'that penetrated his anus, that something was forced into his rectum torturously while he was tied to this chair.'<sup>705</sup> In an interview A.C. Thompson told that 'the things that these men had to say when we interviewed them were really chilling. I mean, they were absolutely terrifying, and they sounded just like Abu Ghraib.'<sup>706</sup> Thompson said that some of the gentlemen they talked to would start crying while accounting their experiences. He added:<sup>707</sup>

They loosed dogs on the men, snarling German Shepherds. They were held naked for days. They weren't fed for days. They were put in stress positions that were horribly painful and beaten if they broke from those positions. They were beaten over and over again. They weren't told why they were there. They were interrogated relentlessly for days for being supposed Taliban or al-Qaeda sympathizers. They weren't given the things they needed to properly practice their religion. I mean, all kinds of just horrendous stuff.<sup>708</sup>

In Afghanistan authors also got to interview two former Afghani detainees. Allah Noor, a middle-aged small-time merchant with a produce stand in the town, who was taken by US soldiers on a winter afternoon in late 2003 accused of providing weapons to the local Taliban; and Gannat Gul, a 38-year old veterinary surgeon. Allah Noor was stripped naked and photographed from all sides; questioned, beaten, tortured, attacked by a snarling German shepherd; kept without proper clothes and food, not allowed to use the toilet, or allowed to pray. He was not allowed to talk to soldiers, nor to talk to, or look to other

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<sup>702</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.144-146.

<sup>703</sup> Torture Taxi, p.146.

<sup>704</sup> A.C. Thompson, interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*.

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<sup>706</sup> A.C. Thompson, interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*.

<sup>707</sup> A.C. Thompson, interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*.

<sup>708</sup> A.C. Thompson, interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*.

prisoners. The abuses went on for about five months when he was released with little explanation.<sup>709</sup> Gannat Gul had a similar story, but he was permitted to talk to other inmates. He learned that there were people who were abducted outside Afghanistan and brought to Bagram prison - Iraqis, Iranians, Saudis, Yemenis, and Pakistanis.<sup>710</sup> The most detailed account from within the Salt Pit comes from Khaled El-Masri, a German citizen of Lebanese descent, who was kidnapped by the CIA in January 2004 and held incommunicado for four months.<sup>711</sup> El-Masri described the conditions and treatment, including torture while imprisoned and the fact of being photographed by masked men in black uniforms on the first night in the Salt Pit.

In the book they also write about a prisoner, an Afghan in his early twenties, who in 2003, froze to death after he was stripped, chained to the concrete floor, and left overnight without blankets. After a CIA medic ruled the man's cause of death as 'hypothermia', he was buried in an unmarked grave. His family was never told of his fate, and his remains were never returned home.<sup>712</sup> Paglen and Thompson account for the disappeared<sup>713</sup> and acknowledge that as they write their book, 'scores of known prisoners remain unaccounted for'<sup>714</sup> and that the torture taxis continued their daily flights.

Paglen in his research explains that the torture techniques were pioneered in the CIA black sites and then migrated to Guantanamo Bay and Iraq, and culminated with the photos from Abu Ghraib.<sup>715</sup> Following accounts of the Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse scandal in Iraq, one of the "torture memos"<sup>716</sup> was leaked to the press in June 2004. The so called "torture memos" were drafted in 2002 to advise the CIA, the US department of Defense, and the President on the use of enhanced interrogation techniques: mental

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<sup>709</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.146-8.

<sup>710</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.148-9.

<sup>711</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.137-9.

<sup>712</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.136-137.

<sup>713</sup> Torture Taxi, pp.20-21.

<sup>714</sup> Paglen and Thompson meticulously name detainees who are missing at the time: Abdul Rahim as-Sharqawi, Adil al-Jazeera, Mohammed Omar Abdel-Rahman, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, Hassan Gul, and Mustafa Setmariam Nasar. Torture Taxi, pp.194-195.

<sup>715</sup> Paglen, 2010, p.270.

<sup>716</sup> The so called 2002 "Torture memos" are a set of legal memoranda drafted by John Yoo as Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the US and signed in August 2002 by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee, head of the Office of Legal Counsel of the US Department of Justice. They advised the CIA, the US department of Defense, and the President on the use of enhanced interrogation techniques: mental and physical torment and coercion such as prolonged sleep deprivation, binding in stress positions, and waterboarding, and stated that such acts, widely regarded as torture, might be legally permissible under an expansive interpretation of presidential authority during the "war on terror". The documents on this subject can be found in the Rendition Project's document archive; Paglen, 2010, p.14.

and physical torment and coercion such as prolonged sleep deprivation, binding in stress positions, and waterboarding, and stated that such acts, widely regarded as torture, might be legally permissible under an expansive interpretation of presidential authority during the “war on terror.”

We get an insight into prisoner’s experiences from both books - *the Torture Taxi* and *the Blank Spots on the Map*, and also from the interviews authors gave to the press. From these accounts we also learn that the CIA follow the procedure to strip naked prisoners and photograph them.<sup>717</sup> We learn about illegal, brutal treatment and torture. Those are mental images that are invoked, created by the storytelling of victims and investigators. These stories and testimonies create perspectives that were absent, nonexistent before. Consequently, we learn not only about the large covert infrastructures that disappear people. We get to know the names of some of the people who have been disappeared and tortured and also killed. The collaborative story incorporates the stories told (and testimonies given) by the victims of the CIA RDI programme. Solnit (and also Girard<sup>718</sup>) points out the importance of the story’s perspective. Solnit argues that ‘Who gets to be the subject of the story is an immensely political question,’<sup>719</sup> ‘one of the battles of our time is about who the story is about, who matters, and who decides.’<sup>720</sup> ‘To change who tells the story, and who decides, is to change whose story it is.’<sup>721</sup>

I suggest that these mental images can also be regarded as what Butler calls the *frames* that distribute the recognisability of certain figures of the human, and that these *frames* make adjustments to broader *norms* that determine what will and will not be a grievable life. That by telling the stories of the CIA RDI programme’s victims, authors created depiction of the specific lives that previously were not perceived as damaged or lost

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<sup>717</sup> Only in 2015 it was revealed that the US government has concealed the existence of some 14,000 images/photographs documenting the CIA network of secret “black site” torture and interrogation centres established after September 11. Many of them show naked prisoners. The CIA RDI archive is still withheld by the US government. Gaist, 2015.

<sup>718</sup> Girard points out ‘our growing ability to decipher phenomena of collective violence and then to produce texts of persecution rather than myths’ as the achievement of the modern and Western world. Moreover, he discusses texts of persecution that are written from the point of view of the persecutor as one phase, that is followed by the further radical change and points to the importance of the victim’s own perspective in these stories. Girard, R., (2003). *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. London, New York: Continuum, pp.126-138.

<sup>719</sup> Solnit, 2019, p.17.

<sup>720</sup> Solnit, 2019 p.13.

<sup>721</sup> Solnit, 2019. p.7.

because these lives were not perceived as living.<sup>722</sup> That authors have written ‘people back into the past that previously were not a part of the past.’<sup>723</sup> For Paglen those are relevant questions, who has the power to create meanings, ‘who has the power to tell those stories, who has the voice to shape the way in which we understand the past, shape where we’ve come from and where we’re going.’<sup>724</sup>

Moreover, in the contemporary conditions (by that I mean not only covert illegal programmes that are intended to hide torture and brutal treatment, and also stealth torture) these stories inform and prepare the spectator/reader. Rejali points out familiarisation as another relevant aspect of the civic skill:

If global monitoring of torture is to succeed in eliminating these clean tortures, citizens need to understand clearly what these techniques are, where they come from, and what they do. Being able to talk intelligently about these techniques is not simply a cognitive ability that promotes better research on torture, but a necessary civic skill. Citizens who cannot speak competently about cruelty are unable to protect themselves against tyranny and injustice.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> The numerous stories provide evidence that the U.S. government still do not recognise the CIA RDI victims as people with rights. Their cases are not heard in courts, they do not receive apology and compensation, no assistance or redress for their torture and suffering. That is endemic situation, with rare exceptions. Another two recent examples were made public in *The Intercept*. Ridha al-Najjar and Lofti al-Arabi al-Gharisi (Lofti El Gherissi), both men are Tunisian citizens. They were released and repatriated to their home country in 2015. Neither was ever charged with a crime, and the U.S. government did not compensate either for their torture or 13 years of detention without charge. In the interviews with Human Rights Watch (Pitter, L. and Hancock, S., (2016). Interview: New CIA Torture Claims. [HRW.org](https://www.hrw.org), October 3. [online] Available from: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/03/interview-new-cia-torture-claims>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].) the two men describe the abuses that took place at the Salt Pit - a converted brick factory north of Kabul, Afghanistan (Detention Site COBALT). According to the Senate reports’ summary, al-Najjar was the first detainee held in Detention Site Cobalt. Both men described various forms of water torture, waterboarding, and being strapped to a board while submerged face down in a bathtub; being threatened with a makeshift electric chair - a previously unreported torture method; sleep deprivation, being hung from a rod while beaten with batons; and other abuses. During his time in CIA custody, al-Najjar claims to have suffered broken bones, broken hips, a broken ankle, damaged knees and a damaged jaw. Both men, now in their fifties, are dependent on their families, unable to find work due to lingering physical and psychological trauma. Al-Najjar says he lives with chronic pain in his ankle, hips, and backbone, and that he has kidney pain, a hernia, and blood in his stool. A-Gharisi says he has chronic pain, and blurred vision. He says he does not see a doctor, because he cannot afford one. Emmons, A. (2016). Former CIA Detainees Describe Previously Unknown Torture Tactic: A Makeshift Electric Chair. *The Intercept*, Oct. 3. [online] Available from: <<https://theintercept.com/2016/10/03/former-cia-detainees-describe-previously-unknown-torture-tactic-a-makeshift-electric-chair/>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>723</sup> Paglen, T., (2018). A Conversation with Trevor Paglen. In: Jacob, J.P. and Skrebowski, L. *Trevor Paglen: Sites unseen*, p.225. Paglen discusses the changes to the creation of meanings and also who has the power to write history for the past and envisage future in the digital age. I will discuss some of the concerns raised in more detail in the section below.

<sup>724</sup> Paglen, T., (2018). A Conversation with Trevor Paglen. In: Jacob, J.P. and Skrebowski, L. *Trevor Paglen: Sites unseen*, p.225.

<sup>725</sup> Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, p.3. A British-American intellectual Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011) decided to have firsthand experience of the controversial drowning technique - waterboarding, and wrote an article about it. Hitchens, C., (2008). Believe

Importantly, Azoulay states that 'photography can no longer be reduced to the act of taking the photograph - shooting (as in Susan Sontag's writings) or capturing an effervescent moment (as in Roland Barthes' thinking). The photograph is just one possible outcome of the event of photography.' She argues, that 'when a camera is used in torture rooms, and the photos are suppressed from the public's eye, the event of photography could - and should - be reconstructed from other documents, testimonies, and so on. The inaccessibility of such photographs, which might have been censored or destroyed, doesn't annul the existence of an event in which a person was tortured and photographed.'<sup>726</sup> I should add, that the inaccessibility of photographs or their initial (intentional) absence also doesn't annul the existence of an event in which a person was tortured.<sup>727</sup> The censored torture and stealth torture prompts to reconsider the role of the photograph. I suggest that reconstruction of the event (that necessarily constitutes the exercise of civic skill) potentially can be initiated by the mental image. Moreover, I suggest that Azoulay's exploration of the photographic event ("watching" of the photograph) already involves mental images that are used to explore (to "watch") moments surrounding the photograph.

To conclude, I argue that Paglen's representational strategy (that consists of social science research and image making/art) can be regarded as an important (and effective) adaptation in addressing the contemporary Western practices that involve covert atrocities and also stealth torture. As photographic image is missing - atrocity/violence is either never photographed, destroyed, kept undisclosed or is impossible to photograph - the investigation/research on its history and infrastructure reconstructs the events that atrocity is part of. For the spectator/reader it is a way of learning to see contemporary covert/stealth atrocity. This project exposes the fact that black sites and their prisoners exist in spite of invisibility (and absence of photographic evidence).

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Me, It's Torture. *Vanity Fair*, July 2. [online] Available from: <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/08/hitchens200808>> [Accessed 7 January 2022].

<sup>726</sup> Thompson, N., (2014). Photography and Its Citizens: Ariella Azoulay in conversation with Nato Thompson. *Aperture*, 214 Spring, p.53.

<sup>727</sup> In the 'positive' approach I was intending to look at work where artists reconstruct the events of atrocity. For example, Taryn Simon's series *Zahra/Farah* (2008, 2009, 2011). Simon was invited by Brian De Palma to make a photograph of Zahra [Zubaidi] for his movie *Redacted* (2007). As De Palma states, 'that film was about images and events we can't access.' The photograph was a fictionalised rendering of a real event. Simon, T., (2015). *Rear Views, a Star-Forming Nebula, and the Office of Foreign Propaganda: The Works of Taryn Simon*. London: Tate Publishing, pp.123-134.

Paglen, following geography's axioms, considers production of space - both, the black world and his own activity - cultural production, that also produces space. Paglen documents the production of black space, he exposes how covert atrocities are practised and sustained invisible, and how these illegal activities influence, affect democratic systems and domestic and international law in the form of human rights violations and subverted democracy. His cultural production produces alternative space and creates conditions and possibilities of an informed/prepared encounter with covert and illegal activities practised by the contemporary Western democratic states. Thus, it produces space and gives 'permission' to look at what has been made invisible. I suggest that his work creates new meanings, that potentially become shared meanings; it becomes a part of the process through which new contexts are determined and formed (Butler, Solnit, Lucaites & Hariman). Moreover, it produces civic space (Azoulay, Rejali, Lucaites & Hariman) and I suggest that mental images play a pivotal part in that process. As a result, Paglen has enriched and complicated the viewing strategies.

The collaborative story, that also incorporates victims' stories, creates vocabulary that makes conversation about the subject possible. It is an alternative story that disrupts the state controlled narrative. It represents people that have not been recognised as humans with corresponding rights by the U.S. government and its allies in the war on terror. By considering and attending to the suffering of others, authors create *frames* that allow for the representability of the human and create the *frames* of recognisability (Butler) for victims of the CIA RDI programme.

### **3.2. Edmund Clark. The appearance of disappearance**

British artist Edmund Clark (1963) explores the representation of processes and experiences that are not seen, that cannot be seen because they are controlled.<sup>728</sup> His work is shaped by engagement with censorship, security and control. Thus, restrictions of access and also restrictions and control over what he can represent play pivotal role in the work he makes. There are two main recurring themes: he develops strategies for reconfiguring how subjects are seen and he engages with state censorship to explore hidden and unseen experiences, spaces and processes of control and incarceration in the

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<sup>728</sup> Smith, B., (2016). A Small Voice Podcast: Conversations with photographers. 025 - Edmund Clark. *bensmithphoto.com*. [online] Available from: <<https://bensmithphoto.com/asmallvoice/edmund-clark>> [Accessed 21 February 2020].

'Global War on Terror' and elsewhere.<sup>729</sup> Clark has produced many art works that explore the 'Global War on Terror.' He made works about Guantanamo Bay in the US<sup>730</sup>; Control Order House in Britain<sup>731</sup> (the detention of terrorism suspects in England on control orders); Bagram Base in Afghanistan.<sup>732</sup> He also explores prisons. One of the latest projects he made at the only wholly therapeutical prison in Britain at Grendon (established in 1962).<sup>733</sup> Most recent work that continues exploring the War on Terror is about extraordinary rendition program. He collaborated with counterterrorism investigator Crofton Black.<sup>734</sup> In 2015 they published a book *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* that reveal the infrastructure of the secret detention program. This project also featured in the form of exhibition.

In what follows, I look at the representational strategies devised for *Negative Publicity* to render visible the infrastructure of contemporary atrocity that has been happening in plain sight and nearby, though staying almost invisible. I consider how they use the photographs and what underpins their decision. I pay attention to the censorship they themselves exercise in this work in regards to information and photographs. Also, I consider Clark's strategy of not photographing people and the assumed role played by the photographs of the face and body of the victims of RDI programme. Moreover, I consider Clark's use of the "mental images" (though Clark does not use the term "mental images", effectively he considers existing images that the spectator might already have about the subject he explores). Furthermore, I look at their own expectations about the effects of their work; and the spectator's role.

### *Representational/visual strategy - testimony and writing history for the future*

Clark states that this collaborative body of work is about the extraordinary rendition process, it is not about the interrogation of people in secret CIA sites, although it does

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<sup>729</sup> Edmund Clark: Biography. edmundclark.org [online] Available from:

<<https://www.edmundclark.com/biography/>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>730</sup> Clark, E., (2010). *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*, Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis Publishing; *Letters to Omar* (2010) and other projects.

<sup>731</sup> Clark, E., (2013). *Control Order House*, London: Here Press.

<sup>732</sup> Clark, E., (2014). *The Mountains of Majeed*, London: Here Press.

<sup>733</sup> Clark, E., (2007). *Still Life Killing Time*, Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis Publishing; Clark, E., (2017). *In Place of Hate*, Birmingham : Ikon Gallery; Clark, E., (2017). *My shadow's reflection*, Birmingham, UK; London: Co-published by Ikon Gallery and Here Press.

<sup>734</sup> Crofton Black has spent many years carrying out in-depth international investigations into counterterrorism tactics on behalf of the human rights group Reprieve, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, The Rendition Project, and other organisations. See The Rendition Project Team [online] Available from: <<https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/about/index.html>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

appear in the book. It is about the process of transportation; who was running it; who was responsible for flying people from one secret prison to another secret prison around the world.<sup>735</sup> Thus, the central subject is ‘the societies we are living in [...] about here, society I live in, and of the control processes, [...] so we are our own subject.’<sup>736</sup> In particular, they focus on the processes, paper trail and locations of the CIA’s secret prison programme that happened in Europe.

The starting point was the documents that Black had collected while working for lawyers on behalf of the CIA RDI victims. Together<sup>737</sup> they decided what the most important and most interesting documents were to include from an evidential point of view, and also what worked visually. As a result, they developed a visual language which was about redaction, because they discovered that a lot of the images were the redacted ones which were visually the strongest.<sup>738</sup> The image below shows a page from an internal CIA investigation into its own interrogation activities. Clark points out that if ‘mock executions’ and ‘waterboard technique’ is listed on the contents list, then what is underneath those black rectangles? He emphasises that we are dealing with something unseen, with visualisation of what we do not know, we are dealing with state secrecy.<sup>739</sup> Clark sees it as a powerful trigger for an audience. That these black rectangles are ways of engaging audiences, of making people question what is going on and reflect on what our governments are doing on our behalf.<sup>740</sup> These are (new) image texts created by controlling power itself. Indeed, the redacted images display what Butler calls ‘operations of power.’ These are politically saturated frames that delimit the sphere of appearance. The redaction frames the violence, it hides some of the activities that the bodies of detainees were exposed to.<sup>741</sup> In this image the censorship is revealed - it exposes the mechanism of restriction and this imposed framing also becomes part of the *NP* story.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Clark, E., (2019). Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within. In: *IMAGEMATTERS* Symposium 29 Oct 2019 - 30 Oct 2019. [online] Available from <<https://mediathek-f3.hs-hannover.de>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>736</sup> Ritchin, F., Clark, E. *et al.*, (2019). Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories. In: *IMAGEMATTERS* Symposium 29 Oct 2019 - 30 Oct 2019. [online] Available from <<https://mediathek-f3.hs-hannover.de>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>737</sup> Black and Clark developed representational strategy for the book together with the book’s designer Ben Weaver. That it was ‘a three way conversation.’ Stear, N., (2016). The long read: Edmund Clark and Crofton Black on the War on Terror. In: *British Journal of Photography*, Aug 1 [online] Available from: <<https://www.bjp-online.com/2016/08/long-read-edmund-clark-and-crofton-black-on-the-war-on-terror/>> [Accessed 21 February 2020].

<sup>738</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>739</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>740</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>741</sup> Butler, J., (2010). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, pp.1-3.

<sup>742</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.71-72.

~~TOP SECRET~~ / [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	39
Guidance Prior to DCI Guidelines	40
Specific Unauthorized or Undocumented Techniques	41
Handgun and Power Drill	41
Threats	42
Smoke	43
Stress Positions	44
Stiff Brush and Shackles	44
Waterboard Technique	44
[REDACTED]	46
[REDACTED]	47
[REDACTED]	48
[REDACTED]	48
[REDACTED]	50
[REDACTED]	54
[REDACTED]	57
[REDACTED]	58
[REDACTED]	61
[REDACTED]	65
[REDACTED]	67
Specific Unauthorized or Undocumented Techniques	69
Pressure Points	69
Mock Executions	70
Use of Smoke	72
Use of Cold	73
Water Dousing	76
Hard Takedown	77

ii

~~TOP SECRET~~ / [REDACTED]

017 (-> 209, 265-269)

26. Contents page from the CIA Inspector General, *Special Review: Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities (September 2001 - October 2003)*, dated 7 May 2004. Declassified in redacted form in August 2009. NP, p.17.

Black opens each section with an essay on a particular episode in the CIA RDI programme and Clark photographed related locations. The paper trail assembled in the book shows primary source documents from the CIA's RDI programme: invoices, documents of incorporation, billing reconciliations produced by the small-town American businesses enlisted in prisoner transportation, declassified documents; documents that demonstrate

how this subject has been seen and contextualised by different people: the CIA internal report, New York Law School, European Union, Italian police in Milan, and so on;<sup>743</sup> and detainee's testimonies. In conjunction with photographs of the programme's physical infrastructure: airports, front companies, hotels, prison sites, former detention sites and government locations, this work recreates the network that links CIA 'black sites,' thus making visible a system hidden in plain sight. Clark points out that with this work he preserves histories that would not be told otherwise.<sup>744</sup> He creates 'source material for the future' and that, though there is a contemporary audience, this work is possibly intended for future spectators.<sup>745</sup>

There are relevant patterns developed for the book. In one pattern, the annotations all come in a block after the images, leaving the images and documents unadorned and resembling an evidence dossier. It is intended to replicate an investigation process and involve the audience in going through a similar process of investigation, of making connections.<sup>746</sup> Another notable structural pattern is that the photos relating to the former detainees, never charged with any crime, come after the annotations for the photos and documents relating to the rendition programme. Clark and Black wanted to make those images (of interiors and exteriors of their homes) stand apart because, they state, the subject itself is different to all the other imagery in the book. These are images from within the homes of people who were subjected to extraordinary renditions, whereas the rest of them are about the process.<sup>747</sup> I discuss the representation relating to victims of the CIA RDI in more detail in a section further below.

Moreover, in the book format it is also a hypertext. As Clark points out, 'The structure of this book is an evocation of this network, with a system of cross-referencing to suggest alternative paths through the forest of documents and images; an experience that by turns sheds light on the process and acknowledges its impenetrability.'<sup>748</sup> Furthermore, the aspect of impenetrability (and a reflection of what you cannot see) is particularly well highlighted, demonstrated and utilised in the annotations section. Often there is a tension between the 'unsuspecting' photographs/images and the story/history/description that

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<sup>743</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>744</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>745</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>746</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>747</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>748</sup> Clark, E., (2015). Some Third Party. In: *Negative Publicity*. New York: Aperture. p.8.

accompanies the image. I look at their assumptions about photos and resulting strategy in more detail in a section below on the photographs.

### *Censorship - the law and other control processes*

Next to the censorship - image texts created by controlling power itself - addressed and exposed in *NP*, there is also censorship Clark and Black practise themselves. They do not hide that 'we have redacted our own work.'<sup>749</sup> They decided not to publish any names that had not already been published elsewhere. However, they do not publish known names of the RDI pilots. A pilot was named in a German court, thus, his identity was known, but Clark states that 'it was never my intention to reveal his name or to reveal the location of the house.'<sup>750</sup> In addition, the deliberate anonymity of the extraordinary renderers plays into Clark's intention to address the spectator and question (her) complicity. Moreover, some photos are partly or fully edited using pixelation and grey out. There is a fully pixelated image of the interior of Boeing 737 N787WH, that is censored because of the copyright issue.<sup>751</sup> There are two partially pixelated images that Clark states are photographs of buildings where pilots, identified as having flown rendition flights, live.<sup>752</sup> Notably, he states that, 'The photographs of these two private homes are perhaps the crux of this work, raising questions of rights, complicity, power and choice. Do I have the right to reveal their location, to show what I can see? Do I want to do so and what would that reveal about me?'<sup>753</sup>

Under American law it was acceptable to use those images, but under British law the person has a reasonable right to privacy and security in their home even if you do not name them and don't say the location of the house; just the fact that this image would be used in the context of this book under British law they could have the right to take the author to court and have all books pulped. Following legal advice Clark redacted/pixelated two photographs that showed the homes of pilots who had flown the rendition flights and in the book itself that information and action/redaction becomes the text related to the image.

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<sup>749</sup> Bayley, B., (2016). Exposing the Black Sites Behind Extraordinary Rendition, *VICE*, March 22 [online] Available from: <[https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/jmayag/negative-publicity-edmund-clark-crofton-black](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/jmayag/negative-publicity-edmund-clark-crofton-black)> [Accessed 19 February 2020].

<sup>750</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>751</sup> *NP*, image on p.209 and description on p.234.

<sup>752</sup> *NP*, image 141. on p.155 and image 173. on p.190. Both images are partly pixelated to hide buildings where pilots identified as having flown rendition flights live. These image are redacted on legal advice as the inhabitant has the right to privacy and security in their own home.

<sup>753</sup> Clark, 2015, Some Third Party, *Negative Publicity*, pp.7-9. The second redacted image of a house belonging to a pilot identified as having flown rendition flights is on p.173.

That image text reveals another control process; it evidences a legal privilege not afforded to the cargo in that pilot's airplane.<sup>754</sup> Clark wrote, that 'Standing before the houses of pilots named as having flown rendition flights is as close as I have come to pointing a finger with this testimony. I feel more vulnerable unannounced before these comfortable homes than escorted in a former Libyan interrogation room.'<sup>755</sup> Thus, the mandatory framing is an important part of the story they tell. They expose the mechanisms of restriction (Butler)<sup>756</sup> also in the censorship exercised by themselves.



27. Edmund Clark, *Redacted image of a complex of buildings where a pilot identified as having flown rendition flights lives*. NP, p.141 and p.155.

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<sup>754</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>755</sup> NP, p.8.

<sup>756</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.71-72.

The description added to the pixelated image reads:

The houses are modern clapboard style family houses with garages. The complex, which has been landscaped around a golf course, is on the edge of a small provincial American town. The image is redacted on legal advice as the inhabitant has the right to privacy and security in their own home.<sup>757</sup>

Thus, Clark follows both - the restrictions imposed onto him by institutions he collaborates with and he also consults lawyers (American and British law) and follows their advice. Notably/perhaps, the 'asymmetry' (under law) is further highlighted in their visual strategy where authors do not follow the same concealment strategy and show the former victims' homes, and also name many victims. For example, the photograph on page 61 is taken outside the home of a family rendered by the CIA with assistance from MI6. Though we know that Clark collaborated with released rendition victims and agreed on the terms of their representation,<sup>758</sup> nevertheless, this visual strategy<sup>758</sup> also can be seen as a demonstration of a different kind of asymmetry. This work displays not only another type of image and text created by a different kind of control process - censorship that is provided (or not provided) by the law. Clark (and Black) created images that visualise/materialise legal aspects of human rights that Western citizens have, but victims of rendition chose not to use such an option, and did not hide their existence.

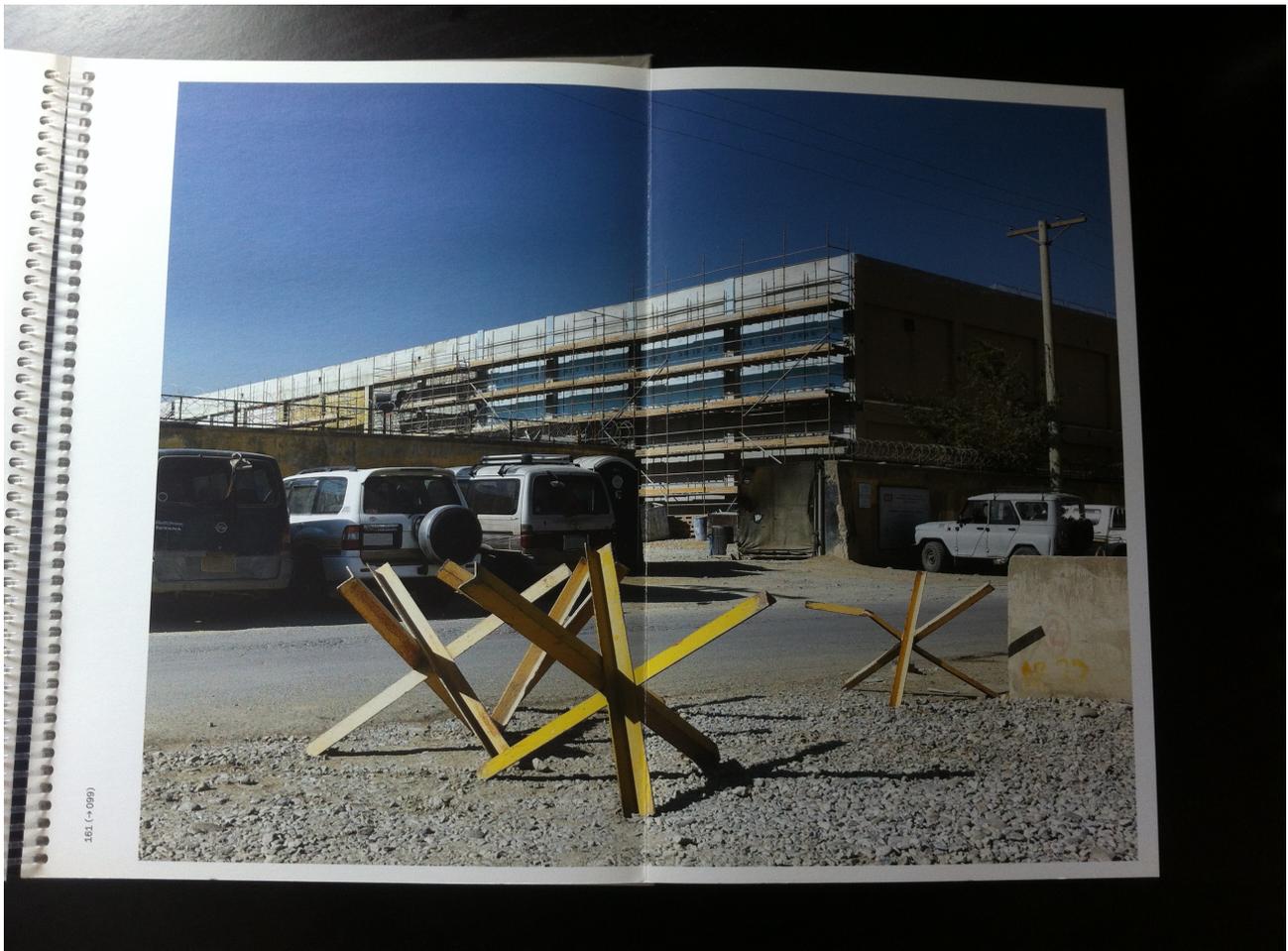
I suggest that both RDI case studies also highlight also another aspect of contemporary condition. Though Clark consciously did not reveal some of the identities of rendition perpetrators, and manipulated some of the initial digital images to disguise part of the image showing American pilots' homes, despite these law abiding activities, the names of the rendition pilots and some other CIA RDI programme contractors are publicly available.<sup>759</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> NP, p.155.

<sup>758</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>759</sup> For instance, the plane which abducted Khaled El-Masri in Germany in 2003 is alleged to have been operated by company Aero Contractors Ltd. and three rendition pilots have been named in relation to El-Masri's kidnapping court case. Their names can be found on [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org) It is a progressive nonprofit watchdog and advocacy organisation based in Madison, Wisconsin - The Center for Media and Democracy.



28. Edmund Clark, *The site of the former Bagram Theater Internment Facility at Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul, Afghanistan*. NP, p.161 and p.189.

In addition, I point out that there seems to be other censorship at work. For example, there is an image/photograph of the site of the former Bagram Theater Internment Facility (the image above). The story that accompanies the photograph talks about the building that was turned into a makeshift detention centre following the 2001 invasion and further accounts for two detainees, Dilawar and Habibullah, who were both killed there in December 2002; and following US Army investigation; and continues to report the changes to the building and the site.<sup>760</sup> Three cars that are parked in front of razor-wired wall next to the building do not have numbers on their licence plates, they look greyed out. There is no mention of the redaction of car plate numbers. On the car on the right the licence plate number can be discerned. Perhaps that suggests that there might be more

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<sup>760</sup> NP, p.189.

unaccounted redaction in this work, some other unaccounted control processes,<sup>761</sup> perhaps censorship of a censorship?

Moreover, the deaths of two men and the details of their killing revealed in the story demonstrate what Clark and Black call ‘the pointlessness of photography’<sup>762</sup> and suggest that the opacity of these images reveal something of the condition of extraordinary rendition itself. Thus, the impenetrability of the image can be seen also as a metaphor for the CIA RDI programme. I suggest it also further highlights the importance of the storytelling and its perspective. It can be seen as an example of a ‘viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others.’ Azoulay states that such reading becomes a civic skill.<sup>763</sup> Furthermore, the story that accompanies the photograph is a testimony for ‘those that ‘touched bottom’ never to come back’ of the Global War on Terror. Clark points out in *NP* foreword that their testimony ‘can be found and is reproduced, in fragments, in this book.’ I explore the aspect of ‘photographic redaction’ highlighted by Clark in more detail in a section below on photographs; and the increasing importance of the storytelling in a section on the “mental images.”

### *Photographs as testimony, political performance and a reflection of what you cannot see*

Clark reveals that at the beginning he did not want to make photographs about this subject, because there was nothing to see, he could not photograph torture. This work instead is about secrecy.<sup>764</sup> He wanted to use existing photography and other forms of imagery: imagery created by satellites and by other people. He even tried to make camera-less imagery from photograms from computer screens which showed sites.<sup>765</sup> Clark and Black tried all sorts of different strategies for sourcing images from around these sites, images that have already been made and posted online, images that would help to visualise this network, but these images were too varied and there were copyright

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<sup>761</sup> Kilpatrick, J., (2020). A Framing Paper. Counter-terrorism and the Arts: How counter-terrorism policies restrict the right to freedom of expression. *www.tni.org*. [online] Available from: <[https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/tni\\_freedom\\_of\\_expression\\_online.pdf](https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/tni_freedom_of_expression_online.pdf)> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

<sup>762</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>763</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>764</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>765</sup> Stear, 2016.

problems.<sup>766</sup> They decided that there was a formal need for a photographic strand that served as a counterpoint and also as a complement to the documentation.<sup>767</sup>

In these circumstances when there was nothing to see, Clark states that the act of photographing becomes not one of witnessing but an act of testimony,<sup>768</sup> 'and an act of reconstructing part of this network, of visualising it.'<sup>769</sup> 'The act of taking the photos eventually became almost the point for me - even if all I could do was take a photo of a facade, I went there.'<sup>770</sup> Thus, taking photographs can be seen as a political performance.

Moreover, Clark points out that 'the point of not being able to see anything, the point of the pointlessness of photography was exactly in the end relevant, because these images became sort of extension, a reflection of the black rectangle, of the white rectangle, of the facade, of what you cannot see.'<sup>771</sup> Consequently, Clark sees 'a relationship between what you can't see in the photographs and how the redaction works in the documentation.'<sup>772</sup> He compares the photographs to the strike-out that is used in the documents to mask off sensitive information.<sup>773</sup> Furthermore, Clark and Black have discussed the relevance of the aspect of opacity that these photographs demonstrate. They state that:

The photographs in this book show only surfaces of these events through detectable traces and liminal sites or objects: unremarkable streets, facades, furnishings, ornaments and detritus. It is the opacity of these images that reveals something of the condition of extraordinary rendition. Look at them and they show nothing. Look into them and they are charged with significance. They are veneers of the everyday under which the purveyors of detention and interrogation operated in plain sight.<sup>774</sup>

The approach to photographs that both, Clark and Black, restate - you look at them and you do not see very much, but you look into them and they are charged with significance, highlights, perhaps, not only the 'redaction' aspect that photographs demonstrate. By emphasising relationships between different documents, how photographs relate to other documents and suggesting a re/construction of the network/infrastructure, and of

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<sup>766</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>767</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>768</sup> Stear, 2016; Clark, 2015, Some Third Party, *Negative Publicity*, p.7.

<sup>769</sup> Bayley, 2016.

<sup>770</sup> Bayley, 2016.

<sup>771</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>772</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>773</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>774</sup> Clark, 2015, Some Third Party, *Negative Publicity*, p.7.

visualising it,<sup>775</sup> it can also be seen as a strategy, what Azoulay suggests as an ethical response to a photograph of a suffering - a “watching” strategy that constitutes a civic spectatorship. Clearly, this strategy emphasises the spectator’s/reader’s role. Also, I suggest that this strategy potentially creates a mental space in the reader/spectator; it activates existing mental images and also creates new images in the reader/re-creator of the covert network.<sup>776</sup> As Belting argues, the spectator/reader is ‘the locus of images.’<sup>777</sup> Belting states that, ‘Notwithstanding all the devices that we use today to send and store images, it is [...] only within the human being, that images are received and interpreted in a living sense; that is to say, in a sense that is ever changing and difficult to control [...].’<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>776</sup> There is a condition that affects specifically creation of the mental images. Aphantasia is a mental condition characterised by an inability to voluntarily visualise mental imagery. It is the inability to visualize in the mind's eye, hear sound in the mind's ear, or imagine experiences outside the present moment. [online] Available from: <<https://aphantasia.com>> [Accesses 11 Sep 2020].

<sup>777</sup> Belting, H., (2011). *An Anthropology of Images*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.37.

<sup>778</sup> Belting, 2011, p.37.



29. Edmund Clark, *Room 11, Skopski Merak hotel, Skopje, Macedonia*. *NP*, p.259 and p.281.

Clark spent some time in the room where a German citizen Khaled El-Masri was detained and interrogated for 23 days. While in the room 11, Clark contemplates the experiences that El-Masri went through in this room twelve years ago, the sights he saw are the same Clark sees then - a giant cross on a mountaintop overlooking the city, outlined at night in bright white neon; a broken chimney. Clark photographed this view that El-Masri had described in a declaration he made to lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union and it appears in *NP*.<sup>779</sup> Clark works on the introduction for *NP* there. He writes: 'These words are written in room 11 of this side street hotel. I am trying to make sense of four years spent tracking and photographing sites of extraordinary rendition. I have witnessed nothing during this time, but the making of these photographs has become an act of testimony.'<sup>780</sup> In a 2019 talk Clark displayed the image of the Room 11 and said:

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<sup>779</sup> *NP*, p.263 and annotated photograph on p.281.

<sup>780</sup> Clark, 2015, Some Third Party, *Negative Publicity*, p.7.

I know that this is .... a hotel bedroom in a very small backstreet hotel in Skopje the capital of Macedonia. I know this the room where a man called Khaled al-Masri was detained and interrogated for 23 days, it's a place of interrogation, it's a site in the battlefield of contemporary conflict. This is where interrogation took place. I was able to work out from evidence he gave at the EU where the hotel was, where the room was in the hotel, he did a hand drawing, the floor plan matched exactly, this is where he was.<sup>781</sup>

Clearly, Clark emphasises the politics of production and tells his testimony to the audiences. Perhaps, because the photographs 'show nothing' both strategies become increasingly relevant. Moreover, arguably, 'the pointlessness of photography' and another, more attuned way of representing issues of contemporary conflict could be further demonstrated by Clark's attempt to submit *The Letters to Omar* series to the World Press Awards. His entry was rejected on the grounds that it was not a photograph, but a xerocopy.<sup>782</sup> Clark stated that he lets documents speak for themselves - those are the image texts created by the controlling power itself. These documents reveal the work of controlling power in redaction and also in the carelessness of how this procedure is done.

*The strategy of not photographing people (and the assumed role played by the photographs of the face & body of the rendition victims)*

Black stressed and highlighted the value of a photograph of a prisoner by pointing out that at a hearing for a European Parliament civil liberties committee inquiry into complicity in illegal detentions, one MEP asked if he could see a photograph of a prisoner on a plane. Failing that, he would remain convinced of the fictional world in which it didn't happen. Similarly, Black writes that, a former president of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, when asked during a visit to London in 2011 about CIA prisoners being held in his country, stated firmly that: "Nobody proved it, nobody showed it."<sup>783</sup> <sup>784</sup> Also, in an interview authors say that because at the time the Obama administration refused to disclose its 14,000 photographs of prisoners being transported on planes and held in secret locations, as a result they cannot show them, they show instead what they can.<sup>785</sup> Nevertheless, despite revealing

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<sup>781</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>782</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories. Similar attempt to publish (in *The Guardian*) their photographs as reportage from the war by Broomberg & Chanarin (Perhaps, it can be seen as fluidity of the image medium and/or as problematisation of documentary protocols (Azoulay)).

<sup>783</sup> Clark, E. and Black, C., (2016). The appearance of disappearance: the CIA's secret black sites. [FT.com](https://www.ft.com/content/90796270-ebc3-11e5-888e-2eadd5fbc4a4), March 17. [online] Available from: <<https://www.ft.com/content/90796270-ebc3-11e5-888e-2eadd5fbc4a4>> [Accessed 19 February 2020].

<sup>784</sup> Black also recounts the conversation with residents of Antaviliai (Lithuania) who said that 'The American journalist told us that if we had pictures we wouldn't need to work anymore as they would pay a lot of money for the pictures. [...] NP, p.240.

<sup>785</sup> Clark and Black, 2016, The appearance of disappearance: the CIA's secret black sites, [FT.com](https://www.ft.com).

importance of the photographs of rendered people and directly working with people who were held and tortured at secret prisons and released without any charge, in the representational strategy Clark and Black developed for *NP*, photographic depiction of people is absent.

The spectator/reader is reminded that the main focus of the work is the infrastructure of the contemporary atrocity. 'The point about this work is that it's the process of rendition and its place embedded in plain sight in our cities and our societies; it's not actually about individuals and their experiences.'<sup>786</sup> Clark stresses that one of the things that they tried to do with *NP* book is to show that extraordinary rendition wasn't something exotic handled by the government or the CIA. It was outsourced to small companies, taking place in unremarkable, ordinary places. 'The extension of that is that our airports were used, our airspace - we are all implicated, all complicit in this, because it was happening in our world.'<sup>787</sup> Clark emphasises complicity of the fellow citizens, but he does not consider any precedents where citizens of Western democracies were noticing and actively interacting with the covert state and military activities.<sup>788</sup>

I suggest that, perhaps, this strategy of revealing, evoking what was/is going on in plain sight, with frames of places without people in them, also alludes to the core message that this work exposes, namely, 'we should remember that principally what disappeared here is people. [...] What also disappeared is the law.'<sup>789</sup> Thus, next to implication, complicity of the spectator/reader in the process of rendition, that are relevant issues for Clark, this work also alludes to how those processes already directly affect, and influence the spectator's

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<sup>786</sup> Stear, 2016.

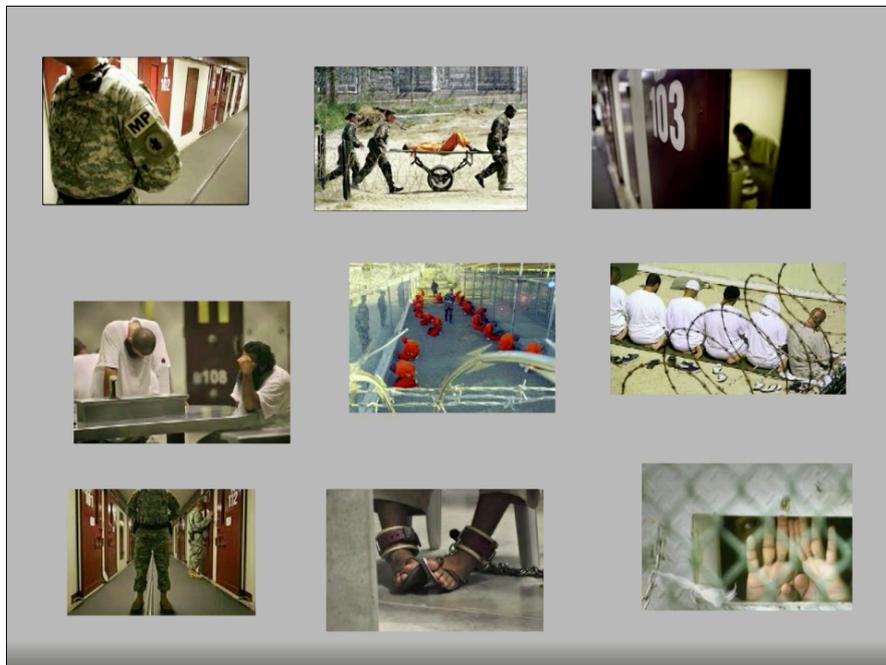
<sup>787</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>788</sup> There have been precedents of citizens noticing the covert and illegal activity from the very beginning of the war on terror and monitoring it and publicising it, for example members of a peace group called the Mid-West Alliance Against Military Aggression. A member of the group, Tim Hourigan, stated that they have monitored Shannon Airport in Ireland since late September, early October 2001, because of the U.S. military use of Shannon Airport in attacking Afghanistan and Iraq. They also logged the particular jets linked to renditions that were never inspected. They logged complaints with the police, but they also never inspected those jets/military flights. They staged few actions, including the disarmament actions by Mary Kelly and the Catholic Workers, and after that a high court injunction was sought to evict everyone in the peace camp and to prevent them from entering the grounds of the airport, where they had been monitoring before. Though as Hourigan stated, 'It has had very little effect, because we just got a telescope, and we do it from, you know, a mile away.' Goodman, A., (2005). St. Patrick's Day Special: Irish Peace Activists Protest U.S. Use of Shannon Airport in Iraq War. [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), March 17. [online] Available from: <[https://www.democracynow.org/2005/3/17/st\\_patricks\\_day\\_special\\_irish\\_peace](https://www.democracynow.org/2005/3/17/st_patricks_day_special_irish_peace)> [Accessed 11 Sep 2020]. (Mary Kelly and the 5 Catholic Workers were facing serious charges for their actions.) In *Blank Spots Paglen* explored the issue of visibility/transparency that is a precondition for functioning democracy and argued that more often than not this illegal, covert world when exposed tends to transform everything around it in its own image, not to fix the issue.

<sup>789</sup> Clark and Black, 2016, The appearance of disappearance: the CIA's secret black sites, [FT.com](http://FT.com).

everyday life. Empty sites can also be seen as theatrical stages; an empty stage perhaps hints at another aspect of the disappearance of law or ignoring law<sup>790</sup>, there is a possibility that it might become relevant for the spectator/reader herself.

However, there are also 'reasons of representation, censorship and ethics,<sup>791</sup> that shaped Clark's choice not to use any imagery of the individuals involved. He says that, 'the act of making portraits of people is hugely political act and it comes with all sorts of ethical and representational dilemmas [...] to certain extent it was a sign of respect to leave people out.'<sup>792</sup> Clark reveals his thinking discussing the work he did on Guantanamo and extraordinary rendition. The collection of images seen below demonstrate 'the forms of representation which we are familiar with, which were first coming out, seen on our screens about this subject.'<sup>793</sup>



30. The collection of images Clark showed during his 2019 talk at the *ImageMatters* Symposium.

Clark describes them as 'these kinds of images that dehumanised, demonised images of people where you are not allowed to show anyone's faces, no one is allowed to be identified, which come with the message that these are the worst of the worst, who

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<sup>790</sup> Bayley, 2016.

<sup>791</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>792</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>793</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

planned 9/11 ..<sup>794</sup> One reason was that Clark tried, 'not reproduce the visual stereotype on the screen again.'<sup>795</sup> He said:

I have seen portrait series of ex-Guantanamo detainees and they are 99% South Asian or Arab males with large beards and certainly at the time I was making that work that image was hugely problematic. There is a notion in photography the human form is supposedly humanising and often it is not. It's quite the opposite. It's de-humanising. It's just a sort of representation which forms .. becomes a mirror for all those stereotypical preconceptions going in our minds, and with that work it is particularly what does the terrorist look like, look that is about terrorists, cause that is what we see on our screens. So, I chose deliberately not to make any images of those men who were working with me.<sup>796</sup>

He states that because 'in most cases, pictures of Arab or South Asian men with beards is so toxic,<sup>797</sup> by 'not using those forms of representation is a way of taking that barrier out of the way in which the work may communicate or engage people.'<sup>798</sup> Instead, he focused on domestic/personal space, 'which is about the familiar, rather than about the exotic and about the demonised.'<sup>799</sup> Looking at 'the objects, the space around these people and the objects and spaces connected to the people who have been managing, running, facilitating the process of rendition is a way of focussing on the everyday and the ordinary.'<sup>800</sup> In addition, Clark points out that still life imagery of personal space and possessions follows a long tradition of symbolism and metaphor of the 'Vanitas' style of

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<sup>794</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>795</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid. It is assumed that "the normal photographic strategy for humanisation" is "giving the issue a 'face'", see Campbell, D. (2010). Thinking images v.4: Edmund Clark's Guantánamo project. *David Campbell website* [online] Available from: <<https://www.david-campbell.org/2010/11/07/thinking-images-v4/>> [Accessed 19 February 2020].

<sup>797</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>798</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>799</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>800</sup> Stear, 2016.

17th century Dutch painting in which objects like hourglasses, candles, skulls and flowers symbolised the passage of time and the transience of human existence.<sup>801</sup>



31. Edmund Clark, Image from the series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.

Also, Clark points out that ‘vast majority of people at Guantanamo Bay have never been charged with anything, that the legal process is very problematic ..’<sup>802</sup> By photographing places where people live after they have been released from Guantanamo Bay, either back in the United Kingdom or in the Middle East, Clark intended to represent something else about Guantanamo Bay, a dissonance, something people usually do not expect to see, thus he wanted ‘to create sense of confusion in the minds of an audience.’<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>801</sup> Clark, E., (no date). If the Light Goes Out: Home from Guantanamo. *lensculture* [online] Available from: <<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/edmund-clark-if-the-light-goes-out-home-from-guantanamo>> [Accessed 21 February 2020].

<sup>802</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>803</sup> In the project on Guantanamo Bay Clark creates a photographic narrative where he mixes together three spaces: domestic spaces of the released prisoners, spaces where the American military live at Guantanamo Bay, and the spaces of incarceration and detention. The aim of this is “to create a photographic narrative which is dissonant, which is not what you expect to see about Guantanamo Bay, but which is also confusing because i do not tell you what you are looking at you initially do not know what you are looking at whether it is a home, whether its base or its a detention space.” Moreover, he wants to achieve a sense of confusion in the minds of an audience, to make them disoriented, because that also resembles the process of interrogation which takes place there. Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.



32. Edmund Clark, Image from the series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.

Moreover, the strategy of using familiar, recognisable places and objects, was intended to bring it closer to every possible viewer's everyday experience of spaces, and places that they inhabit, frequent, and objects that they use. In addition, it also shows that 'our spaces were used for this process. This happened in our cities, quiet suburbs, and quiet villages. It's not an exotic thing; it's happening in everyday spaces run by people who are just going about their business. And in a sense that also means that these kinds of spaces are to a certain extent contaminated by this.'<sup>804</sup>

Clearly, such photographic/representational strategy complicates the spectatorial practice. Clark creates images that do not conform to the expectations the spectator might have of the subject of examination. His strategy is intended to reconfigure existing stereotypes, and hopefully provoke different thinking about the subject. Thus, for Clark different images potentially provoke different thoughts and feelings.<sup>805</sup> Also, there are some reoccurring related themes that Clark often talks about that I find relevant to consider in a bit more detail. Those are the notion of stereotypes and the notion of fixed and stable meanings; and also propaganda. It seems that the emphasis on fixed and stereotyped meanings that are attached to photographs perhaps is an indication of a different approach to the

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<sup>804</sup> Stear, 2016.

<sup>805</sup> In 2019 talk Clark discussed his experience of working in a product development agency and he draw parallels between development of new products and new concepts with manufacturers and advertising agencies and of working with documentary subjects and current affairs. He pointed out the importance of emotion and feeling in targeted messages that we receive. He explained the ways how an advertising campaign is developed in order to alter behaviour of potential consumer and the use of the ideas of anxiety, of reassurance, of aspiration, things which are exotic, things which are familiar in developing the right triggers for them to respond to what you are trying to say, what you are trying to sell them. Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

meaning creation and fixation/attachment. It could be underpinned, perhaps, on one hand, by his historian background, and, on the other, by his approach to “screens.” He talks about screens as very important these days - ‘screens are where everything takes place .. battlefield of images and text.’ Also, that screens target us with simplistic (forms of) messages.<sup>806</sup> In regards to the first underpinning - he prioritises the initial meaning that has been ‘attached’ to the photograph/document (for example pictures of Arab or South Asian men with beards from Guantanamo Bay prison who are presented as terrorists). He stated that for him the change of context cannot critically change the initial meaning of that image/document.<sup>807</sup> Also, Clark said the following:

I studied history at the university, the whole idea of interpretation, responding to source material, the idea of evidence, it’s all propaganda, it’s all what you write, you interpret, I suppose at one level, this sounds deeply pretentious, but at one level, some of my work I made, is .. there is a contemporary audience, perhaps, but I hope at some level I am creating source material for the future, perhaps, because, all this material won’t be available otherwise [..]<sup>808</sup>

I suggest that insistence on the images with fixed and stereotypical meanings takes issue with what Belting points out as an important and inherent aspect of human interaction with images. Belting writes, that:

Notwithstanding all the devices that we use today to send and store images, it is within the human being, and only within the human being, that images are received and interpreted in a living sense; that is to say, in a sense that is ever changing and difficult to control no matter how forcefully our machines might seek to enforce certain norms.<sup>809</sup>

Also, it disregards the dual effects of the image circulation elaborated by Butler. She argued that the circulation of war photos breaks with the context all the time, as in the case of (unintended) circulation on the internet. The image reaches new contexts, but it also creates new contexts as a result of its arrival, it becomes a part of the process through which new contexts are determined and formed.<sup>810</sup> The photos that fail to circulate, either because they are destroyed or censored, are incendiary for what they depict and for the limitations imposed on their movement. When the fact of a destruction is leaked, the report

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<sup>806</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>807</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>808</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>809</sup> Belting, p.37.

<sup>810</sup> Butler, 2010, p.9.

on the destructive act circulates in place of what was destroyed. She states, that such 'leaks' demonstrate how to break from the context that frames the event and the image.<sup>811</sup>

Consequently, Butler and Belting emphasise the fluidity and instability of the image meaning that issue from both, inherent human ability and also the effects of circulation, change of contexts that affect the initial meaning of the image. However, there are some significant changes to the image meaning creation that have come with "screens." I consider this issue in more detail in a section below where I look at Paglen's recent research results on digital images and machine vision. Paglen examines the changes to meaning creation in digital realm and points out exactly the issue of fixedness of meanings that comes with the digital image, programming and AI; and particular issue is fixedness of meanings chosen and attached to images of humans that are also problematic as they are stereotypical and racist.

In 2017 Clark made series called *Orange screen* (2017, ongoing) that consists of verbal descriptions of images of key events of the Global War on Terror 'seen on our screens.' The short texts are ekphrastic readings of images presented as calligrams in the rectangular frame of a photograph. Clark describes images from the war on terror as 'spectacles of war and terror appear on our screens,' and he states that 'the absence of the image removes it from its ideological context. The texts trigger visual memories of images and the impressions of the events recorded.'<sup>812</sup> Clark describes his strategy as collecting the key images that he had in his own mind of the events on the war on terror and of contemporary conflict and 'just writing,' 'trying to describe what I saw in those still

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<sup>811</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.1-12.

<sup>812</sup> Edmund Clark, *Orange Screen*, Summary. edmundclark.com [online] Available from: <<https://www.edmundclark.com/works/orange-screen/#text>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

images or video clips,' 'actually simply say what is it that I know I can see in these images.'<sup>813</sup>

2011 Small crowded room semi circle of seated figures around laptop covered table people standing behind all eyes fixed to the left except one man in blue uniform with multi-coloured medal ribbons looking down as a man in white polo shirt and black open jacket leans forward and a woman folder on lap covers mouth with right hand

33. Edmund Clark, *Orange Screen*, 2017

The intended outcome that Clark wanted to achieve is that the spectator/reader would not have the familiar representation of these events, so they would have 'to revisit, to rethink, reimagine, reconnect with the images in my mind because I want people to try and explore whether they have those images, do they recognise those images, [...] or they recall the event itself [...].'<sup>814</sup> Thus, Clark explores the connection between the event and the image what people would have potentially seen on their screens. He states that such strategy takes 'as much propaganda out of this image and when you stop and you actually just describe what it is that you can see, it makes it something else, it's a way of trying to make people to reconnect with these events in a different way, what do they remember, what do they think they know.'<sup>815</sup> Consequently, Clark focuses the spectator/reader on her own mental images and what knowledge she has about those events.

Clark states that the strategy of 'simply' saying what he sees in the images is taking out propaganda from the described image. I would point out that perhaps 'just describing' or

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<sup>813</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>814</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>815</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

'simply saying' is not as simple and as transparent process/activity as Clark presents. The problem of language is elaborated in Paglen's 2016 essay 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)' and also in 2019 essay Paglen co-wrote with Kate Crawford, AI researcher and professor, 'Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets.'<sup>816</sup>

Also, importantly, *NP* focus attention not only on the contemporary condition of controlled access to information about the extraordinary rendition and its photographic depiction, it further develops representational strategies to consider and expose both, the politics of production and also the politics of viewing. I argue that *NP* might offer the opportunity to explore what Darius Rejali points out as a 'future' or current way to see/imagine torture and other abuses that have been developed in the Western democratic states because of the primacy of seeing and transparency demanded by democratic societies, namely, stealth torture.<sup>817</sup> Instead of showing the bodies affected by the abuse/torture (that, as Rejali reminds, in the case of stealth torture that is specifically developed to not produce any visible signs), they show devices of abuse. (Such approach was used by Clark already in his earlier work on Guantanamo Bay prison. He photographed, for example, objects such as shackles and a force feed chair. See an image above with shackles and the next below with the force-feeding chair.)

*"Mental images" (and making oneself familiar with what it is and what it does)*

Clark does not use the term "mental images," nevertheless he considers images, texts and words of the subject he explores, such as rendered terrorism suspects, that are available to spectators, that they might have seen and kept in their minds, and those they do not have:

I think being as aware as possible of what your potential audiences know about the subject you deal with, what images they have seen, what text, what words they have read, what they know about the subjects, how they been visualised, what images might be in their minds of the subjects that you are exploring is kind of vital to be able to make work which seeks to in some way reconfigure or change those representations. The other reason why I talk about bending the screen<sup>818</sup> is most of

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<sup>816</sup> Crawford, K. and Paglen, T., (2019). Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets, *The AI Now Institute*, September 19, [online] Available from: <<https://www.excavating.ai/>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>817</sup> Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

<sup>818</sup> The expression 'bending the screen' that Clark uses in the talk references Fred Ritchin's book Ritchin, F., (2013). *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen*, New York: Aperture. One of the

my work is actually about what takes place not on the screen, its about what is happening behind the screen, its about what we are not being shown, its about what we do not get to see, its about the complexity of messages, alternative messages behind the, perhaps, simplistic representations and messages that we receive, that we have targeted to us.<sup>819</sup>

In the above citation Clark talks about two ideas/aspects that I find particularly relevant for my argument. One is - consideration (and collection) of existing mental images, his own and his potential audiences. Thus, he imagines and creates the collection of (imagined) images before seeking 'new or alternative ways to make work to engage audiences and ideally affect change.'<sup>820</sup> He suggests, that 'It is only through reflecting on the nuanced way information (image, text and image-text) is imparted and received that artists, photographers and activists can hope to find strategies that reconfigure, question and ideally affect representation and even action.'<sup>821</sup> Consequently, he imagines also a group of people whom he wants to address and affect with his work. Such intention can be seen as an attempt to activate the spectator's civic skill, that is, to create, what Azoulay calls, the civil spectator.<sup>822</sup>

Moreover, I want to point out following observation. Though Clark avoids photographing any person to avoid exoticization, stereotyping etc., what is left for the spectator/reader to see (with for example my background) is obvious cultural differences displayed by the interiors, exteriors and photographed objects. Secondly, language betrays exactly what Clark tries to avoid to show by photographic means. It explicitly 'shows' that either 'a man formerly imprisoned in a CIA black site'<sup>823</sup> or still incarcerated (or dead) victims of extraordinary rendition, have names such as: Gul Rahman, Mohamed Farag Ahmad Bashmilah, Khaled el-Masri, Binyam Mohamed, Abu Omar, etc. In *NP* there is also an unclassified list of the CIA detainees from 2002 - 2008 on Appendix 2.<sup>824</sup> These names evoke images from a different culture and language landscape. Thus, such strategy not only emphasises the mental images the spectator/reader has, but absence of human body

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themes that Clark discusses are 'screens that are targeting us', 'screens are where everything takes place .. battlefield of images and text.'

<sup>819</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>820</sup> Clark, E., (2019). Abstract: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within, *IMAGEMATTERS* website, [online] Available from: <<http://image-matters-discourse.de/abstracts/bending-the-screen-ekphrasis-plain-sight-and-the-monster-within/?lang=en>> [Accessed 21 February 2020].

<sup>821</sup> Clark, 2019, Abstract: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>822</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

<sup>823</sup> NP, p.34, p.103

<sup>824</sup> NP, pp.163-169.

focuses also attention onto what is left in the frame or by what frame is replaced - language.

Clark states, that 'this book does not try to bear witness for the transported and tortured of extraordinary rendition who have endured the deathlike experiences of waterboarding or mock executions. Those who survived, and are no longer incarcerated, can supply the words of their own testimony - personal or legal.'<sup>825</sup> In the *NP* authors include some of those testimonies. Notably, Clark also writes about 'those that 'touched bottom' never to come back.'<sup>826</sup> He states that all the documents and reports, relating to the CIA RDI programme, are a testimony of those who perished, disappeared completely.<sup>827</sup>

Furthermore, as Azoulay points out and argues, some objects cannot be reduced to the documentary value of their photographs, nor to the work of art that fits into some place in an imperial history of art. The spectator should view it as the encapsulation of the imperial violence.<sup>828</sup> I suggest that such images (either photographic, verbal descriptive, drawn) offer the spectator an opportunity, as Rejali and Azoulay remind, to imagine, feel for themselves what these devices inflict upon human bodies (while been disappeared and kept in legal limbo and outside the reach of law.) These images (photographic, verbal, or drawn) allow a reading of the injury inflicted on others and this activity of reading is a civic skill<sup>829</sup> (not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation).<sup>830</sup>

The photograph below is from Clark's project on Guantanamo Bay prison. It is mobile force-feeding chair, that is used on detainees. He was allowed to photograph it only after

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<sup>825</sup> Clark, 2015, Some Third Part, *Negative Publicity*, p.7.

<sup>826</sup> Clark references Giorgio Agamben's writing on Levi's testimony and the Muselmänner: 'Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness. But it alters the value of testimony in a definitive way; it makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area.' Clark states that the 'unexpected area' in *NP* are 'the traceable bureaucracy of invoices, documents of incorporation and billing ...' Also, the documents and reports that attempt to define the scale and experiences of extraordinary rendition, such as police files, human rights reports, national and transnational inquiries and internal secret service investigations, that 'It is here that testimony of the Muselmänner of the so-called Global War on Terror can be found and is reproduced, in fragments, in this book.' Clark, 2015, Some Third Part, *NP*.

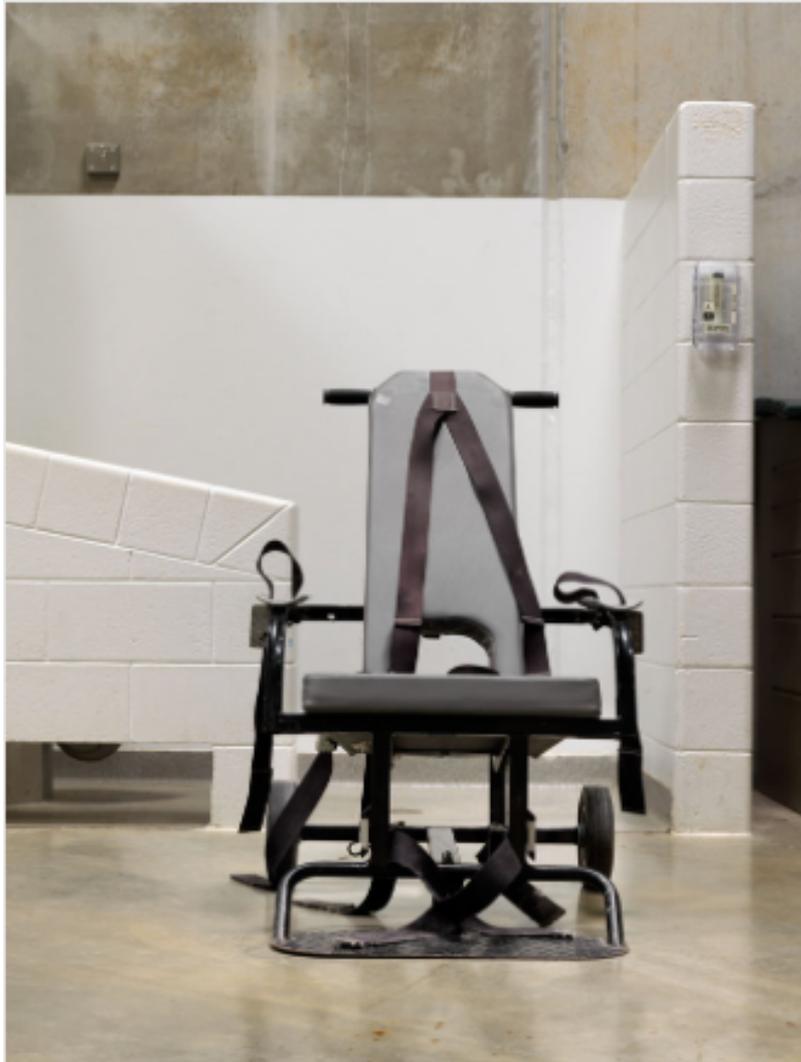
<sup>827</sup> Clark, 2015, p.8.

<sup>828</sup> Azoulay, A., (2018). 2. Unlearning Images of Destruction. *www.fotomuseum.ch*, Sep. 17. [online] Available from: <[https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155283\\_unlearning\\_images\\_of\\_destruction](https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155283_unlearning_images_of_destruction)> [Accessed 21 February 2020]; Azoulay, A., (2019). *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. London, New York: Verso. She considers photograph of a looted artefact from indigenous society/culture; I find her approach useful to consider contemporary 'artefacts,' such as photographs of the torture devices.

<sup>829</sup> Rejali, 2007.

<sup>830</sup> Azoulay, 2008, p.14.

negotiation.<sup>831</sup> In *NP* Clark and Black include account by Mohamed Farag Ahmad Bashmilah of his experiences in CIA detention in Afghanistan. Next to other experiences, he describes force feed inflicted upon him.



34. Edmund Clark, Image from Clark's series *Guantanamo: If the Light Goes Out*.

Though Clark stresses that *NP* is a testimony from a perspective of a western citizen (and made for a Western citizen), and that he does not want to witness what those rendered people went through, the account of force-feed by Mohamed Farag Ahmad Bashmilah provides the reader with experience that perhaps comes close to witnessing torture:

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<sup>831</sup> Lane, G. and Clark, E., (2010). If the Light Goes Out: Edmund Clark's pictures of Guantanamo Bay. *The Guardian*, Nov 3, [online] Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2010/nov/03/guantanamo-photographs-edmund-clark-gallery>> [Accessed 19 Feb 2020].

In the interrogation room there was me, the doctor with the disfigured hand, an interpreter, an interrogator, and three guards. I was weighted on a scale that used pounds as its unit of measure and the scale showed that I was about ninety pounds. Then the guards untied my hands and sat me in a chair and strapped my arms to the arms of the chair. They then used chain to connect the shackles on my feet to a metal ring in the floor. I saw blue cans on the table that contained what looked like pink colored liquid. There were also tubes like those used for IVs and a metal IV pole. After I was strapped to the chair and chained to the floor they shoved a tube up into my nose and I began screaming because of the pain. I resisted because I was beginning to choke and the guards held my head back. In this way they forced the tube all the way into my stomach. After this tube was inserted where they wanted it to be they taped it to my nose and connected it to whatever the material was that they were going to feed me. They emptied five or six cans of this liquid into a plastic container that they hooked to the IV pole. They then put this material into my stomach.

After they emptied this material into stomach, I told them my stomach was bloated and they took the tube out. When they pulled the tube out my nose started to bleed. Then the doctor told me that this was the way that it would be, once in the morning and once at night, until I started eating again. After they force-fed me, they weighted me again, and then took me back to my cell. [..]<sup>832</sup>

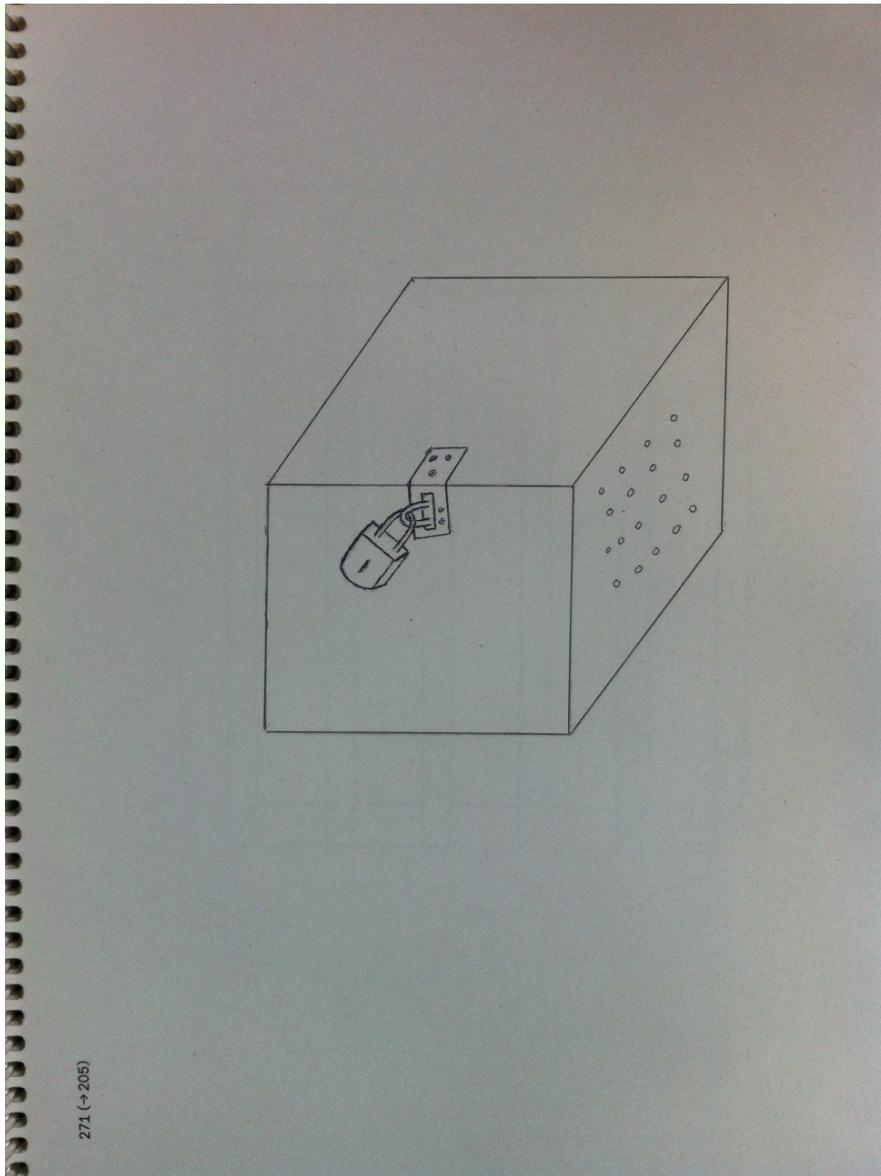
By juxtaposing the photograph of the force-feed chair and the account of the force-feed itself that Clark used in different but connected projects I want to point to a larger strategy employed by Clark (and other artists discussed earlier - Rosler and Jaar in particular). He explores different ways of visualising abuse and torture. As a result, the spectator/reader encounters, for example, the force-feed torture through different mediums. I find this aspect relevant especially in the context of mental images because these explorations/juxtapositions help to consider (perhaps compare) experiences that the spectator/reader potentially gets from different accounts of torture. In addition, it also exposes the accumulation of the mental images.

Furthermore, Clark and Black put in the book drawings by a Libyan man Mohammed Shoreiyya of confinement boxes and a waterboard that he encountered in a CIA run facility in Afghanistan. These three reproductions of drawings (see below) include a small wooden box in which he was locked, a narrow windowless box in which he was held naked for one and a half days, and a waterboard.<sup>833</sup> These sketches of three torture devices drawn by a former detainee continue to show the importance and potential of the mental images.

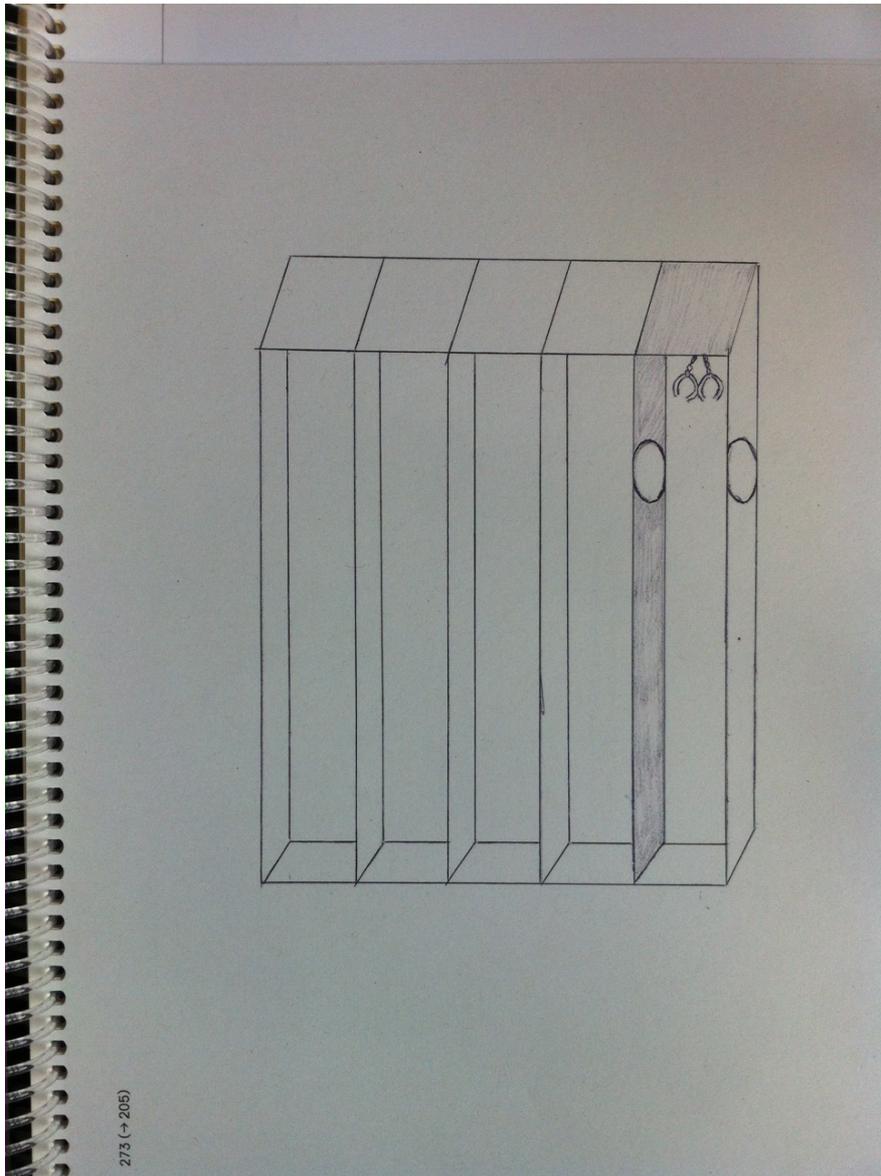
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<sup>832</sup> Excerpts from *Surviving the Darkness: Testimony from the US 'Black Sites.'* NP, pp.147-149.

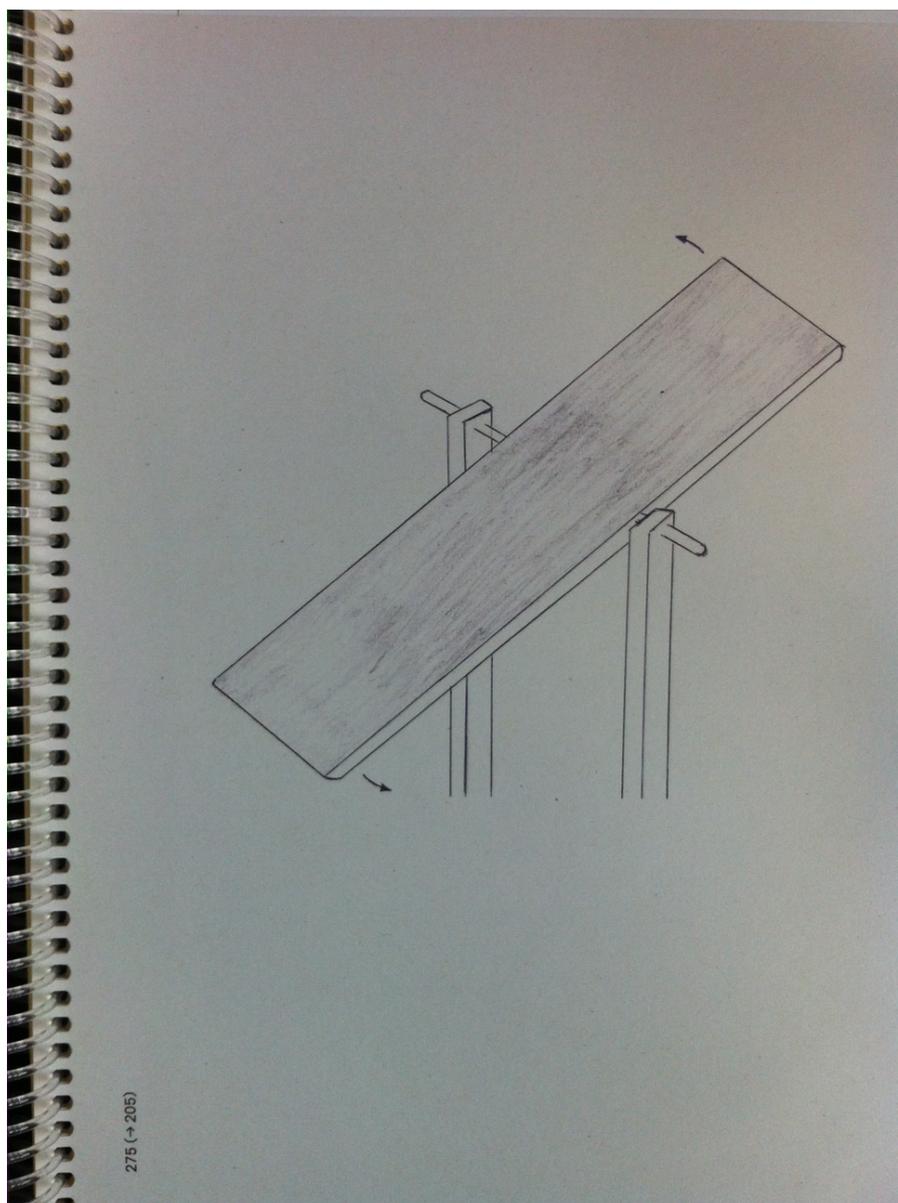
<sup>833</sup> Sketches by Mohammed Shoreiyya, from Human Rights Watch, *Delivered Into Enemy Hands: US-Led Abuse and Rendition of Opponents to Gaddafi's Libya*, September 2012. *Negative Publicity*, p.282



35. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.271.



36. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.273.



37. Negative Publicity, Sketch by Mohammed Shoroeiya, NP, p.275.

I suggest that the above examples of *NP* representational strategy can also be seen as a relevant development to address not only the censored torture, but specifically the stealth torture. As Clark pointed out, there is nothing to photograph. This testimony does not rely on the photograph of violated human body as evidence. Moreover, as Rejali argued, Western democracies developed ‘clean torture’ to evade detection.<sup>834</sup> He writes: “The modern democratic torturer knows how to beat a suspect senseless without leaving a mark.”<sup>835</sup> Rejali explores the implications of the violence that leaves no marks on the human body. One of them is that we are less likely to complain, as there is no evidence to

<sup>834</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.xvii [..] clean (torture) techniques begin in British, American, and French contexts and spread outward to other places (part 4).

<sup>835</sup> Rejali, 2007, p.3.

show. Thus, the mental images could potentially help to contemplate and imagine - with sketches drawn by a former detainee; a photograph of a room in a hotel where detained man was held and interrogated for 23 days, and other examples - what it is like to be suddenly picked up by masked strangers, transported, held in captivity without explanation, without access to a lawyer, to be tortured, held in small boxes, kept awake for days, mock executed etc.

Notably, in the 2020 report UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment Prof. Nils Melzer draws up a conflicting and rapidly evolving landscape.<sup>836</sup> He observes that despite (success of) the universal prohibition of torture and its first proclamation in Art. 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and establishment of impressive normative and institutional framework for its implementation by the international community. At the same time, 'numerous States have invested significant resources towards developing methods of torture which can achieve purposes of coercion, intimidation, punishment, humiliation or discrimination without causing readily identifiable physical harm or traces.'<sup>837</sup> Thus, he warns, that next to intentional misreadings of international law on torture, States are exploiting psychological torture in order to bypass the ban on torture because they don't leave any visible marks.<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> Melzer, N., (2020). Advance Unedited Version: Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. <https://www.ohchr.org>, 14 Feb [online] Available from: <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Torture/SRTorture/Pages/SRTortureIndex.aspx>> [Accessed 22 Feb 2020].

<sup>837</sup> Melzer, 2020. In this report he mentions Snowden's revelations on activities conducted by secret services and also references "Eminent Monsters: A Manual for Modern Torture" (2020) by a Scottish director Stephen Bennett, a documentary film on the origins and devastating effects of contemporary psychological torture. It investigates covert CIA funded research on mind-control techniques conducted in the 1950s at a Canadian research establishment that was run by the Scottish-born psychiatrist Dr Ewen Cameron.

<sup>838</sup> Melzer, 2020. He writes, that "The Cold War era saw the emergence of classified large-scale and long-term projects involving systematic "mind control" experimentation with thousands of prisoners, psychiatric patients, and volunteers unaware of the real character and purpose of these trials and the grave health risks generated by them." Most notably, "Project MK-Ultra, the CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification" (1953-73) <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/hearings/95mkultra.pdf>. (referenced in the report) Moreover, "These experiments resulted in the adoption and international proliferation of interrogation methodologies which – despite their euphemistic description as "enhanced", "deep", "non-standard" or "special" interrogation, "moderate physical pressure", "conditioning techniques", "human resource exploitation", and even "clean" or "white" torture – were clearly incompatible with both medical ethics and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. While some of these methods involved significant physical violence, others were of a specifically psychological nature. In the recent past, some of these approaches have resurfaced most prominently in connection with interrogational torture in the context of counter-terrorism, 'deterrence'-based detention of irregular migrants, alleged mass-internment for purposes of political 're-education', and the abuse of individual prisoners of conscience." Melzer references experiences of Bradley/Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange as some of the most recent examples.

Melzer elaborates on physical “no marks”<sup>839</sup> and “no touch”<sup>840</sup> torture and “psychological torture”<sup>841</sup> and points to ‘specific challenges arising in connection with the investigation and redress of this type of abuse.’<sup>842</sup> Furthermore, he explores the possibility and basic contours of what could be described as “cyber torture.”<sup>843</sup> Rapporteur points out that, ‘new and emerging technologies give rise to unprecedented tools and environments of non-physical interaction which must be duly considered in the contemporary interpretation of the prohibition of torture.’ He warns that States, corporate actors and organised criminals ‘not only have the capacity to conduct cyber-operations inflicting severe suffering on countless individuals, but may well decide to do so for any of the purposes of torture.’ Clearly, ‘Cyber-technology can also be used to inflict, or contribute to, severe mental suffering while avoiding the conduit of the physical body, most notably through intimidation, harassment, surveillance, public shaming and defamation, as well as appropriation, deletion or manipulation of information.’<sup>844</sup>

Importantly, Melzer addresses the challenges and capabilities of new and emerging technologies not only in cyber space. He ends the report with the recommendation (point 87.):

In order to ensure the adequate implementation of the prohibition of torture and related international legal obligations in present and future circumstances, its interpretation should evolve in line with new challenges and capabilities arising in

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<sup>839</sup> Melzer, 2020. For example, he writes: “Some physical “no marks” techniques achieve the intended physical pain or suffering immediately and directly, such as beatings with insulated objects on selected parts of the body, simulated drowning (“waterboarding” or “wet submarine”) or asphyxiation with plastic bags (“dry submarine”).”

<sup>840</sup> Melzer, 2020. “Likewise, physical “no-touch” torture avoids direct physical interaction, but still intentionally manipulates or instrumentalizes physiological needs, functions and reactions to inflict physical pain or suffering. This typically includes pain inflicted through threat-imposed stress positions, or powerful sensory or physiological irritation through extreme temperatures, loud noise, bright light, or bad smell, deprivation of sleep, food or drink, prevention/provocation of urination, defecation or vomiting, or exposure to pharmaceutical substances or drug-withdrawal symptoms. Although these techniques deliberately use the conduit of the victim’s body for the infliction of pain and suffering, they are sometimes discussed as psychological torture, mainly because of their psychological *rationale* and intended destabilizing *effect* on the human mind and emotions, and the limited physical contact between the torturer and the victim. As long as “no-touch” techniques inflict severe physical pain or suffering of any kind, however, they should be regarded as physical torture.”

<sup>841</sup> Melzer, 2020. Section D of the report.

<sup>842</sup> Melzer, 2020. “While all of these techniques are calculated to avoid physical marks visible to the naked eye and inexpert observer, many of them still produce physical *sequelae* - such as swellings, abrasions, contusions and irritations - which experienced forensic experts can reliably detect and document for periods ranging from days to several weeks. In practice, however, obstruction and delays, as well as lack of expertise, capacity and willingness on the part of the investigative authorities entail that the vast majority of allegations regarding “no marks” torture are either not investigated at all, or are easily dismissed for lack of evidence.”

<sup>843</sup> Melzer, 2020. Section E of the report.

<sup>844</sup> Melzer, 2020.

relation to emerging technologies not only in cyber space, but also in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, nano- and neurotechnology, or pharmaceutical and biomedical sciences including so-called “human enhancement”.

Paglen’s research and observations on machine vision, AI and invisible images provide a glimpse into some of these ‘invisible’ cyber technologies and their abilities<sup>845</sup> and he argues, that in order to understand what this paradigm of vision is that’s being constructed and what are its wider-scale implications the spectator has to try to understand how some of these systems work, (that is a necessary first step to starting to think about it).<sup>846</sup> I look at the aspects of Paglen’s research that are relevant for the ‘negative’ approach in a section below on tectonic changes.

### *Spectators’ role & their own expectations about the effects of their work*

Counterterrorism investigator Black reveals that he wanted to make the book to address a different and bigger audience.<sup>847</sup> For Clark:

I think it is important to try to engage audiences in a way that reconfigures the prevailing narratives and forms of representation about the events of the War on Terror overall, hopefully to give them space to think about these subjects in a different way, to question what they have seen. It won’t stop these events, of course, it won’t bring accountability either, but it adds to the discourse about them now and in the future.<sup>848</sup>

As Clark directly stated, ‘Our audiences are our subjects, the work is directly asking questions of the people looking at it to identify their own experience of what they are seeing in the images and in the text and image text.’ Thus, NP is intended as a reflection ‘on here, society I live in, and of the control processes.’<sup>849</sup> Moreover, by creating the space where the spectator does not know what she is looking at, and she knows that something is being hidden, but does not know what it is, Clark also sees it as ‘a kind of visual

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<sup>845</sup> The Snowden archive shed light how these technologies have already been used by secret services to achieve their aims.

<sup>846</sup> Kupfer, P., (2018). Interview: Trevor Paglen with Paula Kupfer. In: Cotton, C., Chao M. and Vermare P., (eds.) *Public, private, secret: on photography & the configuration of self*. New York: Aperture Foundation. Also, Paglen, 2016.

<sup>847</sup> Bayley, 2016.

<sup>848</sup> Teicher, J.G., (2016). What’s Left of the CIA’s Notorious “Black Sites” Secret Prison Network. *slate.com*, April 20. <<https://slate.com/culture/2016/04/edmund-clark-photographs-secret-detention-sites-in-his-book-with-crofton-black-negative-publicity-artefacts-of-extraordinary-rendition.html>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

<sup>849</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

metaphor' for how we respond to that and change our behaviours.<sup>850</sup> For instance, he questions:

How many of us have not typed in the search engine, because we think we've been watched? i have done it; how many of us have actually started to change our daily behaviours because we think we are being surveilled because we think someone might think that is the wrong thing to do?<sup>851</sup>

Clark points out how the response of our governments to terrorism and measures they are taking are 'actually changing the fundamental nature of our societies; the ethical decisions that have been made on our behalf are they worth it?'<sup>852</sup>

Asked about what hopes they have for the book, Black said, "I have quite a narrow hope for it, which is that it will sell out and that we'll be able to do a reprint that is small and affordable. Clark: "All one can hope for with any book or body of work is that the way we've done it and the material in it proves different enough, interesting enough to stop people, make them engage with it, think about it, and hopefully reconfigure, or develop how they think about the subject."<sup>853</sup>

To conclude, from both rendition case studies, the spectator/reader learns extensively about the CIA RDI programme. The paper trail assembled/accumulated in the book *Negative Publicity* together with Black's essays on different episodes of the programme and Clark's photographs exposes and disseminates the knowledge about the covert programme. Authors create 'source material' and preserve (particular) histories that would not be told otherwise. They recreate the network and illuminate the infrastructure of the CIA RDI programme. They tell an alternative story that incorporates multiple perspectives/vantage points, including victims of the CIA RDI programme. The collaborative story is both, history writing and testimony. Authors account for the survivors providing some of the testimonies and also account/give testimony for those who perished in the CIA RDI programme. Thus, the NP story disrupts the state controlled narrative and amplifies the critique of war on terror and its atrocities.

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<sup>850</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>851</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

<sup>852</sup> Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>853</sup> Stear, 2016.

The censorship plays a central role in the representational strategy developed for *Negative Publicity*. The visual language is about redaction - exposing and utilising both, new image texts created by controlling power itself and also created by authors themselves. Authors expose and describe various mechanisms of restriction (Butler), they reveal different 'control processes' at work (but also create an uncertainty about the unaccounted censorship). I point out that the mandatory framing is part of the story they tell. Thus, authors emphasise the politics of production. I suggest that NP demonstrates that exposed censorship is itself a potent tool of exposure, a negative evidence.

This project challenges the common notion of photographic image of atrocity as evidence of atrocity, showing that hidden and redacted atrocities can be made visible by other means and function as a negative evidence. Secondly, 'nothing to photograph', 'nothing to see' was an important point in regards to the representational limits of photography. Photographs became a reflection of what we cannot see. Clark states that the photographic image is another type of redaction - 'photographic redaction.' Moreover, the aspect of impenetrability of the photograph is seen as a metaphor for the CIA RDI programme itself. I argue that the aspect of impenetrability of photographs further highlights the importance of storytelling - the added annotations, essays, talks and interviews. In addition, Clark's photographs play a relevant part in the re/construction of the network and the infrastructure of the atrocity. Taking photographs was a political performance, it was Clark's testimony. Furthermore, I suggest that the strategy of not photographing people involved, but instead photographing places and related artefacts, creates a stage like images that allude not only to the disappearance of people (victims of the CIA RDI programme), but perhaps also hints on implications for the spectator (putting the spectator in the position of potential participation on either side).

I suggest that representational strategy developed for NP also demonstrates the increasing importance of, and role played by, the mental images. It emphasises the mental images the spectator already has and creates (Belting). The absence of the photographic evidence is surpassed by the mental images of the experiences of torture and abuse provided in the redacted documents describing torture techniques, authors' annotations, victims' testimonies, the drawings of torture devices and photographs of torture devices and sites of torture. They counter the invisibility of the abuse and offer the spectator/reader necessary tools to imagine for herself and familiarise with these torture techniques. Mental images prepare the spectator for a better understanding of the contemporary stealth

torture techniques developed by Western democracies that do not leave any visible signs (Rejali).

I argue that representational strategy developed for this work can be regarded as a relevant adaptation in addressing the contemporary Western practices of covert atrocities and stealth torture. Moreover, it produces civic space (Azoulay, Rejali) and I suggest that mental images play a pivotal part in that process. As a result, this work enriched and complicated the viewing strategies.

### **3.3. The tectonic changes - representational images versus operational images**

In the previous chapters I looked at censorship of the representation of the violated body. Clearly, it was noticeable that the representation of violence/atrocity is increasingly controlled and absented by the state and military. Rebecca Solnit in her essay 'The Visibility Wars' (2010) describes some particular gradual developments related to our ability to see the violated body:

Spears, catapults, arrows; then guns, cannons, and bombs; and in the twentieth century, airplanes and then missiles; and in the twenty-first century, unmanned drones make the site of the killers increasingly removed from the site of the killed. Intercontinental ballistic missiles completed the transformation from, say, Gettysburg, where men killed each other at close range with screams and gore around them, to a system in which technicians in control rooms could wipe out civilians en masse on other continents.<sup>854</sup>

It shows that 'modern warfare involves huge quantities of civilian casualties, and the killing is done by increasingly remote means.'<sup>855</sup> Rejali's research revealed that modern democracies have worked on and developed ways to coerce their citizens (and others) covertly, without leaving visible signs on their victims' bodies. He argues that because public monitoring of human rights is a core value in modern democracies, Western democracies developed stealth torture to evade detection. Rejali explains:

What makes covert coercion valuable is that allegations of torture are simply less credible when there is nothing to show for it. In the absence of visible wounds or photographs of actual torture, who is one to believe? Stealth torture breaks down the ability to communicate. The inexpressibility that matters here is the gap between a victim and his or her community. Stealth torture regimens are unlike other torture

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<sup>854</sup> Solnit, R., (2014). The Visibility Wars (2010). In: *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*, San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, p.300.

<sup>855</sup> Solnit, 2014, The Visibility Wars, p.300.

procedures because they are calculated to subvert this relationship and thereby avoid crises of legitimacy.<sup>856</sup>

In the 2020 report UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment Prof. Nils Melzer, envisaged further the developments in the rapidly evolving landscape, that includes now ‘new challenges and capabilities arising in relation to emerging technologies not only in cyber space, but also in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, nano- and neurotechnology, or pharmaceutical and biomedical sciences including so-called “human enhancement”’.<sup>857</sup> It evidences that not only invisibility and controlled visibility have been utilised as part of the arsenal, but also new technologies in different spheres.

Moreover, Solnit also highlights, that soon after 9/11 the Bush administration divided the world map into areas under different commands. That as a result ‘The surface of the earth is structured as a wide battlefield.’<sup>858</sup> Consequently, ‘battlefields are everywhere’ with ‘potential for violence anywhere.’<sup>859</sup> She envisages this development further to ‘the militarization of outer space,’<sup>860</sup> but as Paglen pointed out to her ‘the next arena for a U.S. military command is virtual space, [...] In that territory, the battles, the exposures, and the secrecies will be purely about information, which has always been part of war’s arsenal, never more than now.’<sup>861</sup> Assange compares the ‘militarization of cyberspace’ to ‘a military occupation.’<sup>862</sup> The situation where all our communications are intercepted by military intelligence organizations he describes as ‘like having a tank in your bedroom.’<sup>863</sup>

Zuboff’s research reveals that it is not only our communications that are intercepted.<sup>864</sup> For two decades she had been ‘observing and analyzing the quiet emergence of a

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<sup>856</sup> Rejali, 2007. pp.8-9.

<sup>857</sup> Melzer, N., (2020). Advance Unedited Version: Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of punishment. <https://www.ohchr.org>, 14 Feb [online] Available from: <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Torture/SRTorture/Pages/SRTortureIndex.aspx>> [Accessed 22 Feb 2020].

<sup>858</sup> Solnit, 2014, p.301.

<sup>859</sup> Solnit, 2014, p.301.

<sup>860</sup> Solnit, 2014, p.301.

<sup>861</sup> Solnit, 2014, pp.301-302.

<sup>862</sup> Assange, J. with Appelbaum J., Muller-Maguhn A. and Zimmermann J., (2012). *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*. New York, London, OR Books, p.33.

<sup>863</sup> Assange, *et al.*, 2012, p.33.

<sup>864</sup> Zuboff, S., (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, London: Profile Books.

fundamentally anti-democratic new economic logic' that she calls 'surveillance capitalism.'<sup>865</sup> She states:

For 19 years, private companies practicing an unprecedented economic logic that I call *surveillance capitalism* have hijacked the Internet and its digital technologies. Invented at Google beginning in 2000, this new economics covertly claims private human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. Some data are used to improve services, but the rest are turned into computational products that predict your behavior. These predictions are traded in a new futures market, where surveillance capitalists sell certainty to businesses determined to know what we will do next. This logic was first applied to finding which ads online will attract our interest, but similar practices now reside in nearly every sector — insurance, retail, health, education, finance and more — where personal experience is secretly captured and computed for behavioral predictions.<sup>866</sup>

Zuboff argues that what is at stake is democracy itself. She states that: "We can have democracy, or we can have a surveillance society, but we cannot have both."<sup>867</sup> Zuboff points out that:

Surveillance capitalists now wield a uniquely 21st century quality of power, as unprecedented as totalitarianism was nearly a century ago. I call it *instrumentarian power*, because it works its will through the ubiquitous architecture of digital instrumentation. Rather than an intimate Big Brother that uses murder and terror to possess each soul from the inside out, these digital networks are a Big Other: impersonal systems trained to monitor and shape our actions remotely, unimpeded by law.<sup>868</sup>

Paglen's research on machine vision and AI is relevant for the 'negative approach' because it delves into this new invisible terrain and explores tectonic changes in the way how images are used, how they function, namely, their operational mode. In his 2016 essay 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)' Paglen argued that the advent of digital images has enormous implications. The fact that digital images are fundamentally machine-readable, regardless of a human subject, 'allows for the automation of vision on an enormous scale and, along with it, the exercise of power on dramatically larger and

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<sup>865</sup> Zuboff, S., shoshanazuboff.com, [online] Available from: <<https://shoshanazuboff.com/book/about/>> [Accessed 29 Mar 2021].

<sup>866</sup> Zuboff, S., (2019). The Surveillance Threat Is Not What Orwell Imagined, [time.com](https://time.com), June 6, [online] Available from: <<https://time.com/5602363/george-orwell-1984-anniversary-surveillance-capitalism/>> [Accessed 29 Mar 2021].

<sup>867</sup> Zuboff, S., (2021). The Coup We Are Not Talking About. *The New York Times*, Jan 29, [online] Available from: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/opinion/sunday/facebook-surveillance-society-technology.html>> [Accessed 29 Mar 2021].

<sup>868</sup> Zuboff, 2019, The Surveillance Threat Is Not What Orwell Imagined.

smaller scales than have ever been possible.<sup>869</sup> He points out that visual culture has become detached from human eyes and has largely become invisible. The overwhelming majority of images are now made by machines for other machines, with humans rarely in the loop. Paglen writes, that the classical or human visual culture has become a special case of vision, an exception to the rule<sup>870</sup> (and with it also the way of image making-sharing) and points out the tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action. These findings/observations raise pertinent questions about how “*instrumentarian power*” affects who is/can be heard, who’s stories are/will be told, but also, how any information/image/photograph will be used in this new and extremely vast and invisible landscape of invisible images. Paglen questions the core assumption that ‘humans are looking at images, and that the relationship between human viewers and images is the most important moment to analyze.’<sup>871</sup> In what follows I look at two particular issues highlighted by Paglen: the absence of an ambiguity (and fluidity) of the meaning in machine world and operational mode of images.

### *The loss of an ambiguity and fluidity of the meaning*

One of the things that Paglen points out is that an ambiguity (and fluidity) of the meaning that is an important part of the classical or human visual culture, is absent in machine world. Computers or AI systems cannot do that. Meaning is fixed and it cannot be changed in automated systems. Once a network has been created, it subscribes to a certain set of meanings and it does not evolve. It can’t make its own rules. It can only operate according to preprogrammed rules.<sup>872</sup> Also, when AI are taught to see, they are trained on the training images from the stock photography. Paglen observes, that ‘It creates a situation where it creates meaning and those meanings are derived from the past, and those meanings are kind of enforced and it’s not possible to challenge or reshape them.’<sup>873</sup> In other words, when you are training AI systems ‘you’re training them on a racist and patriarchal past, and you’re going to reproduce that racist and patriarchal past.’<sup>874</sup>

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<sup>869</sup> Paglen, 2016. See also Zuboff, S., (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, London: Profile Books. Zuboff reveals a world in which technology users are neither customers, employees, nor products. Instead they are the raw material for new procedures of manufacturing and sales that define an entirely new economic order: a surveillance economy.

<sup>870</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>871</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>872</sup> Kupfer, 2018, Interview: Trevor Paglen with Paula Kupfer.

<sup>873</sup> Kupfer, 2018, Interview: Trevor Paglen with Paula Kupfer.

<sup>874</sup> Kupfer, 2018, Interview: Trevor Paglen with Paula Kupfer. Attachment of meaning is explored in more detail in the collaborative essay - Crawford, K. and Paglen, T., (2019). Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets, *The AI Now Institute*, September 19, [online] Available from: <<https://www.excavating.ai/>> [Accessed 11 September 2020].

Consequently, these invisible datasets perpetuate old stereotypes, patriarchal and racist vision.

Moreover, it is not possible to “neutralize” bias in image training sets, or provide a perfect remedy to the forms of discrimination and bias that exist in machine-learning systems today. It is the feature of the system, not a bug.<sup>875</sup> Kate Crawford<sup>876</sup> points out that ‘It’s actually what machine learning is designed to do - to classify and discriminate. They are discriminatory by design, in the broadest sense.’<sup>877</sup> And it is not a fixable issue. Crawford asks the fundamental questions about how these systems could be “scrubbed” to neutral, how we “delete” bias: ““Remove it to what?” What is the baseline that you are thinking of? What is the vision of the world that we are establishing as neutral?”<sup>878</sup>

Importantly, Paglen points out, that the counter-hegemonic visual strategies and tactics that artists and cultural producers have developed for making interventions into human-human visual culture in order to challenge inequality, racism, and injustice, often capitalize on the ambiguity of human-human visual culture to produce forms of counter-culture - to make claims, to assert rights, and to expand the field of represented peoples and positions in visual culture. All of these strategies, rely on the fact that the relationship between meaning and representation is elastic. But the idea of ambiguity, does not exist on the plane of quantified machine-machine seeing. Also, there is no clear way to intervene in machine-machine systems using visual strategies developed from human-human culture.<sup>879</sup>

### *Operational mode: we no longer look at images – images look at us*

Notably, images no longer represent things, but actively intervene in our everyday life.

These invisible images and machine vision have become ever more active and their continued expansion ‘is starting to have profound effects on human life.’<sup>880</sup> In the machine-machine visual landscape the photograph never goes away. It becomes an active

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<sup>875</sup> Crawford and Paglen in conversation in: Paglen, 2018, A Conversation with Trevor Paglen. In: Jacob, J.P. and Skrebowski, L. *Trevor Paglen: Sites unseen*, p.219; Also, Paglen, 2016.

<sup>876</sup> Kate Crawford is a leading computer vision and AI researcher and AI Now Initiative co-founder. <https://www.katecrawford.net/index.html>

<sup>877</sup> Crawford in Paglen, 2018, A conversation with Trevor Paglen, *Sites Unseen*, p.219.

<sup>878</sup> Crawford in Paglen, 2018, A conversation with Trevor Paglen, *Sites Unseen*, p.219.

<sup>879</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>880</sup> Paglen, 2016.

participant in the modulations of her life, with long-term consequences. Paglen observes that our pictures are looking back at us:

Images have begun to intervene in everyday life, their functions changing from representation and mediation, to activations, operations, and enforcement. Invisible images are actively watching us, poking and prodding, guiding our movements, inflicting pain and inducing pleasure. But all of this is hard to see.<sup>881</sup>

Paglen states that ‘the invisible world of images isn’t simply an alternative taxonomy of visibility. It is an active, cunning, exercise of power, one ideally suited to molecular police and market operations’ designed to exploit ever-smaller slices of everyday life.<sup>882</sup>

Moreover, ‘machine-machine systems are extraordinary intimate instruments of power that operate through an aesthetics and ideology of objectivity, but the categories they employ are designed to reify the forms of power that those systems are set up to serve. As such, the machine-machine landscape forms a kind of hyper-ideology that is especially pernicious precisely because it makes claims to objectivity and equality.’<sup>883</sup> AI and ‘data regime is said to be truthful, powerful, objective, and important.’<sup>884</sup> Paglen points out:

Because image operations function on an invisible plane and are not dependent on a human seeing-subject (and are therefore not as obviously ideological as giant paintings of Napoleon) they are harder to recognise for what they are: immensely powerful levers of social regulation that serve specific race and class interests while presenting themselves as objective.<sup>885</sup>

What it means to politically active artists, was recently demonstrated by the treatment of Eyal Weizman, the director of the investigative group Forensic Architecture. He was not allowed to go to the United States where a retrospective of Forensic Architecture’s work is on display at Miami Dade College’s Museum of Art and Design,<sup>886 887</sup> because an

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<sup>881</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>882</sup> Paglen, 2016; Zuboff, 2019.

<sup>883</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>884</sup> Paglen, 2016; Crawford in: Paglen, 2018, A conversation with Trevor Paglen, *Sites Unseen*, p.220.

<sup>885</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>886</sup> Miami Dade College, MOAD presents the first major U.S. survey of Forensic Architecture’s extraordinary work uncovering evidence of state and corporate violence. [online] Available from: <<http://www.mdcmoad.org/explore/exhibitions.aspx>> [Accessed 12 September 2020].

<sup>887</sup> FA: “Exhibitions are treated as alternative forums for accountability, ways of informing the public about serious human rights violations. Importantly, they are also opportunities to share with local activists and community groups the methods and techniques we have assembled over years of work in the field.” Weizman, E., (2020). “Homeland Security algorithm” prevents me from joining you today: A statement from Eyal Weizman, forensic-architecture.org Feb 20, [online] Available from: <<https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/news/homeland-security-algorithm-prevents-me-from-joining-you-today-a-statement-from-eyal-weizman>> [Accessed 10 March 2020]; Also section on Forensic Architecture and interview with YW (and Sarah Nankivell) in Turner Prize 2018 catalogue.

algorithm had identified a security threat related to him. Also, his wife was detained and interviewed at the airport in the U.S. and separated from their daughters. In the statement published on Forensic Architecture website Weizman writes, that in his interview with the officer at the U.S. Embassy in London he was informed that:

My authorization to travel had been revoked because the “algorithm” had identified a security threat. He said he did not know what had triggered the algorithm but suggested that it could be something I was involved in, people I am or was in contact with, places to which I had traveled (had I recently been in Syria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia or met their nationals?), hotels at which I stayed, or a certain pattern of relations among these things. I was asked to supply the Embassy with additional information, including fifteen years of travel history, in particular where I had gone and who had paid for it. The officer said that Homeland Security’s investigators could assess my case more promptly if I supplied the names of anyone in my network whom I believed might have triggered the algorithm.<sup>888</sup>

The details revealed by Weizman provide some insight into what information has been collected and then analysed by the mentioned algorithm. Weizman points out what is at stake here:

This much we know: we are being electronically monitored for a set of connections—the network of associations, people, places, calls, and transactions—that make up our lives. Such network analysis poses many problems, some of which are well known. Working in human rights means being in contact with vulnerable communities, activists and experts, and being entrusted with sensitive information. These networks are the lifeline of any investigative work. I am alarmed that relations among our colleagues, stakeholders, and staff are being targeted by the U.S. government as security threats.<sup>889</sup>

What Crawford’s and Paglen’s observations and questions about image neutrality and Weizman’s experience bring to the foreground is one of my thesis suggestions, namely, that the “political self” is actively involved in the image world, not only in interpreting images and effectively affecting photographic discourse but, as algorithms demonstrate, also by actively intruding in our lives more or less noticeably. Nevertheless, this aspect of self (often) has been and still tends to be taken either for granted or ignored (or private).

Paglen and Crawford in their latest collaborative 2019 essay emphasise that ‘struggles for justice have always been, in part, struggles over the meaning of images and representations. [...] Representations aren’t simply confined to the spheres of language

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<sup>888</sup> Weizman, 2020.

<sup>889</sup> Weizman, 2020.

and culture, but have real implications in terms of rights, liberties, and forms of self-determination.<sup>890</sup> Importantly, the invisible visual culture that is created by the training sets used in AI ‘can promote or discriminate, approve or reject, render visible or invisible, judge or enforce.’<sup>891</sup> Moreover, these systems already are used to examine us, these ‘training sets are increasingly part of our urban, legal, logistical, and commercial infrastructure, they have an important but underexamined role: the power to shape the world in their own images.’<sup>892</sup>

Furthermore, Paglen points out that ‘In the long run, there’s no technical “fix” for the exacerbation of the political and economic inequalities that invisible visual culture is primed to encourage.’<sup>893</sup> These analysing images<sup>894</sup> stay invisible and actively transform, and affect some aspects of person’s private everyday life. He suggests that ‘we must begin to understand these changes if we are to challenge the exceptional forms of power flowing through the invisible visual culture that we find ourselves enmeshed within.’<sup>895</sup> He points out, that we have to reconsider and relearn how we see:

We need to learn how to see a parallel universe composed of activations, keypoints, eigenfaces, feature transforms, classifiers, training sets, and the like. But it’s not just as simple as learning a different vocabulary. Formal concepts contain epistemological assumptions, which in turn have ethical consequences. The theoretical concepts we use to analyze visual culture are profoundly misleading when applied to the machinic landscape, producing distortions, vast blind spots, and wild misinterpretations.<sup>896</sup>

Paglen’s recent projects *A Study of Invisible Images* (2017)<sup>897</sup> and *From ‘Apple’ to ‘Anomaly’* (2019) are eloquent illustrations to the problems that are at the core of machine vision and AI (and the invisible visual culture).<sup>898</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to choose an image from these large projects to use here as an illustration. I rather suggest to go back to an earlier exploration (before the Snowden archive) that ‘interrogates the possibility of a

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<sup>890</sup> Crawford and Paglen, 2019.

<sup>891</sup> Crawford and Paglen, 2019.

<sup>892</sup> Crawford and Paglen, 2019.

<sup>893</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>894</sup> Paglen states that he does not make a distinction between a photograph or a painting or a metadata signature. To a machine, a sound is the same as a digitized image of a painting. Paglen finds that the traditional discourses we have to think about photographs seem useless today. He notes that we need new analytical tools. Kupfer, 2018, Interview: Trevor Paglen with Paula Kupfer.

<sup>895</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>896</sup> Paglen, 2016.

<sup>897</sup> Trevor Paglen, *A Study of Invisible Images*, Sep 8 - Oct 21, 2017 at Metro Pictures, New York.

<sup>898</sup> Trevor Paglen: *From ‘Apple’ to ‘Anomaly’ (Pictures and Labels) Selections from the ImageNet dataset for object recognition*. The Curve, Barbican Centre 26 Sep 2019 - 16 Feb 2020.

universal visual language and questions the supposed innocence and neutrality of the algorithms upon which search engines rely,<sup>899</sup> to *Image Atlas* (2012) that was created by programmer Aaron Schwartz (1986-2013) and artist Taryn Simon (1975). *Image Atlas* displayed top image search results given by 57 local engines throughout the world that were available at the time in 2012. It was an interactive display as visitors could refine and expand their comparisons and sort them. It is still available online. Please type <http://www.imageatlas.org><sup>900</sup> and explore.<sup>901</sup>

The case studies (and in particular works on the extraordinary rendition) and surrounding discourses highlight the need for a prepared spectator. Weizman argues that *NP* 'necessitated the invention of new ways of seeing' particularly if the spectator wants to see a body in pain that is masked by the 'negative evidence' (by blackout that hides it in plain sight).<sup>902</sup> Solnit, writing about Paglen's work, points out that the spectator needs 'educated eyes to see.'<sup>903</sup> She writes:

The bright, moving dots in the night sky that are surveillance satellites, the planes at regional airports that are torture transports, the offices that are fronts for dubious activities, the buildings in which secret operations are carried out take effort to see at all - and yet another kind of effort to recognize, to see with knowledge of what one is seeing, with knowledge that is not strictly visible. They are perhaps another kind of unknown knowns, invisible visibles. A minority dedicates themselves to learning to see this way. We could call what they do seeing in the dark.<sup>904</sup>

Paglen points even further that 'we need to learn how to see a parallel universe.' (In my thesis) I suggest that the "mental images" are essential for the ability to 'see in the dark.' They take part in creating the prepared spectator. But, importantly, Paglen and Zuboff argue that today there are more control mechanisms at work (in "the machinic landscape") and their role, their functions are underexamined and unregulated. The control goes beyond internet surveillance where 'in order to have internet censorship there must also

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<sup>899</sup> Simon, T., (2015). *Rear Views, A Star-forming Nebula, and the Office of Foreign Propaganda. The Works of Taryn Simon*. London: Tate Publishing, pp.257-272.

<sup>900</sup> [online] Available from: <<http://www.imageatlas.org>> [Accessed 30 March 2021].

<sup>901</sup> Also, an introductory experience could be gained from a multimedia performance *Sight Machine* (2019) where Paglen collaborated with the Kronos Quartet to demonstrate a data-driven world and 'showing us how machines and their algorithms perceive what we are seeing.' [online] Available from: <<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/event/kronos-quartet-trevor-paglen-sight-machine>> [Accessed 12 April 2021].

<sup>902</sup> Weizman, E., (2015). *Strikeout: The Material Infrastructure of the Secret*. In: *Negative Publicity*. New York: Aperture.

<sup>903</sup> Solnit, R., (2014). *The Visibility Wars* (2010). In: *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*, San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, p.309.

<sup>904</sup> Solnit, 2014, pp.309-310.

be internet surveillance. In order to check what someone is looking at, to see whether it is permitted or denied, you must be seeing it, and therefore if you are seeing it you can record it all.<sup>905</sup> Zuboff points to 'a sharp rise in epistemic inequality, defined as the difference between what I can know and what can be known about me.'<sup>906</sup> She states that our 'epistemic rights' have been appropriated by surveillance capitalists. Moreover, that this appropriation, 'a claim to people's lives as free raw material for the extraction of behavioral data, which they then declare their private property' was the beginning of the epistemic coup that progresses in four stages.<sup>907</sup> She observes that we are now in the third stage. This stage:

Introduces epistemic chaos caused by the profit-driven algorithmic amplification, dissemination and microtargeting of corrupt information, much of it produced by coordinated schemes of disinformation. Its effects are felt in the real world, where they splinter shared reality, poison social discourse, paralyze democratic politics and sometimes instigate violence and death.<sup>908</sup>

Zuboff writes that in the last stage, 'epistemic dominance is institutionalized, overriding democratic governance with computational governance by private surveillance capital. The machines know, and the systems decide, directed and sustained by the illegitimate authority and anti-democratic power of private surveillance capital.'<sup>909</sup> If, as Zuboff suggests, this is happening now, if our information society/civilization is now in the stage of epistemic chaos, and is approaching the total loss of our democratic rights, what expectations there could be from the photographic image and in particular from the photographic or mental image of the violated body? What terms and values could form the field of discourse through which photography and more specifically representation of the violated body and its spectatorship are articulated?

Paglen's, Crawford's and Zuboff's research indicate a need for a further study on the representation of the violated body and its spectatorship in the digital realm. It seems relevant to look at the consequences of the tectonic changes highlighted by Paglen's recent research on machine vision and to explore how these new 'relational'<sup>910</sup> conditions, that are inherent to 'these new 'geographies' of seeing-machines,'<sup>911</sup> affect, influence and

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<sup>905</sup> Assange, *et al.*, 2012, p.116.

<sup>906</sup> Zuboff, 2021.

<sup>907</sup> Zuboff, 2021.

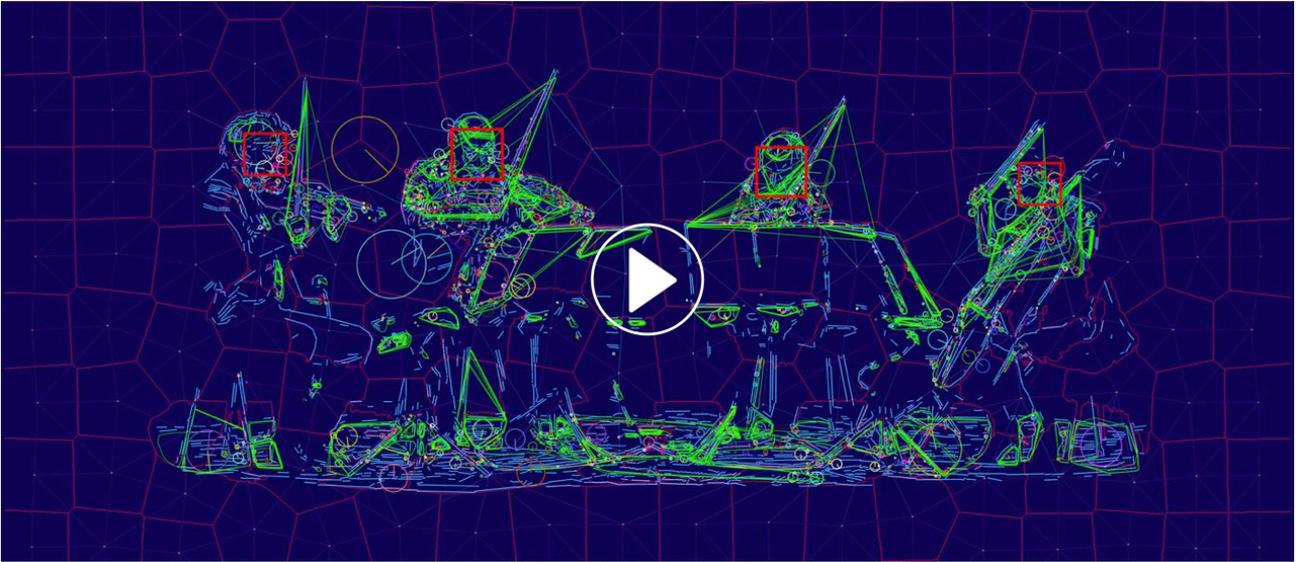
<sup>908</sup> Zuboff, 2021.

<sup>909</sup> Zuboff, 2021.

<sup>910</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.207.

<sup>911</sup> Stallabrass (ed.), 2013, p.207.

condition the representation of the violated body. Also, how it affects its creator's and the spectator's political agency.



38. Kronos Quartet & Trevor Paglen, screenshot from *Sight Machine*, 2019

## Conclusion

This study set out to explore the representation of the violated body and its spectatorship, focusing on the 'negative' approach in the period from the 1970's up to 2016. The main assumption was that any censorship either the state/military/media or self-inflicted ('forced' and emphasised absence) has a potential to provide important cause and vital stimulus to rethink and reformulate traditional assumptions about the photographs of the violated body and their function in society. The research and analysis of the case studies demonstrated that visibility is a complex and unstable system of permissions and prohibitions; that it is a shifting process, where some bodies are brought into the frame and others are left and kept outside, and/or brought back into the frame to make them socially and politically visible and significant. The findings demonstrated that photographic depictions of the violated body are regarded as important, relevant and necessary. It was repeatedly shown that their status as evidence - for instance for journalists/media,<sup>912</sup> US army and government personnel,<sup>913</sup> European officials,<sup>914</sup> and artists - was essential. For example, the torture at Abu Ghraib prison was documented by rights groups, however, it was often stated that only after publicising of photos was an investigation started. Nevertheless, it was also highlighted that worst things were not documented or their depiction and evidence was destroyed, or there were atrocities that could not be documented photographically.<sup>915</sup> Moreover, it was argued that Western democracies have developed stealth torture after the WW2, with an aim to avoid detection, therefore often there would be no visible sign to document and show as the evidence.<sup>916</sup> Thus, in the context of seeming abundance and importance attributed to the photographic image of violence, it seemed relevant to focus on the 'negative' approach and explore works that deal with the representation of the violated body/atrocity, focusing specifically on artworks that addressed the absented atrocity.

To analyse the case studies I drew on the following ideas: visual and conceptual frames that distribute the recognisability elaborated by Butler;<sup>917</sup> the reconstruction of the event of the photograph (the photographic event) as a civic skill developed by Azoulay; civic

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<sup>912</sup> Wittwer, 2014. Interview with Seymour Hersh: 'Problem is not interrogation, it's war itself.'

<sup>913</sup> Goodman, 2007. Interview with Seymour Hersh.

<sup>914</sup> Clark and Black, 2016. The appearance of disappearance: the CIA's secret black sites.

<sup>915</sup> Gourevitch, P. and Morris E., (2008). *Standard Operating Procedure*. New York: Penguin Press.

<sup>916</sup> Rejali, D., (2007). *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

<sup>917</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.63-64.

### *Conclusion*

spectatorship explored by Hariman and Lucaites; the relevance of the perspective of the story and whose story it is addressed by Solnit (also Girard on the importance of victim's perspective) and the notion of the "mental image" developed by Belting.<sup>918</sup>

In the first chapter I considered three art works where artists exercised self-censorship and consciously avoided showing the vulnerable/violated human body in order to provoke and challenge the spectator. Analysed case studies evidenced that in the absence of the depiction of an atrocity/violated body, the artists devised new representational strategies that made visible infrastructures that created and hid most of the atrocities and victims, and their visual representation. Thus, the attention was moved away from the victim to the perpetrators and the infrastructure of the atrocity. Also, these representational strategies questioned and emphasised the role of the spectator. These new visual strategies were intended to critique visual strategies of humanitarian, traditional commemorative and photojournalistic embedding, and also their (assumed/traditional) spectatorship; and they enabled new modes of spectatorship and reconsidered what the spectator brings to the experience of a particular art work.

I suggested that despite deliberate avoidance of showing the bodies of victims, these visual strategies were defined by and infused with what was left outside the frame (Butler, Azoulay, Didi-Huberman). These managed frames - the photographs/photograms/video - spotlighted 'mental images' of absented human subjects that 'live' in the viewer (or their absence). These absented bodies were like ghosts that inhabit the spectator's imagination.

I argued that the 'negative' approach thus focused attention on what Belting calls the 'mental images.'<sup>919</sup> It demonstrated that our bodies themselves operate as a living medium by processing, receiving, and transmitting images; that the living body of the spectator is the locus of images.<sup>920</sup> I suggested that the visual strategy of withdrawing the vulnerable/violated body from the photographs illuminates and further complicates the role of the spectator. Moreover, I argued that at the same time these artworks create space where the spectator can consider vulnerable and lost bodies, and that consequently, they potentially produce the civic space (Azoulay).

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<sup>918</sup> Belting, 2011.

<sup>919</sup> Belting, 2011.

<sup>920</sup> Belting, 2011, p.5.

### Conclusion

I pointed out another relevant aspect illuminated especially by the last case study - the role played by storytelling. The artists Broomberg and Chanarin used descriptive captions and also revealed in their interviews and artistic statements the exact things they were forbidden to photograph, and in doing so subverted the initial prohibition by embed rules. I suggested that the detailed stories told about censorship of the depictions of violence not only subvert the imposed prohibitions, they also connect to earlier image making and transmitting practices as we did with images before photography.<sup>921</sup> We use images of memory and imagination with which we interpret the world. Therefore such practice helps to reconsider the role of the photographs of socially sanctioned violence and their spectatorship.

Furthermore, there are the following notable findings. I pointed out developments in Rosler's visual strategy of dealing with homelessness and its representation. The strategy of absenting the vulnerable body that Rosler used in *The Bowery* was an ethical approach and it also mimicked the social invisibility of the homeless inhabitants of the Bowery streets. Importantly, Rosler developed further the ethics of representation of the homeless people and in the 1989 project people affected by homelessness were highly visible and the terms of their visibility - both: the presence in the gallery space and mode of representation in photographs, were discussed and agreed upon before and during the project. The about-turn in the approach to spectatorial practice revealed that in the later project the spectator was treated as a pedagogical subject who learns about the issues at stake. If, initially the 1974/5 installation was exhibited with no additional information, in 1981 Rosler added the essay to elucidate ideas embodied in the artwork. The 1989 project was an ambitious platform organising that delved into historical causes of the problem of homelessness and linked together victims and activists of the then contemporary housing struggles in New York.

The work of Lockemann and Neudörfl emphasised the importance of the unaccounted control processes that actively shape and take part in the making of the representation. I pointed out that, next to the expressed assumption that the vulnerable/violated body is a distraction, German law might have played a relevant role in this representational strategy. In German law an individual has rights to control their own appearance and the use of their

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<sup>921</sup> Belting, 2011, pp.144-146.

### *Conclusion*

image in public (also after their death), while the photographer is merely copying the original and must therefore ask for permission to publish any portrait.<sup>922</sup>

Lastly, I suggested that the visual strategy utilised by Broomberg and Chanarin - the captioned photograms and dead-pan video (that provided a glimpse inside the British war machine) - together with their verbal disclosures draw the spectator's attention to the absented bodies - the violated and lost bodies of the British soldiers and Afghani collaborators that artists directly address in this project, but also the bodies that were not mentioned at all, those of the Afghani civilians. I argued that this work created a space for the consideration of both, the bodies lost that are accounted for and also those who stayed unaccounted for. This artwork intended and demonstrated that by absenting something it can become a point of direct attention and exploration, and I suggested that it also can be applied to the persons that have been left out by the artists.

In the second chapter I considered three artworks that addressed and exposed the state and the media censorship of the atrocity photographs from the U.S. war on terror. I examined three representational strategies devised by Alfredo Jaar to make censorship visible and I pointed out a line of thought that did not isolate photos from their context but carefully put censored photographs in a bigger infrastructure - that of the army and the government efforts to wage the war on terror. In all artworks he focused on the censorship and the spectator's role in viewing atrocities that were redacted from the public space. Jaar created space that introduced the spectator to the complexity of controlled visibility of different events. The spectator cannot see the image, because the image is privatised, absented, or censored by the absence of documentation (the image was never taken, there is only factuality of the event and its description, as in the case of Mandela's un-prisonment, or as in the case of purchased satellite images). In these artworks Jaar actualised and staged the spectator and perhaps exposed inadvertent inaccessibility of visual evidence and highlighted the role of verbal narrative and storytelling, and public experience of sharing and questioning the situation in an art environment.

In the 2009 version of *Lament of the Images* Jaar utilised the black colour that usually represents redaction. I argued that exposed censorship revealed the fact of redaction, and also helped to see the surrounding machinery of censorship and in turn further

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<sup>922</sup> McClean, 2011, *Photography and the Law: Five Groundbreaking Cases of Photography in Litigation*.

### *Conclusion*

complicated spectatorship, because it exposed access levels to information that is deemed sensitive. In the *Lament of the Images* (2009) Jaar rendered public themes that were censored and consequently enacted a disobedient act of seeing. He considered the forms of social and state power that are “embedded” in the frame, including the state and the military regulatory regimes. Thus, the spectator was led to interpret the interpretation that had been imposed upon the public, resulting in the possibility of critique of regulatory and censorious power.<sup>923</sup>

In *May 1, 2011* Jaar introduced a new strategy by rendering visible levels of secrecy in censorship. He framed and exposed spectators that authorised redaction of the images (of killing of Osama bin Laden) that they were supposedly looking at themselves. These installations allowed the spectator to consider censored subjects that were intended to stay secret and also the processes that create secrecy, and execute censorship. I suggested that these exposures highlighted the deficiency of the democratic process and corruption of the system that executed censorship in the first instance. I pointed out two relevant aspects of censorship - its intended invisibility/secrecy and its influence on the democratic system - that both have political consequences.<sup>924</sup>

I noted that none of these artworks could be ‘read’ just by looking only at the artwork itself. I suggested that all these works have taken part in a ‘deconstruction’ of the expectation that the photo can or should tell the story in its entirety, in other words, represent the whole event. It became more obvious that the image or frame representing its absence is part of a wider frame. That the process of interpretation/‘reading’ demands much more from the spectator than looking at the installation. It was due to the spectator’s previous ignorance. (My extensive research on the background of the censored images that is reflected in this thesis demonstrated my own unpreparedness to understand at first what I was looking at.) The case studies demonstrated that it might take a long time for information that illuminates the event to be made public because investigations exploring these events and ongoing trial results continue to be drip fed and still today not all the evidence is present. It took years for investigative reporting results to be published in books. And with all the gained knowledge and awareness I continued to agree with John Berger that ‘the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.’<sup>925</sup> There is hope that more

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<sup>923</sup> Butler, 2010, p.72.

<sup>924</sup> Galison, 2004, p.243.

<sup>925</sup> Berger, et. al, 1977, p.7.

### *Conclusion*

withheld photographs will be released or leaked. That there will be more transparency gained and new investigations would shed light onto secrets that we possibly pass by unnoticed.

Furthermore, there were two notable points I made in regard to mental images. Jaar presented to the spectator empty frames, either white or black with an exception of *May 1, 2011* where he added an official image from the White house website. There were longer or shorter ekphrastic descriptions providing some contexts. There were no visual references presented. These un-immersive works with white screen as in the *Lament of the Images* literally shed light on the viewer and her condition of spectatorship. The spectator in the absence of an image-maker's perspective cannot/might not immerse and empathise with depicted victims. Nevertheless, the spectator created images in herself. Thus only mental images were evoked or generated (imagined, assembled from already seen images) by the spectator. These installations created situations where the spectator could explore the creation of or absence of mental images in herself. The second point was highlighted by some American army and government personnel who had a peculiar assumption about the relationship between the knowledge of the event and the photograph. They separated the description of the photograph and the actual physical act of seeing the photograph. It showed the power some of the military personnel attach to the photographic image, while at the same time ignore the atrocity if it is conveyed by different means, such as verbal description.<sup>926</sup>

In the last chapter I considered two works that addressed and exposed the CIA's extraordinary rendition programme (2001 - 2009) that is part of the U.S. war on terror. I explored the representational strategies utilised and developed by Paglen (and Thompson) and Clark and Black to render visible the extraordinary renditions that went beyond the strategy of exposure of censorship that hides these atrocities. These longterm collaborations with investigators and researchers (and artists themselves doing research) exposed the infrastructure of the 'black world' where atrocities were/are hidden in plain sight. I argued that artists (with their collaborators) developed elaborate representational strategies to expose the infrastructure of atrocity. They rendered it visible through a variety of means - testimonies of former detainees, reports of the investigative journalists, corporative paper trails, flight records, declassified documents (the image texts created by

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<sup>926</sup> Goodman, 2007. Interview with Seymour Hersh.

### *Conclusion*

power structure itself), different types of redaction as evidence itself, satellite images, photographs etc. I suggested that both works challenged the common notion of the photographic image of atrocity as evidence of atrocity, showing that hidden and redacted atrocities can be made visible by other means and function as a negative evidence.

For Clark and Black the censorship played a central role in their representational strategy developed for *Negative Publicity* (2015). The visual language focused on redaction - exposing and utilising both, the new image texts created by controlling power itself and also created by the authors themselves. The authors exposed and described various mechanisms of restriction (Butler), they revealed different control processes at work,<sup>927</sup> but also created an uncertainty about the unaccounted censorship. I pointed out that the mandatory framing was part of the story they told and suggested that NP demonstrated that exposed censorship is itself a potent tool of exposure, a negative evidence. Also, importantly, most case studies (Lockemann and Neudörfl, Broomberg & Chanarin, Jaar, Paglen, Clark) demonstrated how different control processes (that often are unaccounted for), such as human rights, copy rights, super-injunctions and also other restrictions imposed onto the artists/citizens, actively shape and take part in the making of the representation.<sup>928</sup>

For Clark 'nothing to photograph', 'nothing to see' was an important point in regards to the representational limits of photography.<sup>929</sup> Photographs became a reflection of what we cannot see. Clark described the photographic image as another type of redaction - the photographic redaction.<sup>930</sup> I argued that the aspect of impenetrability of photographs further highlighted the importance of storytelling - the added annotations, essays, talks and interviews. In addition, Clark's photographs played relevant part in the re/construction of the network and the infrastructure of the atrocity. Also, I suggested that the strategy of not photographing people involved, but instead photographing places and related artefacts, created a stage like images that alluded not only to the disappearance of people (the victims of the CIA RDI programme), but perhaps also hinted on implications for the spectator (putting the spectator in the position of a potential participation on either side).

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<sup>927</sup> Butler, 2010, pp.71-72.

<sup>928</sup> Kilpatrick, 2020, A Framing Paper. Counter-terrorism and the Arts: How counter-terrorism policies restrict the right to freedom of expression.

<sup>929</sup> Smith, 2016; Clark, 2019, Talk: Bending the Screen: Ekphrasis, Plain Sight and the Monster within.

<sup>930</sup> Stear, 2016.

### *Conclusion*

The spectator/reader learned extensively about the CIA RDI programme from both rendition case studies. Their stories incorporated multiple perspectives/vantage points, including victims' of the CIA RDI programme. The authors account for the survivors providing some of the testimonies and also account/give testimony for those who perished in the CIA RDI programme. Thus, both collaborative stories told an alternative story and disrupted the state controlled narrative and therefore joined and amplified the critique of the war on terror and atrocities and their (absent) coverage in the (corporate and establishment) media. Also, it represented people that have not been recognised as humans with corresponding rights by the U.S. government and its allies in the war on terror. By considering and attending to the suffering of others, the authors created *frames* that allow for the representability of the human and create the *frames* of recognisability (Butler) for victims of the CIA RDI programme.

The collaborative stories created a vocabulary that makes possible conversation about the subject (Paglen). It is a 'source material' and written history (Clark).<sup>931</sup> Thus, by recreating the network and illuminating the infrastructure of the CIA RDI programme the authors created and preserved (particular) histories that would not be told otherwise. Thus, both case studies illuminated the increasing importance and relevance of the storytelling and history writing exercised by artists that accompany their artwork. I suggested that the detailed stories told about censorship of the depictions of violence not only subverted the imposed prohibitions, they also connected to earlier image making and transmitting practices as we did with images before photography (Belting). We use images of memory and imagination with which we interpret the world. This practice further helps to reconsider the role of photographs (of atrocities) and their spectatorship.

Throughout the thesis, and in particular in the last chapter, I highlighted and demonstrated that censorship stimulated an interrogation of the politics of democracy and hence helped to explore spectatorship and develop a more nuanced understanding of the spectatorial practice. I pointed out that by exploring the covert state operations and shedding light into the workings of the infrastructures of secrecy both case studies exposed how this secret programme - its censorship and also parts that have been made public - affected and continue to affect democratic systems. For example, Paglen, considered the production of space - both, the black world's and his own activity that constitutes the cultural production,

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<sup>931</sup> Ritchin, 2019, Panel Discussion: Weaving Hidden Stories.

### *Conclusion*

that also produces space. Paglen documented the production of the black space, he exposed how covert atrocities were practised and sustained invisible, and how these illegal activities influenced, affected democratic systems and domestic and international law in the form of (legalised) human rights violations and subverted democracy. That as a consequence documentary photography (in terms of its social and political relevance) has been revitalised and expanded.

In addition, I suggested that last case studies demonstrated another relevant development - the increasing importance of the role of law and human rights in regards to the safety of their subjects and also for artists' own safety (and also their artworks' safety). They consulted the law. The artists regarded the act of taking photographs as a political performance (Paglen, Clark) and a testimony (Clark). They emphasised the right of a citizen to know what is done in their name and with their tax money. Moreover, their cultural production produced alternative space and created the conditions and possibility of an informed/prepared encounter with covert and illegal activities practised by the contemporary Western democratic states. Thus, it produced space and gave 'permission' to look at what has been made invisible. It produced civic space (Azoulay, Rejali, Lucaites & Hariman) and I suggested that mental images play a pivotal part in that process.

Moreover, despite its absence the photographic image has not lost its importance as evidence, the opposite is true. I argued (together with Azoulay, Didi-Huberman, Hirschhorn, Linfield, Simon, Solnit, Strauss) that the photographs of violated and destroyed human bodies play an important and irreplaceable role, they are infinitely precious, they provide evidence, experience and information that cannot be gained by other means. But in its absence there has been a notable development. Growing awareness of the structures of secrecy exercised by the Western democratic (American and European) governments and military has complicated viewing strategies. Due to more informed and nuanced understanding how the state secrecy subverts democratic systems, spectators are less (or no more) accused of voyeurism and complicity in the atrocity by the artists and critics. (Though Clark expressed contrasting views - he did not expect big changes, nevertheless, he implicated Western citizens). The spectator was rather expected to be less trusting and more suspicious of what she was looking at, or was presented to view. There was less expectation that the image will provide the whole story, instead, the viewer, in order to read the photograph or its redacted presence/absence

### *Conclusion*

respectively, was demanded to know the background, to do ‘*archeological work*,<sup>932</sup> to do/read research (“to work harder”). The photograph and its manifested absence is a small part of a big puzzle. The case studies and surrounding discourses highlighted the need for the prepared spectator. It was argued that censorship had ‘necessitated the invention of new ways of seeing’<sup>933</sup> particularly if the spectator wants to see the body in pain that is masked by the ‘negative evidence’ (by a strikeout that hides it in plain sight) (Weizman).<sup>934</sup> It was pointed out that the spectator needs ‘educated eyes to see’ (Solnit)<sup>935</sup> and this thesis is therefore in part a contribution to our better understanding of that new spectatorial role.

Furthermore, I argued that the ‘negative’ approach was particularly useful for bringing into focus the mental images of the absented bodies and also the mental images the spectator already has and/or creates. I suggested that the representational strategies developed by Paglen, Clark and Black demonstrated the increasing importance played by the mental images, that in some cases the absence of the photographic evidence was surpassed by the mental images of the experiences of torture and abuse provided in the redacted documents describing torture techniques, in authors’ annotations, victims’ testimonies, interviews with former or current detainees, the drawings of torture devices and photographs of torture devices and sites of torture. These accounts countered the invisibility of the abuse and offered the spectator/reader necessary tools to imagine for herself and familiarise with these torture techniques. These mental images potentially prepared the spectator for a better understanding of the contemporary stealth torture techniques developed and used by Western democracies that do not leave any visible signs (Rejali). I argued that the representational strategies developed for both case studies (that consist of research and image making/art) can be regarded as an important (and effective) adaptations in addressing the contemporary Western practices of covert atrocities and stealth torture. As the photographic image is missing - the atrocity/violence is either never photographed, destroyed, kept undisclosed or is impossible to photograph - the investigation/research on its history, infrastructure and bodily experience reconstructs the events that atrocity is part of. For the spectator/reader it is a way of learning to see contemporary covert/stealth atrocity. Familiarisation with the atrocity can be seen as

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<sup>932</sup> Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.47.

<sup>933</sup> Weizman, 2015.

<sup>934</sup> Weizman, 2015.

<sup>935</sup> Solnit, 2014, *The Visibility Wars* (2010), p.309.

*Conclusion*

another relevant aspect of the civic skill (Rejali) and I suggested that mental images play pivotal part in that process.

Lastly, at the end of the third chapter, I considered observations and concerns raised by Paglen in his recent research on machine vision<sup>936</sup> because they have consequences for the classical or human visual culture that, as he observed, had become an exception to the rule, and envisaged tectonic changes to previous modes of thinking and action. I found these developments (and incidents) essential to the field of violence representation and particularly for the 'negative' approach. These findings indicated also a need for a further study. Firstly, there is little research on the lives of the atrocity images and their censorship in the digital realm. It seems important to look at the consequences of the tectonic changes highlighted by Paglen's (and Crawford's and Zuboff's) research on machine vision, to explore how these new conditions affect, influence and condition the representation of the violated body; and also how it affects the creator's and the spectator's political agency. Arguably, part of the tectonic changes and resulting challenges for the spectator that Paglen revealed, perhaps, could be put also in the following words - the challenge that the spectator/reader has shifted from 'seeing the elephant'<sup>937</sup> to seeing "nothing," and 'having a tank in your bedroom.'<sup>938</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Paglen, 2016, *Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)*; Crawford and Paglen, 2019, *Excavating AI: The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets*.

<sup>937</sup> Nachtwey, J., (1989). *Deeds of war*. Introduction by Robert Stone. NY: Thames and Hudson, p.10.

<sup>938</sup> Assange, *et al.*, 2012, p.33.

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