

Violence and Representation

Saturday 18 September, 10:30–17.00
Starr Auditorium, Level 2, Tate Modern

An international symposium at Tate Modern

Supported by Oxford Art Journal, Oxford University Press, The Open University and the British Council

10.30 Welcome by **Gabriela Salgado**, Curator of Public Programmes, Tate Modern

10.35 Introduction by **Simon Baker**, Curator of Photography and International Art, Tate Modern

Session One

10.50 **John Roberts** *Violence, Photography and the Inhuman*

In representing the body subject to violence, we are always at some point confronted with what the representation of violence shares with the drive-to-visibility in pornography: the psychological barrier of showing everything-as-truth. That is, as soon as the limits of representability are transgressed, we lose focus on the thing that the transgression is designed to achieve (the powerful and truthful encounter with the real) and turn away. Hence the desire and need to look in order to discover the truth of violence is countered by the desire and need to look away in order to retain our composure and equanimity. This paper will focus on this conflicted and destabilizing interrelationship as the very ethics of a politics of representation.

11.20 **Susan Meiselas** *The Life of One Image over Time, in the Context of its Making and Reframing*

11.50 Panel discussion chaired by **Simon Baker**

12.10 Q&A

12.25 Lunch break

Session Two

13.30 **Alberto Toscano** *Iconoclasm Today: The Tactics and Ethics of Negative Presentation*

Whether we look to the supposed return of religious 'image wars' in the geopolitical arena or to strategies for representing violence in the arts, contemporary iconoclasm - and its critique - is in need of theoretical attention. Can we distinguish between piety and politics in the occultation and destruction of images?

14.00 **Shahidul Alam** *When the Lions Find their Storytellers*

Who tells the story, often determines what story gets told. Selected versions of history, often propagated by gatekeepers of the status quo, have been established and reinforced, and largely gone unchallenged. For majority worldⁱ practitioners, negotiating dangerous political spaces requires not only adapting modes of visual expression, but also modes of intervention.

ⁱ The *majority world* (sometimes capitalized as *Majority World*) is a term used in preference to the largely inaccurate, out-of-date and/or non-descriptive terms *developing countries*, *third world* and the "*South*". The expression, coined by Shahidul Alam, highlights the fact that these countries are indeed the majority of humankind. It also brings to sharp attention the anomaly that the Group of 8 countries—whose decisions affect majority of the world's peoples—represent a tiny fraction of humankind. *Majority world* defines the community in terms of what it is, rather than what it lacks.

14.30 Panel discussion chaired by Steve Edwards including **Rupert Grey**

14.50 Q&A

15.05 Refreshments served in the Starr Auditorium Foyer

Session Three

15.35 **Julian Stallabrass** *The Array of Representations of Violence*
Beginning with an examination of Thomas Hirschhorn's installations and other works which use images of mutilated human bodies, this lecture will attempt to place those images in a field of varied image production (including photojournalism, museum photography and amateur photography), and to provide some idea of historical development in this area. It will argue that Hirschhorn's work is a tactical intervention, designed to pull the extreme images he employs out of their usual areas of circulation.

16.05 **Simon Norfolk**
This presentation deals with some of the problems to do with visualising modern warfare, with special reference to modern technologies and future combat systems. The warfare of the future will be totally invisible and largely unphotographable. Unfortunately, the representing of this warfare will continue in the old-mode not only because the representers don't know better, but they also don't know enough about the new technologies/methods and they have to concentrate on the visualisable because magazines and TV demand it. This results in a dangerous swerve away from recording the true effects of war.

16.35 Panel discussion with the all symposium speakers chaired by **John Roberts** and Q & A

16.50 Q&A

17.00 End

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Speakers

Shahidul Alam obtained a PhD in chemistry from London University. As an activist trying to remove General Ershad, he took up photojournalism. Former president of the Bangladesh Photographic Society, Alam set up the Drik agency, Pathshala school of Photography, Chobi Mela festival, Majority World agency and South Asian Media Academy. Honorary fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and visiting professor at Sunderland University, Alam chaired the World Press Photo jury in 2003.

Simon Baker is Curator of Photography and International Art at Tate Modern.

Steve Edwards teaches art history at the Open University. He is an editor of the *Oxford Art Journal* and of *Historical Materialism*. Author of *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (2006) and *Photography: a Very Short Introduction* (2006); his latest book *Martha Rosler, The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* will be published by Afterall Books in 2011.

Rupert Grey is a practicing libel and copyright lawyer with a background in photography. He has represented national newspapers, photographers and agencies and is on the board of a number of photography foundations.

Susan Meiselas joined Magnum Photos in 1976 and has worked as a freelance photographer since then. She is best known for her coverage of the insurrection in Nicaragua and her documentation of human rights issues in Latin America both in photography and film. Her first major photographic essay focused on the lives of women doing striptease at New England country fairs and features in the *Exposed* exhibition. She was editor and contributor to the book *El Salvador: The Work of Thirty Photographers* (Writers & Readers, 1983) and edited *Chile From Within* (W.W. Norton, 1991). In 1997, she completed a six year project curating a 100 year photographic history of Kurdistan, resulting in the book *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Random House, 1997; reprinted by the University of Chicago Press, 2008). Honorary awards of recognition include the Robert Capa Gold Medal for "outstanding courage and reporting" by the Overseas Press Club for her work in Nicaragua (1979) and most recently the Cornell Capa Infinity Award (2005). In 2009 she won the LUMA book award at Rencontres de Arles for *Susan Meiselas, In History* (ICP/Steidl, 2008). She was named a MacArthur fellow in 1992.

Simon Norfolk was born in Lagos, Nigeria and educated in England. After leaving the Documentary Photography course in Newport, South Wales, he worked for far-left publications specialising in work on anti-racist activities and fascist groups, before giving up photojournalism in 1994 in favour of landscape photography. His book *For Most of It I Have No Words: Genocide, Landscape, Memory* was published in 1998 and the work was exhibited at many venues including the Imperial War Museum in London, the Nederlands Foto Instituut and the Holocaust Museum in Houston. The work produced in Afghanistan in 2001, published as *Afghanistan: chronotopia* won the European Publisher's Award, an award from the Foreign Press Club of America and was nominated for the Citibank Prize. In 2004 Simon won the Infinity Award from the ICP in New York and in 2005 Le Prix Dialogue in Arles. His work is held in many collections including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Art, Portland Art Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and The Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

John Roberts is Professor of Art & Aesthetics at the University of Wolverhampton. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday* (Manchester University Press, 1998), and *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (Verso, 2007). His new book, *The Necessity of Errors* is to be published by Verso next year. He is also a contributor to the *Oxford Art Journal*, *Third Text*, *Philosophy of Photography*, *Historical Materialism* and *Radical Philosophy*.

Gabriela Salgado is Curator of Public Programmes at Tate Modern.

Julian Stallabrass is a writer, curator, photographer and lecturer. He is Reader in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and is the author of *Art Incorporated* (Oxford University Press, 2004); *Internet Art: The Online Clash Between Culture and Commerce* (Tate Publishing, London 2003); *Paris Pictured* (Royal Academy of Arts, London 2002); *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (Verso, London

1999) and *Gargantua: Manufactured Mass Culture* (Verso, London 1996). He curated the 2008 Brighton Photo Biennial, 'Memory of Fire: Images of War and the War of Images'.

Alberto Toscano is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (Verso, 2010) and *The Theatre of Production: Philosophy and Individuation Between Kant and Deleuze* (Palgrave, 2006). He is the translator of Alain Badiou's *Logics of Worlds* (Continuum, 2009) and *The Century* (Polity, 2007). He is an editor of the journal *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory*.