

# **WAR, ART AND VISUAL CULTURE**

**An International Symposium on the Art and Visual Culture of War,  
Conflict and Political Violence**

**Monday 25 February 2019  
SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, Australia**



Today's images of war and violent conflict are unlike those of the past – and the stakes are particularly high. News images of attacks on major European cities are immediate and their presentation emotive, videos of ISIS beheadings or military strikes spark across the internet in seconds, and contemporary war artists reflect on these images, sometimes offering alternative perspectives on war and violence. Artists and photojournalists are often embedded with troops, while others risk everything to work independently. Some voices dominate, while others are excluded. In recent years, then, the art and visual culture surrounding conflict are diverse and politically complex.

Welcome to *War, Art and Visual Culture: An International Symposium on the Art and Visual Culture of War, Conflict and Political Violence*, at the SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney. The aim of the symposium is to explore these complexities and generate new knowledge in this growing field. Today's event is the first of two international symposia – the second will take place at War Studies, Kings College London, on 31 May 2019. These symposia form an important element in a major three-year research project, *Art in Conflict*, led by Curtin University in partnership with the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and National Trust (NSW) and in collaboration with an international academic team from University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales and University of Manchester. *Art in Conflict* receives a Linkage Project grant from the Australian Research Council of \$293,380 over 2018-2021.

The *Art in Conflict* project team would like to pay special thanks to the SH Ervin Gallery, its Director Jane Watters and National Trust (NSW) for their generous support of the Sydney *War, Art and Visual Culture* symposium, particularly in providing this historic venue. Also, we look forward to meeting with the symposium delegates here in Sydney, to share ideas and forge networks, and we thank everyone for coming today. Finally, and importantly, the team would like to acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.

## KEYNOTES:

### 8:40am: Morning Keynote

**Prof Joanna Bourke**

Birkbeck, London, editor of *War and Art*  
(Reaktion 2017)

‘Cruel Visions: Reflections on Artists and  
Atrocities’

### 1:30pm: Afternoon Keynote

**Dr George Gittoes AM**

Sydney Peace Prize 2015,  
Bassel Shenhadeh Award for Social Justice  
USA 2013

‘Crossing the Lines’

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**8:30am**                      **Introduction**

**8:40am**                      **Keynote (Room 1): Prof Joanna Bourke, Birkbeck**

**Session 1 (Parallel Session: Room 1)**

**ART, CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION (9:30am - 10:50am)**

**Chair: Dr. Uroš Čvoro**

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**9:30am**                      **Professor Catherine Speck**, University of Adelaide  
*Thunder raining poison: How contemporary Aboriginal artists are responding to the nuclear bomb tests of the Cold War era*

**9:50am**                      **Dr Chrisoula Lionis**, University of Manchester  
*Cracking the 'scopic regime': Laughter and enactments of statehood in Palestinian art*

**10:10am**                      **Professor Paul Lowe**, University Arts London  
*Evaluating the role of Artistic production in Post Conflict society: Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community*

**10:30am**                      Discussion

**Session 2 (Parallel Session: Room 2)**

**OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL (9:30am - 10:50am)**

**Chair: Ryan Johnston**

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**9:30am**                      **Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox**, Artist (Brisbane)  
*Art and Resistance: New Landscapes in the Drone Age*

**9:50am**                      **Ally Roche**, Australian War Memorial  
*Gary Ramage, combat photographer: Capturing the Australian soldier in conflict*

**10:10am**                      Discussion

**10:50am: Coffee Break (10:50am - 11:10am)**

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**Session 3 (Parallel Session: Room 1)**

**EXCLUDED VOICES (11:10am - 12:30pm)**

**Chair: Laura Webster**

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**11:10am**                      **Richard Travers**, Author (Bowral)  
*War, Commemoration and Widowhood*

- 11:30am**      **Dr Sarah Minslow**, University of North Carolina Charlotte  
*The Visual Art of Conflict in Books for Young Readers*
- 11:50am**      **Dr Helen Berents**, Queensland University of Technology  
*Aesthetics, Politics and Emotion: Images of dead children in conflict and crises*
- 12:10pm**      Discussion

#### Session 4 (Parallel Session: Room 2)

##### THE VIEWFINDER (11:10am - 12:30pm)

Chair: Prof Paul Lowe

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- 11:10am**      **Rola Khayyat**, Columbia University New York  
*Light in Wartime*
- 11:30am**      **Andrew Tenison**, Researcher  
*Worshipping Death: The Visual and Audio Language of Martyrdom In Contemporary Jihadism*
- 11:50am**      **Alex Beldea**, University of Huddersfield  
*Digital Intifada*
- 12:10pm**      Discussion

**12:30pm: Lunch Break: 12:30pm-1:30pm**

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**1:30pm: Keynote (Room 1): George Gittoes AM, Artist**

#### Session 5 (Parallel Session: Room 1)

##### REPRESENTATION (2:15pm - 3:35pm)

Chair: Anthea Gunn

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- 2:15pm**      **Niall McMahon**, Curtin University  
*Invisible Targets: My Way and the impact of conflict on South Korean war cinema*
- 2:35pm**      **Emily Shoyer**, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University  
*Rendering the Victims of the Nigerian Civil War (Jul 6, 1967 – Jan 15, 1970): The Paintings of Obiora Udechukwu*
- 2:55pm**      **Kirril Shields**, University of Queensland  
*A Zeitgeist of Atrocity: Amateur Photos and Trans-Generational Renegotiations of the Holocaust*
- 3:15pm**      Discussion

## Session 6 (Parallel Session: Room 2)

### SOLDIERS (2:15pm - 3:35pm)

Chair: Prof Joanna Bourke

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- 2:15pm**            **Baptist Coelho**, Artist (Mumbai)  
*They agreed to eat biscuits and European bread, but our regiment refused (Indian soldiers' letters, 1914-18)*
- 2:35pm**            **Alice Evans**, Australian War Memorial  
*Beyond the Material: The Trench Art of Sapper Stanley Keith Pearl and the First World War*
- 2:55pm**            **Georgia Vesma**, University of Manchester  
*The Objectified Male American in Catherine Leroy's 'Up Hill 881 with the Marines'*
- 3:15pm**            Discussion

### 3:35pm: Coffee Break (3:35pm - 3:55pm)

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## Session 7 (Plenary Session: Room 1)

### ARTISTS, INSTITUTIONS, PUBLICS: CONTEMPORARY RESPONSES TO CONFLICT (3:55pm - 4.55pm)

Chair: Prof Ana Carden - Coyne

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- 3:55pm**            **Dr Anthea Gunn**, Australian War Memorial  
*Art in the commemorative museum*
- 4:15pm**            **Dr Mikala Tai**, Gallery 4A  
*Personal histories, personal archives*
- 4:35pm**            **Dr Kate Warren**, Australian National University  
*Researching art; Art as research*
- 4:55pm**            Discussion

**5:15pm: Drinks in the SH Ervin Gallery and Gallery talk by Wendy Sharpe, former Australian Official War Artist**

### 6:00pm: Close

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# SESSION 1: ART, CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION

**Professor Catherine Speck**, University of Adelaide

*'Thunder raining poison': How contemporary Aboriginal artists are responding to the nuclear bomb tests of the Cold War era*

This paper will interrogate how contemporary Aboriginal artists are responding to the Cold War era British atom bomb tests on their lands and people at Maralinga and other locations in remote South Australia from 1952-1963. At the time of the tests, little official regard was given for the safety and protection of the Aboriginal people. A truck was sent out to round them up and move them elsewhere, but many hid unaware of the danger. The land, their source of food was destroyed while the health and well-being of many was shattered. Those non-Aboriginal people administering and witnessing the tests were also poorly protected, and many suffered ill effects.

Much official secrecy surrounded the tests, and it is only in recent years that the full story is emerging in books such as 'Maralinga: the Anangu story' and 'Beyond Belief: British bomb tests, Australia's Veterans Speak Out'. This paper will focus how Aboriginal artists, some displaced by the tests, and others as descendants, are now responding and speaking out. These artists include glass artist Yhonnie Scarce whose installations such as *Thunder raining poison*, 2015, consisting of 2000 blown glass yams signifying the destruction of the Anangu people's food source after the tests at Maralinga; and senior men and women from across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, whose *Kulata Tjuta*, 2017 (meaning many spears) have been displayed in an explosive nuclear cloud like formation above empty food collecting bowls.

The effects on Aboriginal people of this Cold War event, and their affective responses via their art is the subject of this paper.



**Dr Chrisoula Lionis**, University of Manchester

*Cracking the 'scopic regime': Laughter and enactments of statehood in Palestinian art*

Though revolutionary in its modes of production and distribution, in previous decades Palestinian cultural production was dominated by an emphasis on populist and nationalist imagery. Though this militant aesthetic persists in demotic forms of cultural production (graffiti, political posters etc.), as Palestinians entered deeper into what is arguably the darkest chapter in their history contemporary art has become increasingly 'funny'. This paper investigates the impetus behind this turn toward humour in a context of ongoing Israeli occupation, accelerated neoliberalism, and the 'NGO-ization' of Palestine whilst also making clear its capacity in the face of what Gil Hochberg describes as a 'scopic regime' where Palestinians experience an unfair distribution of visual rights under the weight of Israeli colonial violence.

Framed by an understanding of Palestinian sovereignty as in a permanent state of 'becoming', this paper draws discussion around the concept of 'anticipatory aesthetics', where 'humorous' contemporary art is used not only to draw attention to the absence of Palestinian sovereignty, but also as a means of enacting Palestinian statehood. Focusing on the work of artists Taysir Batniji, Khaled Jarrar and Khalil Rabah this paper aims to reveal humour as means through which to subvert mechanisms of occupation, thus revealing how laughter serves as a means through which to think through one of the most urgent political issues of our age.

**Professor Paul Lowe**, University Arts London

*Evaluating the role of Artistic production in Post Conflict society: Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community.*

This presentation will outline a series of artistic interventions that have been undertaken in the former Yugoslavia over the last 18 months as part of the AHRC funded research project *Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community*. The interventions involved the commissioning of an artist or group of artists to produce a new work in response to the themes of post conflict reconciliation, and included artists from Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia working across a range of artistic forms of production including fine art, sculpture, painting, performance and video installation. The interventions were evaluated to investigate how different forms of artistic practice might affect the perceptions of inter group relations in the region. Each intervention was evaluated to assess its impact on the artists involved, the participants in creating the artwork, and on targeted and general audiences. In particular this session will discuss the evaluation strategy and framework that has been developed to explore the impact of these artistic commissions and to investigate how these artistic interventions are experienced by those involved and whether (and how) they do or do not contribute to reconciliation and peace-building.

More broadly, it will consider the question of how we can effectively research, evaluate and communicate the social impact of the arts. Recent decades have seen the arts increasingly harnessed to tackle issues of social exclusion, community renewal and in post-conflict societies as a means to build peace. Institutional funders are keen to see evidence of impact however traditional evaluation methods with their emphasis on quantitative methods and linear, causal models of change fail to capture the emergent qualities of the arts and their transformative effects. Is there a way to navigate the clash of cultures between programmatic evaluation approaches and open-ended artistic processes? How can we build research strategies that critically capture and communicate the contribution and qualities of artistic projects to complex and unstable social contexts?

## SESSION 2: OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL

**Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox**, University of Queensland

*Art and Resistance: New Landscapes in the Drone Age*

In this presentation I discuss paintings that have been informed by my academic research into contemporary militarised technology, particularly the airborne drone, its persistent surveillance capabilities and increasingly autonomous systems. My research was inspired by a long-term interest in existential risk posed by emerging technologies. These emerging technologies include the accelerating developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence and their use in advanced surveillance and targeting systems deployed in unmanned vehicles such as airborne drones. In this talk I focus on how I use visual elements and the medium of paint to resist the increasing militarisation, through expanding military/civilian dual-use technologies, of everyday life.

As a result of my academic research, the figure of the airborne militarised drone, or indications of its presence, has entered my paintings. I place drones in cosmic landscapes, inviting viewers to fly, in their imaginations, around the drones. By turning human surveillance/vision back onto the drones this imagery also resists that attribution of anthropomorphic modes of vision to a drone's imaging technology. In its broadest sense human vision indicates not only seeing with an eye, but also a mind's eye, with imagination and visionary thinking. Drones do not see or imagine – they scope – they scope to surveil and to target. A drone is not an eye-in-the-sky, but a scope-in-the-sky.

I use cosmic perspectives to expose the invisible signals that support a drone's scoping operations. These signals ricochet between land, sky and space based assets. They create new unseen landscape topographies which I paint as radiating lines, nets, grids or strings of binary code. With cosmic perspectives these new invisible topographies are revealed as insidious non-human colonising forces that alter landscapes in ways that can influence human movement and activity. In my paintings I attempt to demonstrate that this occupation of landscape, by near light-speed transmissions, aids and abets perpetual war and Derek Gregory's notion of the 'everywhere war'. Both terms indicate a militarisation of the present and the future. This militarisation of time poses an existential threat to the human species, one that I attempt to resist through painted visual disclosure.

**Ally Roche**, Australian War Memorial

*Gary Ramage, combat photographer: Capturing the Australian soldier in conflict*

*In wars, where nothing seems to matter, I can take pictures in which every person counts.* Gary Ramage, 2016

Gary Ramage is a triple Walkley Award-winning photographer and photojournalist and is currently the Chief Photographer for News Corp. Prior to this, Gary spent 20 years as a military photographer incorporating the role of unit photographer as an infantryman with 6RAR through to Australia's Army Chief Defence Public Relations Photographer. As a freelance photographer, he documented the current conflict in Afghanistan. These distinct roles of a combat photographer all document the Australian soldier at war.

Over 20 years, Gary Ramage has documented conflicts in Somalia, Bougainville, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. The majority of his collection is held by the Australian War Memorial in print and digital form but, to date has remained mostly unexamined or not displayed. An initial examination of the collection raises many questions about the visual culture of war and the politics, conflicts and compromises inherent in its documentation. Does having a military background help or hinder the photographer when capturing the 'truthful' image of war? How does the agenda of an employer affect the end result and does it create barriers for the photographer and the subject? How important is trust between the photographer and the subject? What is the impact of war and conflict on a combat photographer when capturing the last moments of a person's life? Ultimately, do you choose to take the picture? Based on an oral history conducted with the Australian War Memorial in 2014 and his 2016 biography written with Mark Abernethy, *Do Whatever You Have to Do. Just Get the Shot*, this presentation will critically examine a selection of Ramage's work to explore these questions.

## SESSION 3: EXCLUDED VOICES

### Richard Travers

*War, Commemoration and Widowhood*

Who makes the greatest sacrifice: the soldier who dies in battle, or his widow and orphans? In commemorating the sacrifices made in war, are we prone to remember the soldier, and forget the widow and orphans?

After her husband was killed on the Somme, Hilda Rix Nicholas made a series of paintings expressing her grief and anguish. They were among the finest and most affecting Australian paintings of the Great War, yet Australian galleries and museums declined to acquire them. Major John Treloar, the first director of the Australian War Museum (the forerunner of the Australian War Memorial), wrote that the flagship painting of the series, *Pro Humanitate*, was 'of too intimate a character for inclusion in a public collection.'

When Vida Lahey offered the War Museum *Rejoicing and Remembrance, Armistice Day, London, 1918*, a brilliant watercolour that contrasted the celebrations of the Armistice Day crowd in Trafalgar Square with the grief of a few sombre women entering St Martin's-in-the-Field for a service of remembrance, the painting was rejected with no more explanation than that the Art Committee had decided not to acquire it.

Few works in the collection of the Australian War Memorial depict or commemorate widows or widowhood. War and widowhood go hand in glove. The rejection of these works of the Great War, and the dearth of other works commemorating the sacrifice of widows and orphans in the collection of the War Memorial give a sense that we may, indeed, be privileging soldiers over widows and orphans. The sense is confirmed in the legislative charter of the Memorial, which requires it to be a 'national memorial of Australians who have died ... on or as a result of active service', and makes no mention of widows and orphans.

In his second inaugural address, delivered as the Civil War ground to a bitter end, President Lincoln challenged the Union to strive 'to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.' It is a challenge that resonates yet.

**Dr Sarah Minslow**, UNC Charlotte, North Carolina  
*The Visual Art of Conflict in Books for Young Readers*

Accurately representing the brutality and reality of conflict is difficult for any artist, but illustrators who represent conflict for young readers have the added layer of working to encourage empathy, sympathy, and understanding in viewers without traumatizing young readers. This paper will examine the artwork in 3-4 contemporary, award-winning picture books *The Enemy: A Book about Peace* by Davide Cali and illustrated by Serge Bloch, *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, *The Rabbits* by Shaun Tan and John Marsden, and *Year of the Jungle* by Suzanne Collins, illustrated by James Proimos.

Each book portrays people whose lives are forever changed by war, including indigenous people, soldiers, asylum seekers, and the families waiting at home for soldiers to return. The artists purposefully use distancing strategies to engage young readers without overwhelming them with the gory details of war, yet they do so while adhering to two key criteria of books about conflict for young readers – one must be historically accurate and the book must take an ethical stance against war.

This paper will analyze the illustrations to reveal how these books not only challenge people's ideas of what is "appropriate" for young readers, but how contemporary picture book authors and illustrators engage in larger political debates about human rights and conflict. This paper will argue that these books can be incorporated into curriculum to teach young people about conflict in ways that allow them to become engaged global citizens while providing rich sources of verbal and visual literacy development. Given the rich visual culture of children's literature, the inclusion of picture books about conflict aims to add a new dimension to this conference.

**Dr Helen Berents**, School of Justice, Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology

*Aesthetics, politics and emotion: Images of dead children in conflict and crises*

In a media environment saturated with news of conflict and violence, civilian suffering is often rendered abstract. Yet images of dead children resonate and provoke compassionate responses. This paper explores both award winning images as well as images that gained traction on social media including dead boys lying on the beach such as the photographs of Alan Kurdi in 2015 and the Palestinian boys killed on the Gazan beach in 2014; or tiny bodies clutched by grieving fathers such as the 2013 World Press Photo winner of dead Palestinian children, and Abdel Hameed Alyousef embracing his dead nine-month-old twins in Syria in 2017.

I focus in this paper on dead children's bodies, rather than children in distress, following others in this space to argue for the importance of the corpse as a significant subject (Auchter 2016). I ask how images of dead children are presented, circulated, read; and how the ethics of sharing these images challenge contemporary frameworks which, to follow Butler (2004, 2010), some lives are apprehendable as living and some are not. The aesthetic and emotional quality of these images of children's corpses shapes understandings of the consequences of conflict.

## SESSION 4: THE VIEWFINDER

**Rola Khayyat**, Columbia University New York

*Light in a Wartime*

*Light in Wartime* explores photography's conversation with objective truth, raising questions about the reliability of seemingly objective historical accounts, such as media images, that greatly determine how war is communicated and remembered. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag writes that "a photograph cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude." Part of the real is always excluded in representation. What we see is not necessarily convergent with truth. Judith Butler concedes that "to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable." Echoing this sentiment, the photographers in *Light in Wartime* challenge the conventions and limitations of war photography by offering new ways to think about, look at, and represent conflict.

Jo Ractliffe's photographs present hauntingly serene and barren landscapes that hint at Angola's violent past and the ghostly aftermath of war. Richard Mosse's images give viewers space to meditate on the sites and implications of conflict without numbing them to the gruesome horrors and bloodshed of war. An-My Lê creates images that transcend specific content and bring to focus the nature of war and theater, as well as the limitations of war photography. David Levinthal depicts contemporary news imagery of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars through the playful use of toy soldiers in desert fatigues toting machine guns, figurines of civilians, and miniature armored humvees seen at close range in sandswept battlefields. Rula Halawani, a native of occupied East Jerusalem, employs one apparatus of war as a tool in the making of her photographs. Through experimental methods akin to the photographic process itself, they reflect on alternative ways of representing endless violence, motivating viewers to seek answers to questions that arise from the real and the imaginary spaces of representation.



**Andrew Tenison**, Researcher

*Worshipping Death: The Visual and Audio Language of Martyrdom In Contemporary Jihadism*

In the landscape of contemporary warfare some of the most potent and influential images of war or calls for war are those made by jihadists. The elevation of Martyrdom and its connection to doctrinal salvation (within the Qur'an and Sahih Hadith) has played an important role in Islam since its inception 1400 years ago that continues today in contemporary manifestations of jihadism. The visual and audio language of contemporary jihadism makes particular use of classical and contemporary notions of martyrdom to inspire action, doctrinally legitimise "righteous" jihad (struggle) against the "kuffar" or "infidel" West, reinforce ideology, educate and reach potential recruits, no matter where they are geographically.

In particular the visual and audio language of jihadism has found its home online amongst jihadist run and operated media outlets and files sharing applications that bypass Western censorship or in some cases find sympathy within some media outlets in Western jurisdictions. Contemporary jihadists leverage classical Islamic sources such as the Sahih (authentic/sound) Hadith literature (sayings and deeds of Muhammad) and specific Qur'anic (Medinan verses) in support of their ideological outlook, which is then referenced within their audio and visual propaganda including video statements, audio files, nasheeds and poems eulogising jihadi martyrs.

This presentation will explore the visual and audio language of martyrdom with a specific focus on the use of the "green birds" text and imagery by jihadists in their online audiovisual propaganda including nasheeds, social media emojis and poems. The paper will conclude with a brief examination of a small educational body of photographic work titled *Black box from Kandahar (2013)* by Canadian photographer Louie Palu that offers a sobering contrasting perspective to the glorification of martyrdom.

**Alex Beldea**, University of Huddersfield  
*Digital Intifada*

Myriad images, still or moving, inundate us daily with sequences of more or less proximate reality, leaving us with the task of negotiating our responses to these representations that empathically seek our attentions. The images that we encounter arrive in various forms on various platforms: 'branding, surveillance, selfies, image wars, citizen journalism...and, within all, photography' (Ritchin, 2013). In the midst of this new paradigm, independent activist groups and photographers documenting injustices around the world have become more prevalent, taking advantage of accessible photographic means and of the possibility for immediate sharing of images with the world.

The Middle East region, affected by recent conflicts and ongoing unrest, has been at the forefront of these new developments. Through photography, they try to challenge the mass-media agenda, to offer an alternative view on the conflicts and to open a window to the struggle that people go through in places like Palestine (Baroud, 2016). Besides being shadowed by the unrest, Palestine is a place of opportunity for independent photographers – citizen photographers, to show their side of the Truth, due to emerging Internet technologies and access to social media platforms being available to more and more people.

Photography is now showcased, more than ever, on Web platforms (Patrikarakos, 2017), and a larger group of people can now produce and disseminate visual content, while using social media platforms in order to form new online discursive networks. The activities of such independent photographers point towards the importance of bearing witness to events and visually attesting these experiences, offering an alternative view for their online followers who subsequently can engage in the online 'conversation'. In relation to the 'Great Return March' emerging in May 2018, this paper will explore the activity of the Activestills photographers through social media and the reportages of Janna Jihad, a 12-year-old independent journalist whose Facebook videos expose the plight of her village, Nabi Saleh (West Bank). These are now more than witnesses and, by using a camera or a mobile phone, they attest the nature of the ongoing unrest, revealing the everyday life and using photography as protest.

# SESSION 5: REPRESENTATION

**Niall McMahon,** Curtin University

*Invisible Targets: My Way and the impact of conflict on South Korean war cinema*

For as long as a nation has had filmmaking capabilities, each have used the medium to cinematically represent their national wars and armed conflicts. Significant conflicts as varied as the American Civil War, the Indonesian War for Independence and the Japanese Occupation of Korea have all been repeatedly reproduced in cinema by nearly all of the countries involved in them. No other conflict has been as widely represented by international cinema as World War II, with countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia and Japan, producing films depicting this war.

During World War II, Korea was under intense occupation by the Japanese, with the Korean populace being subjected to atrocities the nation is still recovering from today. This occurrence can be argued to be why in South Korea, World War II films are rare, combat films even more so. Only one significant World War II combat film has been produced by this nation that being the 2011 film *My Way*. *My Way* is noteworthy for both following nearly all of the conventions of the cinematic war combat genre, whilst also opposing them. While many of the film's narrative and thematic elements follow these traditional conventions, the construction of each of its three main battle sequences do not. While producing sequences that appear to be filled with violence, emotion and grand spectacle, each are instead primarily focused on the film's main characters, Kim Jun-shik and Tatsuo Hasegawa. In turn, each battle becomes an illusion of significant, world shattering combat, when they are instead almost superfluous to the film's overall narrative and thematic content.

This paper will examine *My Way*'s combat sequences, contrasting them against other notable World War II films and war genre theory, in order to explore both how and why this film opposes traditional war film battle sequence construction. In addition, this analysis will act as a catalyst to discuss the dearth of World War II films in South Korea, linking this occurrence back to Korea's cultural climate during the war.

**Emily Shoyer**, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

*Rendering the Victims of the Nigerian Civil War (Jul 6, 1967 – Jan 15, 1970): The Paintings of Obiora Udechukwu*

The Independent State of Biafra declared sovereignty on May 30, 1967 in response to the extreme persecution suffered by the Igbo people in Nigeria. Despite the Igbo's perception of their victimhood during the Nigerian Civil War, which took place between 1967 and 1970, when the conflict ended with Biafra's surrender, Nigerian army leader General Yakubu Gowon infamously stated that there was "no victor, no vanquished." The images that media outlets circulated around the globe throughout the conflict seemed to negate Gowon's claim. The Nigerian Civil War was the first televised African conflict, which invaded the average Westerner's living room and offered post-dinner entertainment that included footage of starved Biafran children.

While filmic and photographic images of the war was widely circulated, Igbo artist Obiora Udechukwu put pen to paper to capture the everyday trauma of the conflict as a displaced person in Biafra. Udechukwu produced hundreds of sketchbooks featuring drawings of the violence enacted upon the Igbo. In addition to these drawings, Udechukwu produced a few paintings depicting the Biafran experience. This paper addresses three understudied semi-abstract paintings of the Nigerian Civil War by Udechukwu and is based partly on an interview I conducted with the artist in December of 2016. This paper will argue that Udechukwu's paintings offer a new perspective on the politics of aesthetics in images of war and violence. In contrast to the journalistic images widely circulated of Biafran victims, Udechukwu's paintings depict Igbo individuals from the position of a fellow Igbo, establishing a sense of agency absent from the infamous images of the conflict. Moreover, Udechukwu's paintings are psychologically mediated, relaying his personal trauma in response to the Biafran conflict. These paintings position their spectator as a witness to the artist's perennial suffering and go beyond mimetic representation of war by requiring us ethically to address this history of injustice.

**Dr Kirril Shields**, School of Communication and Arts The University of Queensland  
*A Zeitgeist of Atrocity: Amateur Photos and Trans-Generational Renegotiations of the Holocaust*

This paper looks at the proliferation of amateur photos of the Third Reich now accessible on internet sites such as Instagram, and discusses how photos of this nature are a problematic means of trans-generational remembrance.

The paper examines certain case studies, exploring them as literal and representational modes of interacting with this history. In exploring amateur photos of the Third Reich, the paper questions the complex role of the photo as a form of memorialisation, and looks at this genre of image through both a structured mapping, and through the affective relationship the image establishes with the viewer.

In photos of the Holocaust, war, conflict and atrocity are present in all images, either literally or through a Third Reich presence. But what about the many millions of photos of the Reich that show no immediate connection to this crime? What narrative do they build of the period, and how is this narrative being reappropriated given that images of the period are uploaded to internet sites on a daily basis?

# SESSION 6: SOLDIERS

**Baptist Coelho**, Artist (Mumbai)

*War, Art and Visual Culture*

*“Even in Friedrich Nietzsche’s early writings “forgetfulness” makes its appearance in two opposed forms: as a limitation that protects the human being from the blinding light of an absolute historical memory (that will, among other things, reveal that “truths” spring from “interpretations”), as well as an attribute boldly chosen by the philosopher in order to avoid falling into the trap of “historical knowledge.”* This is an extract from the *Translator’s Preface ‘Of Grammatology’* (1976) an English translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak of *‘De la grammatologie’* (1976) by the deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida. Spivak’s assessments on forgetfulness, truths, interpretations and historical knowledge are the focal points of departure for my (performed) paper. Using the spoken word format I will deconstruct (Derrida, 1976) the experience of the Indian soldiers who served in Europe during the Great War of 1914-18 through images and letters.

Wearing a khaki cotton service dress, which is reminiscent of the uniform worn by Indian soldiers when they first arrived in France, I will embody varied mindsets of survival and anguish to displaced patriotism of combatants and non-combatants. I will be seated and sometimes walking against a projected backdrop of looping postcard images taken by the colonial paparazzi (Santanu Das, 2014) that feature Indian soldiers and (acknowledges) their contribution. The paper will retrace the British Indian army and their postings in Europe with the help of many letters (David Omissi, *‘Indian Voices of the Great War - Soldiers’ Letters, 1914-18’*, 2014) they exchanged with their Indian families. The narrations of the spoken word will avoid a nostalgic drive and hope to create a hybrid and surrealistic methodology by employing (speculative and factual) documentation to cogitate on the subversions endured by soldiers.

The overall aim is to engage in questions such as, why was the memory of those Indian soldiers who had served (in the now-discredited empire) all but lost in the post-colonial world? What could be the role of photographers and image archives: to reveal, recalibrate, and give a voice (publicise) to otherwise unspoken/unseen? And in what sense do photographs confront the problematic dynamics of documentation and/or propaganda?

**Alice Evans, Australian War Memorial**

*Beyond the Material: The Trench Art of Sapper Stanley Keith Pearl and the First World War*

Trench art was produced in abundance during the First World War. Trench art, as defined by archaeologist and anthropologist Nicholas Saunders, encompasses that produced by soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians and from any sort of material associated temporally or spatially with conflict and its aftermath.

Sapper Stanley Keith Pearl, of the Australian Fifth Field Company Engineers, produced a phenomenal collection of trench art between 1916 and 1919 in Europe. He is an enigma. There is no evidence to suggest that Pearl is survived by anyone, nor can any photographs of him be traced. Pearl's collection, held in the Australian War Memorial, is exceptional given that accompanying field notes contextualise his 'souvenired' materials; a feature not typically associated with First World War trench art.

Digital art history, through the aid of mapping databases, provides a richer context in understanding Pearl's service. Material culture and digital art history are crucial, complementary methodologies informing this cross - disciplinary analysis. The findings presented in this paper are the result of plotting the locations in which Pearl collected materials and assembled trench art objects, thereby translating material culture into the 'data' of the digital art history realm. That is, providing a visual aid to the largely documentary evidence. Digital art history forces us, as a contemporary audience of art historians, to ask new questions of First World War trench art; ones that are not necessarily revealed with an understanding only of material culture. What can we make of clusters of data? What are the strengths and weaknesses of engaging with digital art history? What can these findings tell us about our understanding of First World War trench art? This presentation will address these questions and ultimately bring to light the service of Sapper Stanley Keith Pearl through his trench art.

**Georgia Vesma** University of Manchester

*The Objectified Male American in Catherine Leroy's 'Up Hill 881 with the Marines'*

“Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed.” (Sontag, 2003.) Sontag argues that this objectification is disproportionately enacted on African and Asian bodies. There is a ‘powerful interdiction’ against the publishing of images of ‘our dead’ - that is, wounded or dead Americans.

Catherine Leroy arrived in Vietnam from France in 1966, aged 22. Over the following three years she was injured by shrapnel, captured by the North Vietnamese Army, banned from working for six months for ‘cussing out a senior officer’ and was awarded gold paratrooper’s wings for making a combat jump. She also had many photographs published, primarily in *Life* magazine, including uncensored images of dead and wounded American soldiers.

This paper will take as its subject the central spread of images from Leroy’s 1967 *Life* feature ‘Up Hill 881 With the Marines.’ Leroy described this series of images of a medical corpsman leaning over the body of his dead ‘buddy’ as ‘[summing] up for me my 15 months of war.’ (*Life*, 1967). These images will be examined alongside her correspondence to show how Leroy’s position as a female photojournalist allowed her to subvert the ‘powerful interdiction’ against showing dead Americans to an American audience. The paper will explore how the camera reverses male/female and soldier/civilian power dynamics, producing an ‘objectified’ and fetishised wounded male combatant body. While Leroy identified as ‘antiwar’, she felt a strong affinity with American soldiers, calling them her ‘friends’ (Howe, 2002). She felt that her job in Vietnam was to show the war as it really was for the men who fought it (*Life*, 1967). This paper will argue that, despite her deeply-felt sympathy for American soldiers, Leroy’s unflinching images of American men dead, mortally wounded and in agony ultimately exploit her ‘friends’ in support of her antiwar position.



## SESSION 7: ART, INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLICS

**Dr Mikala Tai (4A), Dr Kate Warren (ANU), Dr Anthea Gunn (AWM)**

Art responding to and interrogating conflict is often confronting and emotive to view. This panel explores how the institutional context for its creation and exhibition can shape the reception and interpretation of the work. Speakers from an independent arts organisation, academia and a public museum will each consider how their context shapes their own practice as curators and researchers and the presentation of works of art.

**Dr Anthea Gunn**, Senior Curator of Art, Australian War Memorial

*Art in the commemorative museum*

As Australia's national shrine, museum and archive, the Australian War Memorial includes an art collection of some 40,000 works. One of the nation's earliest federal collections, for over 100 years the Memorial has commissioned and acquired works that respond to the nation's experience of conflict. Almost always exhibited alongside artefacts and archives in a heritage building, alongside a national memorial to those killed in military service, art plays complex roles here. The Memorial's commissioning program places leading contemporary artists in a markedly different context, both for display and audiences. This paper will tease out these complexities using examples of official war art (Ben Quilty) and other acquisitions and commissions (Angela Tiatia; Alex Seton).

**Dr Mikala Tai**, Director, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
*Personal histories, personal archives*

This paper considers how artists access historical conflicts through the immediacy of personal experience. Reflecting on recent commissions for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art by Adeela Suleman, Sonia Leber & David Chesworth, John Young and Jason Phu this paper examines how the artists approached historical flashpoints through historical research mitigated by memory. Through an examination of artistic methodologies, ideas of the contemporary art audiences and creative archives the role of the artist-as-historian is proposed and questioned.

**Dr Kate Warren**, Australian National University  
*Researching art; Art as research*

Universities are institutions of research, often conducted within traditional modes and frameworks of academia. Increasingly, however, universities are facilitating research programs, collaborative projects and higher degrees in practice-based research. This paper will consider a few notable examples of artist-lead or artist-initiated research projects (Australian and international) that concern contemporary considerations of conflict. It will explore how academic institutions such as universities can productively engage with artist-lead research, as well as some of the associated challenges.

## THE ART AND CONFLICT RESEARCH TEAM

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### **Assoc Prof Kit Messham-Muir**

#### **Chief Investigator 1**

#### **Curtin University**

Associate Professor Kit Messham-Muir is an art theorist, educator, researcher and critic based at Curtin University in Perth, Australia. Since 1997, A/Prof Messham-Muir has taught art history at universities in Australia and Hong Kong and won multiple awards for teaching. He publishes frequently in peer-reviewed and popular press (*Artforum*, *Art & Australia*, *The Conversation*) and directs the StudioCrasher video project. In 2015, A/Prof Messham-Muir published the book, *Double War: Shaun Gladwell, visual culture and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Thames & Hudson Australia). He is the Lead Investigator on Art in Conflict, a three-year ARC Linkage project in partnership with the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and National Trust (NSW) and in collaboration with academics from University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales and University of Manchester. *Art in Conflict* receives a Linkage Project grant from the Australian Research Council of \$293,380 over 2018-2021.

### **Prof Charles Green**

#### **Chief Investigator 2**

#### **University of Melbourne**

Professor Charles Green is an artist, art critic and art historian specialising in the history of international and Australian art after 1960, with a particular focus on photography, post-object and post-studio art. He supervises theses on international and Australian contemporary art, and on art after the 1960s. He teaches courses on international and Australian art since the 1970s, and has taught cinema subjects on artists in film. He is specifically interested in helping students to develop research on art history that is both theoretically-informed and involves close primary research.

### **Dr Uroš Čvoro**

#### **Chief Investigator 3**

#### **University of New South Wales Art & Design**

Dr Uroš Čvoro is a Senior Lecturer in Art Theory at UNSW Australia Art & Design. His research interests include contemporary art and politics, cultural representations of nationalism, post-socialist and post-conflict art. His recent books include *Transitional Aesthetics: Art at The Edge of Europe* (Bloomsbury, 2018) and *Turbo-folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia* (Ashgate, 2014).

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**Ryan Johnston**  
**Chief Investigator 4**  
**Buxton Contemporary**

Ryan Johnston is Director, Buxton Contemporary, the new contemporary art museum at the University of Melbourne's Southbank campus. His professional experience in the museum and university sectors includes being Head of Art at the Australian War Memorial (2012-2018) where he oversaw one of the most significant collections of Australian art ranging from the 19th century to the present day. In this role, he managed Australia's Official War Art Scheme, through which contemporary artists are deployed to conflict zones around world. While at the Memorial he also developed a wide-ranging contemporary art commissioning program to address the complex histories and legacies of conflict.

**Prof Ana Carden-Coyne**  
**Partner Investigator (International)**  
**University of Manchester**

Professor Ana Carden-Coyne is Director of the Centre for the Cultural History of War (CCHW) at the University of Manchester. She is a historian and curator. Her publications include *The Politics of Wounds* (Oxford University Press, 2014); *Reconstructing the Body* (Oxford University Press, 2009); (Ed) *Gender and Conflict Since 1914* (Palgrave, 2012), and a special edition on disability, *European Review of History* (2007). She co-curated a major exhibition with Manchester Art Gallery and the Whitworth Art Gallery, *The Sensory War, 1914-2014* (Oct 2014-Feb 2015) attracting over 203,000 visitors, and for the Somme centenary, *Visions of the Front, 1916-18* (Whitworth Art Gallery). Other current projects include a special edition of *Cultural and Social History on Young People* and the *Two World Wars* (with Kate Darian Smith); project on the Art of Resilience with the Dutch Military academy; and an exhibition with Manchester Art Gallery and Whitworth Art Gallery on Artists, War and Humanitarianism.

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**Dr Anthea Gunn****Partner Investigator 1****Senior Curator of Art, Australian War Memorial**

Dr Anthea Gunn completed a PhD in art history for her thesis *Imitation Realism and Australian Art* in 2010 at the ANU. She worked as a social history curator at the National Museum of Australia (2008-13) and has been at the Australian War Memorial since 2014, where she is Senior Curator of Art. She has published in the *Journal of Australian Studies* and the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, amongst others. She has curated contemporary commissions and exhibitions and was lead curator of the online exhibition, *Art of Nation: Australia's official art and photography of the First World War*.

**Laura Webster****Partner Investigator 2****Head of Art, Australian War Memorial**

Laura Webster has worked in the Art section of the Australian War Memorial since 2006 and became Head of Art in 2018. Her major projects have included the Anzac Centenary Print Portfolio (2016), the contemporary diorama commissions in the redeveloped First World War galleries by artists Arlo Mountford and Alexander McKenzie (2015), *Ben Quilty: After Afghanistan* (2013), *Perspectives: Jon Cattapan; eX de Medici* (2010) and *Sidney Nolan: the Gallipoli series* (2009). At the Memorial she has been part of the transformation of the art commissioning program and regularly commissions contemporary works of art and publishes on the collection.



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