

Routledge Research in Museum Studies

For a full list of titles in this series, please visit www.routledge.com


Selected titles:

- 4 **Museum Communication and Social Media**
The Connected Museum
Edited by Kirsten Drotner and Kim Christian Schröder
- 5 **Doing Museology Differently**
Duncan Grewcock
- 6 **Climate Change and Museum Futures**
Edited by Fiona R. Cameron and Brett Neilson
- 7 **Animals and Hunters in the Late Middle Ages**
Evidence from the BnF MS fr. 616 of the Livre de chasse
by Gaston Fébus
Hannele Klemettilä
- 8 **Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice**
Decolonising Engagement
Bryony Onciul
- 9 **Introducing Peace Museums**
Joyce Apsel
- 10 **Representing the Nation: Heritage, Museums, National Narratives,
and Identity in the Arab Gulf States**
*Edited by Pamela Erskine-Loftus, Mariam Ibrahim Al-Mulla, Victoria
Hightower*
- 11 **Museums and Photography**
Displaying Death
Edited by Elena Stylianou and Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert

Museums and Photography

Displaying Death

Edited by
**Elena Stylianou and
Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert**

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2017 E. Stylianou and T. Stylianou-Lambert

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-85204-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-72377-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	xi
1 Approaches to Displaying Death in Museums: an Introduction	1
ELENA STYLIANOU AND THEOPISTI STYLIANOU-LAMBERT	
PART I	
Evidencing the Past	19
2 Negotiating Death at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum	21
JM HAMMOND	
3 Honoring the Dead: photography and the Display of the Jewish Necropolis at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki	40
IRO KATSARIDOU	
4 “Death From the Skies” Photographs in Museums of the Aerial Bombing of Civilians During World War Two	62
SHEILA WATSON	
5 Saints, Martyrs and Heroes: “Sacred Displays” or the Iconography of Death in Cypriot Museums	84
YIANNIS TOUMAZIS	

PART II

The Spectacle of Death 111

- 6 *The War/Photography* Exhibition and the Display of Death 113
JEAN KEMPF

- 7 *Persons Unknown: lynching Photographs in the Museum* 130
RM WOLFF

- 8 *Human Skulls and Photographs of Dead Bandits: the Problems of Presenting a Nineteenth-Century Museum to Twenty-First-Century Audiences* 150
SILVANO MONTALDO AND ELEANOR CHIARI

- 9 *Our First Murder: exhibiting Evidence Outside the Police Archive* 164
STELLA PEKIARIDI

PART III

Empathy and Escaping Anonymity 177

- 10 *A Gallery of Martyrs – the Martyr in the Gallery: public Display and the Artistic Appropriation of Martyr Images in the Middle East* 179
VERENA STRAUB

- 11 *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone? Funerary Photography in the Gallery's Public/Private Space* 200
ROSANNE ALTSTATT

- 12 *Remediating Death at Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum* 216
RACHEL E. PERRY

- 13 *Photography and the Museum: visiting the Sight of Death* 238
PAM MEECHAM

PART IV

Museums as Agents of Change 255

- 14 *Double Exposure: absence and Evidence in Ken Gonzales-Day's Erased Lynching* 257
REILLEY BISHOP-STALL

- 15 *On May 1, 2011 (Alfredo Jaar, 2011)—Expanding the Frame of the Original Photograph* 277
MAFALDA DÁMASO

- 16 *Photography as a Form of Taxidermy: Zoe Leonard's Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman, Musée Orfila* 293
CHELSEA NICHOLS

- Index* 313

- Apel, Dora. *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Apel, Dora. "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming." In *Lynching Photographs*, 42–78. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951.
- Gonzales-Day, Ken. *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Gonzales-Day, Ken. "Conversation: Ken Gonzales-Day, Grant Kester, Elize Mazadiago, and Jenn Moreno." *Silent Witness: Violence and Representation: Pros** 1 (Spring 2011): 24–77.
- Green, Rayna. "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe." *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1998): 30–55.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1912*. New York: Pantheon, 1998.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. "Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America." *The Journal of American History* (December 2002): 990–991.
- Hill, Jason. "The Camera and the 'Physiognomic Auto-da-fe': Photography, History, and Race in Two Recent Works by Ken Gonzales-Day." *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (Spring 2009). <http://x-traonline.org/article/the-camera-and-the-physiognomic-auto-da-fe-photography-history-and-race-in-two-recent-works-by-ken-gonzales-day/>.
- Hunt, Lynn. "Forward." In *Human Rights in Camera*, ix–xii. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Maxwell, Louise P. "Review: Without Sanctuary." *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 1 (February 2002): 216–218.
- Nicole Jabour, Tania. "The Absence Becomes the Presence: Contextualizing the 'Compton Cookout' in 'Histories of Racial Violence.'" *Silent Witness: Violence and Representation. Special Issue of pros** (Spring 2011), 25–32.
- Pheifer, Michael J. *The Roots of Rough Justice*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Prosser, Jay. "Introduction." In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, edited by Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, 7–13. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
- Simon, Roger. "A Shock to Thought: Curatorial Judgment and the Public Exhibition of 'Difficult Knowledge.'" *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 432–449.
- Sliwinski, Sharon. *Human Rights in Camera*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Smith, Shawn Michelle. "The Evidence of Lynching Photographs." In *Lynching Photographs*, edited by Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, 10–42. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Warren, Louis S. *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Shows*. New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2005.
- Wood, Amy Louise. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

15 On *May 1, 2011* (Alfredo Jaar, 2011)—Expanding the Frame of the Original Photograph

Mafalda Dâmaso

I first saw the installation *May 1, 2011* by the Chilean artist, architect and filmmaker Alfredo Jaar when I visited the 2012 edition of the Paris Triennial. Having found the installation (which appropriates an official photograph of Barack Obama and his team as they watch the capture of Osama bin Laden) equally mesmerizing and perplexing, I decided to analyze it. This chapter is the result of this process.¹ I begin by discussing the official White House photograph that the installation appropriates, which is followed by an analysis of the installation. Finally, I conclude with a reflection of the status of contemporary art in a context of international violence. My broad goal is to understand the specific ways in which this art installation allows for an alternative viewing of an image that was widely circulated in the media.

It will become clear throughout the next pages that my analysis is strongly aligned with Judith Butler's work on viewership. In fact, my analysis of Jaar's installation sees it as providing a partial answer to the questions asked by Butler in "Torture and the Ethics of Photography":²

How do the norms that govern which lives will be regarded as human lives and which will not, enter into the *frames* through which discourse and visual representation proceed, and how do these in term delimit and orchestrate or foreclose ethical responsiveness to suffering [. . .]?³

This said, and crucially, Butler argues that

the photographs do not necessarily determine a particular response. They are shown again and again, and this history of their differing framing and reception structures, without determining, the kinds of public interpretations of torture that we have.⁴

The author expanded this argument in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*,⁵ where she argues that frames of interpretation manage collective responses to life in a context of continuous war, which then (as she describes in detail in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*)⁶

After president Obama's public speech in the East Room of the White House describing what had happened to the Al-Qaeda leader, "crowds gathered outside the White House, in Times Square and at the Ground Zero site, waving American flags, cheering, shouting, laughing and chanting, 'U.S.A., U.S.A.!'"¹¹ This response wasn't merely anecdotal. A content analysis study of the American media headlines in the day that followed Bin Laden's capture noted that the operation was celebrated as a success by conservatives and liberals alike. In fact,

newspapers in conservative-leaning regions presented the story as a patriotic 'killing' (an emphasis on authority and loyalty), whereas newspapers from liberal-leaning regions were more likely to present it in terms of justice restoration (an emphasis on fairness and reciprocity).¹²

To return to the photograph, its iconic status in recent Western political history is also evidenced by the fact that the moment which it represents features in several mass media television series, such as *Homeland* (2012), whose second season includes a direct reference to this image. The writer Richard Seymour has made an important argument in regard to this series, to *Zero Dark Thirty* (a 2012 film that narrates the missions that led to the capture of Bin Laden) and to *24* (an action series from 2001–2010 that follows a counterterrorist agent as he attempts to prevent terrorist attacks in American soil). Seymour affirms that these productions present contemporary acts of terrorism as apolitical (i.e., as explained exclusively by the evil of their perpetrators) and as justifying the disrespect for international law (such as the disregard of the sovereignty of other nation states by American forces) in order to protect Western civilization. These ideas are summarized in Seymour's statement that "[t]hese shows are political thrillers but the fundamental political questions are already settled by the big picture: a war to defend civilization against the barbarians. The enemy is always evil. There is never choice but to torture or to kill."¹³

The critical reception of *Zero Dark Thirty* (which was nominated in five categories at the 2013 Oscar awards) among left-wing critics was comparable. Naomi Klein argued, in a similar way to Seymour, that "in falsely justifying, in scene after scene, the torture of detainees in 'the global war on terror', *Zero Dark Thirty* is a gorgeously-shot, two-hour ad for keeping intelligence agents who committed crimes against Guantánamo prisoners out of jail."¹⁴ Moreover, Klein criticizes the supposed support to the film given by Obama's team, both in terms of access to previously classified information and to aircraft used in some of its action scenes. Other scholars have discussed *Zero Dark Thirty* as "a vehicle for American exceptionalism that allows audiences to ignore what other international communities have said about the legality of the raid on Abbottabad."¹⁵ I should reiterate, however, that my aim isn't to ascertain whether this film was indeed used for political purposes or not. Nor am I interested in proposing a psychoanalytic

explanation of the resonance of such stories with their audiences. Rather, my goal with this overview is to foreground the significance in the public sphere of the photograph appropriated by Jaar.

Let us now consider the photograph in detail, beginning with its use by Obama's communication team as an instrument of political rhetoric. It is hard not to notice the display of emotion that is particularly evident in the faces of Obama and Hilary Clinton, who clasps her hand to her mouth. Their expressions mirror the tension of the situation: the capture followed by the assassination of a man that, especially since the 9/11 attacks, has become the central figure toward whom the fear and hatred of the American citizens are directed. The expressions of these three individuals demonstrate their discomfort watching what one can imagine to be brutal images. But independently from how they feel about it, the photograph reveals that it is their duty to watch these images. That is because, as stated by classical theories of international relations, power and supremacy is a zero-sum game, i.e., there is a mandatory choice to make between, on the one hand, Bin Laden and those who he represents or, on the other hand, the western world. As Carl Schmitt claimed, "the specific political distinction [. . .] is that between friend and enemy."¹⁶ In fact, a year after the Neptune Spear operation, Obama spoke to one of the anchors of the American news channel NBC. Asked about the photograph, he responded to Brian Williams that it "was taken right as the helicopter was having some problems [. . .]. There's silence at this point inside the room." Clinton, who was also interviewed, affirmed that "it was an extraordinary experience and a great privilege to be part of."¹⁷

At this moment in the analysis, it is particularly important to consider Hillary Clinton's role regarding Bin Laden's capture. As Secretary of State, she had access to intelligence compiled by the CIA justifying the operation. However, after the photograph was published, rather than stressing her part in it, she repeatedly praised President Obama's risky decision. At the same time, Obama's public speech announcing Bin Laden's death was notoriously made in the first person. In her many interviews and public speeches following the event, Clinton also described what seemed to be a display of emotion in the photograph as, in fact, being an attempt to control a cough,¹⁸ although she later modified her account. Clinton's narrative change occurred after Obama's successful reelection campaign in 2012. In the book memoir *Hard Choices*,¹⁹ Clinton describes herself as having given unlimited support for the operation and as having been decisive to its success. Clinton's reversal of the argument about the raid is backed by comments by several journalists who also place her at the center of deliberations, having convinced President Obama into supporting the operation after he had canceled three of its earlier plans.²⁰ This suggests that Clinton's previous underplaying of her own importance was a form of indirect support toward Obama's election campaign.

This said, the demonstration of tension in Obama's face is also particularly interesting in itself. Let us consider the essay that the art historian W.J.T. Mitchell wrote following Obama's election against John McCain in 2008.²¹ Mitchell writes that when analyzing

Obama as a 'cultural icon' [. . .], it is important to recognize the extent to which his image is [. . .] a highly ambiguous blank slate on which popular fantasy could be projected. Obama noted this himself [. . .], insisting that his meteoric rise was 'not about me, but about you'.²²

Specifically, Mitchell notes that Obama

made himself a mirror for an international community of frustrated desire for peace, hope and change [. . .]. At the level of the visual image [. . .], he is a figure of both intimacy and monumentality [. . .], clearly capable of modulating his temperature to fit the moment.²³

Barack Obama's foundational political ambiguity—still evident when, for example, he identifies climate change action as crucial yet approves drilling in the Arctic²⁴ before finally reversing this decision²⁵—may have been a strength that led to his election in 2008 and reelection in 2012, but so was his ability to adapt his image according to the situation. In this view, even if one assumes that Obama's demonstration of affect in this image isn't calculated, the publicness of the photograph emerges as the result of a political choice rather than as a neutral dissemination of information regarding the inner workings of the White House.

Additionally, the public revelation of this image is directly related with the simultaneous act of preventive iconoclasm—i.e., the decision not to reveal any photographs of Bin Laden's capture in order to avoid his transformation into a martyr, which I discuss in the third part of this chapter. There were no images of the terrorist's corpse, but there was a photograph of the president and his close team in tension as they regard such images. As a result of this, and despite such iconoclasm, I believe that the viewers of the photograph do see Bin Laden's death—although that viewing is mediated by the politicians' gaze. Our viewing position is framed, and so is, consequently, our position in relation to the narrative of war and violence that it conveys. This analysis resonates both with the critical reception of *Zero Dark Thirty* that I mentioned earlier and with Judith Butler's argument regarding the importance of images of war and violence in shaping the viewers' inability to recognize the lives of specific groups of people.

This idea also joins the argument developed by the geographer David Campbell in the paper "Geopolitics and visuality: Sighting the Darfur conflict"²⁶ regarding visual culture as performative of geopolitics. His conclusion results from a study of the employment of documentary photography and photojournalism covering war in Darfur, Sudan, in late 2003 and early

2004, in international newspapers such as *The Guardian*. Campbell analyzes the ways in which photographs of children and women portrayed as passive and pitiable were chosen to communicate the Darfur conflict, decontextualizing its particularities, rather than images of combatants or casualties, which would "support a story of ethnic cleansing or genocidal violence specific to Darfur."²⁷ He writes: "When we are dealing with photographs we are concerned with the visual performance of the social field, whereby pictures bring the objects they purport to simply reflect into being."²⁸ Crucially, Campbell argues that "this visual enactment is itself geopolitical [. . .], that is, it both manifests and enables power relations through which spatial distances between self/other, civilized/barbaric, North/South, developed/underdeveloped are produced and maintained."²⁹

I believe that we can extend Campbell's argument and view this photograph as performative of not only geopolitics (in that it sustains the unequal power relations between the United States, Pakistan and Al-Qaeda) but also of political legitimacy. In this context, the role of the viewer remains as that of trusting the decisions of elected politicians rather than supervising their behavior. And, in fact, a New York Times/CBS News poll reiterates my analysis. Its results demonstrated that support for President Obama rose sharply after the death of Bin Laden among Democrats, Republicans and independents—specifically, 57% percent of the interviewees approved the president's overall performance, rising from 46% a month earlier.³⁰ Unfortunately, however, the image of Muslim Americans worsened significantly at the same time, as demonstrated by a 2011 study. Its authors concluded that

American public opinion about Muslim Americans significantly worsened in the wake of Bin Laden's killing and the media coverage that followed [. . .]. The net result was that Americans were more tolerant of restricting Muslim American civil liberties such as using religious profiling, the registration of Muslim American whereabouts, greater surveillance of mosques by law enforcement, and banning mosque construction.³¹

More recent audience reactions towards Muslim communities, such as the story of a Muslim teenager accused of taking a bomb to his school, when in fact, the device was a homemade digital clock,³² demonstrate that prejudice against Muslims is a recurrent social and political issue.

Two: May 1, 2011—The Installation

Having broadly analyzed the context of the reception of the original photograph, I will now turn my intention to the installation. In what ways does the viewing experience of this photograph change when it is mediated by the mixed media installation *May 1, 2011* (2011) by Alfredo Jaar? My concern here lies in the potential of the emergence of a critical engagement with this

photograph as a result of its artistic appropriation combined with its relocation to a museum setting. More specifically, in what ways does this installation interrupt what Butler refers to as the operating frames that make impossible the recognition of specific lives in a context of war—including those of terrorists?

Before analyzing the installation in detail, it is important to note that Jaar's work often engages with the relation between visibility, historical memory and conflict. *May 1, 2011* follows, for example, *Lament of the Images*, an installation by Jaar from 2002, in which a reflection on absent images is also present. The latter artwork, through which Jaar reflects upon the control of images by political and commercial organizations, is composed of three illuminated texts followed by a light wall. The texts mounted on plexiglas refer to Nelson Mandela's blindness as a consequence of his work in a limestone excavation site, to Bill Gates's purchase and burial of the world's largest collection of historical photographs and, finally, to the purchase by the United States Department of Defense of satellite photos of Afghanistan and of the regions surrounding the country during its invasion.

But although missing images are a regular interest of Jaar, the installation *May 1, 2011* focuses on a rare moment in which this absence was politically acknowledged. The installation is composed of four frames: on the right side, an LCD monitor shows the photograph of Barack Obama and his political and military team in the White House as they watched the broadcast of Osama bin Laden's compound raid and execution, all named in a framed schematic label on this monitor's right. This follows the traditional method used to identify individuals in an image: black lines define their silhouettes, and a system of numbers provides a key to the figures in the press image. On the left side, the installation comprises another LCD monitor, this time with a non-image shown in white, which is accompanied by a framed empty label on this monitor's left. This non-image represents the absent images of Bin Laden's capture and death.

I would now like to discuss to what extent Jaar's installation provides the conditions for the disruption of the viewer's original experience of the photograph. The different temporalities of the viewing experience in a context of media consumption or during a visit to a museum are of central importance in this context. This is alluded to from within the installation: the photograph and the white screen aren't printed on canvas but, instead, showcased on loop in two LCD screens—as a pause in an ongoing flow of images that allows the viewer to take a closer look. The position of the LCDs, slightly angled towards each other and hence creating a viewing platform, reinforces this interpretation in that it hints at the temporality of the media: usually fast and continuous but, in this case, slowed down for inspection by the viewer. This opposition is further reinforced by the addition of the framed labels, which resemble gallery wall texts and, therefore, stress the specific context that has made this alternative viewing possible. The blank screen might hence come to symbolize not only the moment of

Bin Laden's capture but also the public's inability to witness it, which interrogates the documentary dimension of the original photograph.

Jaar's decision to combine the official photograph with an absent image, thus interrupting the habitual viewing experience of the media consumer, also reminds the latter that she is a witness, both in the case of the original photograph and of the installation. Considering ongoing discussions in media witnessing (an emerging field which theorizes the relationship between contemporary media and practices of witnessing, focusing on the ongoing reporting of the experiences and realities of distant others to mass audiences) will allow me to explain this idea. As the communication scholars Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes stress in "Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media,"³³ the experience of media witnessing is modulated after the experience of the court. In this model, "the 'telling presence' of the witness [. . .] confers responsibilities on the audience to judge and ultimately implement that judgement."³⁴

Following this analysis, the inclusion of an LCD representing the absent images emerges as adding a conflicting testimony that opposes the narration provided by the original photograph. Side by side, the absent image and the photograph of Obama and his political and military team illustrate a struggle between different narratives competing for the attention and the agreement of the viewer regarding the legitimacy of the capture and assassination of Bin Laden outside international courts. And this is indeed the conclusion that Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski achieve when applying Bourdieu's methodology to the field of witnessing in "Witnessing as a Field," which leads to its interpretation as a site "subject to contest and struggle, and hence as a genuine political arena."³⁵

It is helpful at this moment to return to *Frames of War*, a philosophical response to the processes of image production and dissemination in a context of perpetual war. Butler's intention, as I mentioned earlier, is to identify the possibilities for recognizing the live of others as precarious. In light of this analysis, what lies at the center of Jaar's installation is precisely the suspension of the prevailing view that terrorists (Bin Laden being arguably the utmost example thereof) shouldn't be treated according to the principles of international law. Particularly, in "Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag,"³⁶ which I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Butler discusses the problem of embedded reporting (a practice initiated in the 2003 invasion of Iraq), in which journalists agreed to report from positions previously validated by military and governmental authorities. Unsurprisingly, this form of journalism has been criticized for constraining journalists to only reflect the viewpoint of the soldiers with whom they travel. Butler then discusses the Abu Ghraib images, which disturb this circulation of officially validated imagery, in a close engagement with Susan Sontag's response to the former. Replying to Sontag's frustration as a viewer of images that, she thought, could shock but not explain what they revealed, Butler argues that the photograph "is not merely a visual

image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly.³⁷ It could be argued that this is always the case: images can shock, but they can rarely explain. However, what Butler is stressing here is the role of images in sustaining particular (ethical and legal) understandings of the world. It is precisely this framing, present within the original photograph (and, particularly, the identification of the gaze of the viewer with that of Obama and his team) that the installation foregrounds and opposes. As such, the position of the viewer of the installation echoes the experience of Susan Sontag as described by Butler:

What is most interesting to me about the increasing outrage and exasperation she expressed [. . .] is that it continues to be directed against the photograph not only for making her feel outrage, but for failing to show her how to transform that affect into effective political action. [. . .] It is a museum piece by Jeff Wall that allows her to formulate this problem of responding to the pain of others, and so [. . .] a certain consolidation of the museum world as the one within she is most likely to find room for reflection and deliberation.³⁸

Although my focus in this chapter hasn't been on the transformation of affect into political action, my analysis of Jaar's work is nonetheless analogous to Butler's analysis of Sontag's response to Wall. This reading of *May 1, 2011* stresses the potential for contemporary artworks to nurture a change away from either a passive or frustrated mode of engagement with a photograph and toward a more constructive position: the denaturalization and subsequent politicization of an image. To reiterate my general argument, the installation can thus be seen as potentially expanding the narrative regarding the result of operation Neptune Spear—which appears to the viewer as both ethically and legally questionable.

In a similar manner, the viewer is also potentially led to question the use of a vocabulary of exception by the Obama administration (i.e., as a crisis that required unusual political decisions) to justify Bin Laden's capture. In fact, I believe that it would be a mistake to interpret this official discourse as evidence of the existence of a state of exception, defined by Giorgio Agamben's terminology as "a suspension of the whole juridical order itself."³⁹ Instead, I would like to align my analysis with the international relations scholar Kyle Grayson, who argues in "Six Theses on Targeted Killing"⁴⁰ that "the emergence of targeted killing is productive of broader power relations."⁴¹ In this view, Obama's iconoclastic act doesn't point to an unquestionable need for the suspension of the juridical. Rather, Bin Laden's targeted assassination (a premeditated assassination employed by a state outside the battlefield to eliminate individuals beyond its custody) was a "form of lawfare": a form of warfare involving the abuse of existing laws rather than an action taking place outside of the legal framework.

This analysis opposes the Agambian interpretation that sees the state of exception as taking place outside the law. This is because targeted killing is "sustained through legal interpretations that harness the inherent ambiguities regarding principles like imminence, proportionality [. . .] and last resort in the contemporary security environment."⁴² Moreover, and in what brings us back to the idea that images are performative, the installation also makes evident another of Grayson's thesis, according to which targeted killing is a visual practice. But while Grayson, influenced by the work of the media studies scholar Allen Feldman, focuses on the visual techniques through which targets are identified, surveilled and controlled by the combined work of remotely piloted air systems and their human operators, I would like to propose a different understanding of the idea of targeted killing as a visual practice. That is, Jaar's installation potentially reveals the ways in which even traditional mediums such as photography contribute to promoting official narratives regarding war—due to the absence of either non-embedded journalists or of alternative images (such as leaked ones), as is the case. Despite a difference in the technologies that Feldman and I discuss, my conclusion is nonetheless compatible with his definition of a scopic regime, i.e., a set of modalities "that proscribe or render untenable other modes and objects of perception."⁴³ This said, future research is needed to evaluate to what extent this conclusion also applies to other contemporary artworks that appropriate political imagery.

Three: Art in a Time of War

The raid of Bin Laden's compound and his subsequent death were widely criticized by international law experts and human rights groups worldwide. But never had the Obama administration been as condemned as after the disclosures regarding Obama's intensification of Bush's surveillance programs, which resulted from the whistleblowing of Edward Snowden, a former CIA specialist, in June 2013. In what is analogous to Bin Laden's capture, the legality of use of drones in a systematic program of targeted killings and of citizens' surveillance worldwide are guaranteed by secret courts and closed-doors congressional boards that the American citizens cannot see, access or control. What is the position of the contemporary viewer, then, regarding such simultaneous but opposing narratives: Obama's forms of political rhetoric and Edward Snowden's testimony, to name a few?

Jaar's installation reiterates that our condition isn't one of either complicity or potential opposition but, rather, of the entanglement of both. We are subjects—complicit with the choices of our political representatives, with whose gaze we are often led to identify and to whose surveillance programs we contribute freely with information regarding our online behavior. But we are also citizens—aware of the existence of frames through which our engagement with war is mediated, even if not always conscious of their impact on our ways of understanding the world.

This is precisely the reason why it is crucial, as Butler suggests, to guarantee that there are occasions in which we might “expand our existing frameworks or allow them to be interrupted by new vocabularies.”⁴⁴ And that is exactly what I believe that Jaar’s installation achieves: an interruption of the mode of viewership that is demanded by the original photograph and, through it, an expansion of the original frame of the photograph. The combination of the official photograph with the absent images of Bin Laden’s death creates the conditions for a spectatorship that is aware of its ongoing conflation with the gaze of the American president, which opens the possibility of a questioning of the moral and legal bases of the targeted killing of the Al-Qaeda leader.

I would like to conclude by discussing the nature of appropriation in *May 1, 2011*, and the ways in which it is generative of such an alternative viewing position. The reading of the work of Jacques Rancière on the political, developed in “Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life”⁴⁵ by the media studies scholar Thomas Keenan, may help us to understand this. Drawing on Rancière, who affirms that “in order to enter into political exchange, it becomes necessary to invent the scene upon which spoken words may be audible, in which objects may be visible, and individuals themselves may be recognized,”⁴⁶ Keenan affirms that “there could be no politics without irony, without copying, without enigma, and without drift.”⁴⁷

Following this idea, it becomes evident that the installation is only able to potentially contribute to the emergence of a new form of viewing because said artwork is produced and displayed in societies in which copying and drift, to use Keenan’s terms, are institutionally celebrated.⁴⁸ In this view, the political dimension of the installation resides precisely on Jaar’s disturbance of the conflation of the gaze of the photograph’s viewer with that of Obama. Showing Bin Laden not only as a terrorist but also, and despite his heinous, incomprehensible, indefensible crimes, as a human being that has the right to be judged by an international court opens up the possibility of disagreement regarding the ethical and legal bases of his capture. Contemporary art and art institutions, in this view, are equally important as the media to observe and evaluate official political discourses, hence guaranteeing their accountability.

This idea is especially important in light of the argument made by Boris Groys in “Art at War,” a chapter of *Art/Power*.⁴⁹ The art historian writes that both traditional warriors (whom I equate here to the contemporary sovereign leader responding militarily to acts of terrorism) and terrorists use images as part of their war strategies to an extent that makes them iconophiles. This claim is prescient of the recent destruction by ISIL of ancient artifacts in Syria, which the militants filmed for the world to see, but it also resonates with the dissemination of the *May 1, 2011* photograph. It is worth quoting Groys at length in this regard in order to understand why he locates the relationship toward images as something that

often connects the traditional warrior and the contemporary terrorist. The former, he says,

was interested in the images that would be able to glorify him, to present him in a favorable, positive, attractive way. [. . .] But the pictorial strategy of the contemporary warrior is a strategy of shock and awe [. . .]. Contemporary politics represents itself as sublime again—that is, as ugly, repelling, unbearable, terrifying. And even more: all the political forces of the contemporary world are involved in the increasing production of the political sublime—by competing for the strongest, most terrifying image.⁵⁰

In this context, what is the role of the contemporary artist? A form of criticism of this politics of representation, Groys argues—one, however, that should be distinguished from moral assessments. Jaar’s installation achieves this balance: as I argued earlier, it suspends the association of the viewer’s gaze with that of Obama, and hence questions the seeming naturalness of Obama’s decision. However, the installation does so without offering a conclusive analysis of its own. Rather, it asks a question: was there an alternative? By stressing the unstable nature of the political (rather than, say, by directly confronting the moral and legal bases of the operation), Jaar’s installation is able to fulfil the two conditions that Groys later identifies as fundamental if contemporary art is to play a role in a time of war.

The goal of contemporary criticism of representation should be a two-fold one. First, [artistic] criticism should be directed against all kinds of censorship and suppression of images that would prevent us from being confronted with the reality of war and terror. [. . .] But at the same time we are in need of criticism that analyzes the use of [. . .] images of violence as the new icons of the political sublime.⁵¹

Crucially, this stance leads us to view both contemporary artists and art institutions as having the responsibility to contribute to expanding ongoing conversations regarding the values that organize our societies. As I hope to have demonstrated, this is precisely what is accomplished by Jaar’s equally counter-iconoclastic and counter-iconophile installation.

Notes

- 1 I presented a first version of this chapter at the 2013 International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. I am grateful to the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology for financial support for the work on my doctoral thesis and, indirectly, on this chapter.
- 2 Judith Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951–966, later transformed into one of the chapters of Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009).
- 3 *Ibid.*, 956 (original emphasis).

- 4 Ibid., 956 (original emphasis).
- 5 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2009).
- 6 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004).
- 7 Ibid., *Frames of War*, 71.
- 8 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," 959.
- 9 Peter Baker, Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti, "Bin Laden Is Dead, Obama Says," *New York Times*, May 1, 2011.
- 10 Mark Owen, *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission They Killed Osama Bin Laden* (London: Penguin, 2012).
- 11 Baker, Cooper and Mazzetti, "Bin Laden Is Dead."
- 12 Nicholas Bowmana, Robert Joel Lewis and Ron Tamborini, "The Morality of May 2, 2011: A Content Analysis of U.S. Headlines Regarding the Death of Osama Bin Laden," *Mass Communication and Society* 17, no. 5 (2014): 639–664.
- 13 Richard Seymour, "Review of 24, Zero Dark Thirty and Homeland," *Youtube* video, January 22, 2015.
- 14 Naomi Klein, "A Letter to Kathryn Bigelow on Zero Dark Thirty's Apology for Torture," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2013.
- 15 Marouf Hasian, "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of Zero Dark Thirty," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31, no. 5 (2014): 464.
- 16 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, translated by George Schwab (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 17 *NBC News*, "President Obama Describes Obama in Laden Raid One Year Later," April 29, 2012.
- 18 Joe Coscarelli, "Hillary Clinton Flip-Flopping on Bin Laden Raid 'Cough'," *NY Magazine*, June 20, 2014.
- 19 Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
- 20 Andy Soltis, "Hil Swayed O to Kill Osama," August 21, 2012.
- 21 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Obama as Icon," *Journal of Visual Culture* 8, no. 2 (2009): 125–129.
- 22 Ibid., 126.
- 23 Ibid., 127.
- 24 Natasha Geiling, "Obama Explains Why He Approved Arctic Drilling in the Face of Climate Concerns," *Think Progress*, May 28, 2015.
- 25 Suzanne Goldenberg, "Obama Administration Blocks New Oil Drilling in the Arctic," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2015.
- 26 David Campbell, "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict," *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 357–382.
- 27 Ibid., 372.
- 28 Ibid., 379–380.
- 29 Ibid., 380.
- 30 James Dao and Dalia Sussman, "For Obama, Big Rise in Poll Numbers after Bin Laden Raid," *NY Times*, May 4, 2011.
- 31 Erik Nisbet, Michelle Ortiz, Yasmin Miller and Andrew Smith, "The 'Bin Laden' Effect: How American Public Opinion about Muslim Americans Shifted in the Wake of Bin Laden's Death," July 20, 2011: 24.
- 32 Ashley Fantz, Steve Almasy and AnneClaire Stapleton, "Muslim Teen Ahmed Mohamed Creates Clock, Shows Teachers, Gets Arrested," *CNN*, September 16, 2015.
- 33 Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes, "Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media," in *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass*

- Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 112–132.
- 34 Ibid., 113.
- 35 Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski, "Witnessing as a Field," in *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135.
- 36 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography."
- 37 Ibid., 952.
- 38 Ibid., 965–966.
- 39 Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler, "Eichmann, Law and Justice 1/7," *YouTube* video. September 9, 2009.
- 40 Kyle Grayson, "Six Theses on Targeted Killing," *Politics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 120–128.
- 41 Ibid., 121.
- 42 Ibid., 122.
- 43 Allen Feldman, "Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror," *Public Culture* 10, no. 1 (1997): 30 quoted in Ibid., 123.
- 44 Butler, *Frames of War*, 162.
- 45 Thomas Keenan, "Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life," *Grey Room* 21 (2005): 94–111.
- 46 Jacques Rancière and Davide Panagia, "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Diacritics* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 116 quoted in Ibid., 107.
- 47 Ibid., 107–108.
- 48 I discuss Keenan's argument in more detail in "Gerhard Richter's *September* (2005)—the Politics of Ambivalence," in *Terror in Global Narrative: The Aesthetics and Representation of 9/11 in the Age of Late-Late Capitalism*, edited by George Fragopoulos and Liliana M. Naydan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
- 49 Boris Groys, "Art at War," in *Art/Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 121–130.
- 50 Ibid., 122–123.
- 51 Ibid., 125.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Agamben, Giorgio and Judith Butler. "Eichmann, Law and Justice 1/7." *YouTube* video. September 9, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySu0HYfx2VY>.
- Ashuri, Tamar and Amit Pinchevski. "Witnessing as a Field." In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 133–157. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Baker, Peter, Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti. "Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says." *New York Times*, May 1, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
- Blondheim, Menahem and Tamar Liebes. "Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media." In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 112–132. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Bowmana, Nicholas, Robert Joel Lewis and Ron Tamborini. "The Morality of May 2, 2011: A Content Analysis of U.S. Headlines Regarding the Death of Osama Bin Laden." *Mass Communication and Society* 17, no. 5 (2014): 639–664. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2013.822518.

- Butler, Judith. "Torture and the Ethics of Photography." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951–966. doi: 10.1068/d2506jb.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso, 2009.
- Campbell, David. "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict." *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 357–382. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.11.005.
- Clinton, Hillary. *Hard Choices*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Coscarelli, Joe. "Hillary Clinton Flip-Flopping on Bin Laden Raid 'Cough'." *NY Magazine*, June 20, 2014. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/06/hillary-clinton-bin-laden-raid-cough-or-gasp.html>.
- Dao, James and Dalia Sussman. "For Obama, Big Rise in Poll Numbers after Bin Laden Raid." *NY Times*, May 4, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/us/politics/05poll.html>.
- Fantz, Ashley, Steve Almasy and Anne Claire Stapleton. "Muslim Teen Ahmed Mohamed Creates Clock, Shows Teachers, Gets Arrested." CNN, September 16, 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/>.
- Geiling, Natasha. "Obama Explains Why He Approved Arctic Drilling in the Face of Climate Concerns." *Think Progress*, May 28, 2015. <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2015/05/28/3663715/obama-twitter-chat-arctic-drilling/>.
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. "Obama Administration Blocks New Oil Drilling in the Arctic." *The Guardian*, October 16, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/obama-blocks-new-arctic-oil-drilling-cancels-leases>.
- Grayson, Kyle. "Six Theses on Targeted Killing." *Politics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 120–128. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9256.2012.01434.x.
- Groys, Boris. "Art at War." In *Art/Power*, 121–130. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.
- Hasian, Marouf. "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of 'Zero Dark Thirty.'" *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31, no. 5 (2014): 464–478. doi: 10.1080/15295036.2014.906745.
- Keenan, Thomas. "Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life." *Grey Room* 21 (2005): 94–111.
- Klein, Naomi. "A Letter to Kathryn Bigelow on Zero Dark Thirty's Apology for Torture." *The Guardian*, January 4, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/04/letter-kathryn-bigelow-zero-dark-thirty>.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "Obama as Icon." *Journal of Visual Culture* 8, no. 2 (2009): 125–129. doi:10.1177/14704129090080020201.
- NBC News. "President Obama Describes Obama in Laden Raid One Year Later." April 29, 2012. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/29/obama-clinton_talk_about_picture_in_situation_room_during_bin_laden_raid.html.
- Nisbet, Erik, Michelle Ortiz, Yasamin Miller and Andrew Smith. "The 'Bin Laden' Effect: How American Public Opinion about Muslim Americans Shifted in the Wake of Bin Laden's Death." Ohio State University. *Report*. July 20, 2011. http://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/research_publications/binladen_report.pdf.
- Owen, Mark. *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission They Killed Osama bin Laden*. London: Penguin, 2012.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Seymour, Richard. "Review of 24, Zero Dark Thirty and Homeland." *Youtube* video. January 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6U1jBxzYnBg>.
- Soltis, Andy. "Hill Swayed O to Kill Osama." *August 21, 2012*. <http://nypost.com/2012/08/21/hill-swayed-o-to-kill-osama/>.

16 Photography as a Form of Taxidermy

Zoe Leonard's *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*, Musée Orfila

Chelsea Nichols

In an obscure archive of the Musée d'Anatomie Delmas-Orfila-Rouvière (henceforth Musée Orfila) at Paris Descartes University, the taxidermied bust of a bearded woman sits in a bell jar. Her femininity is signaled by the earrings and lace collar she wears, which contrasts the masculinity of her features and the thick beard that covers her chin. Her skin is weathered and pale, but has been well preserved by an unknown method of mummification.

The bearded woman's display, however, has been designed to de-emphasize the presentation of a corpse. Her eyelids are positioned open, fitted with glassy artificial eyeballs that give her an eerie animate expression. Beneath the lace collar, her shoulders are modestly covered in a dark fabric, suggesting that the viewer is looking at a clothed woman and not a naked body. These humanizing gestures seem at odds with her display within the anatomical museum, where specimens are normally meant to remain impersonal and objective. In this setting, the curiosity of the bearded woman is located not only in her physical anomaly, but also in the compelling discordance of her display.

In 1991, the bearded woman in the bell jar caught the eye of artist Zoe Leonard, who created a striking series of photographs entitled *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)*. These five black and white portraits depict the woman from different angles, giving her a dignified yet haunting presence. All printed in different sizes, the photographs could almost be proofs for an official portrait, were it not for the conspicuous presence of glass that separates the bearded woman from the viewer.

Broadly speaking, Leonard's work fits into a larger movement of contemporary artists engaged with the politics of representation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, *Preserved Head* sits alongside the work of artists like Christine Borland, Joel-Peter Witkin, the Quay Brothers and Rosamond Purcell, who have all drawn inspiration from historical practices of collecting and displaying body parts in medical museums. In recent years, curators like James Putnam and Kynaston McShine have discussed these artists' work as part of their investigations into the relationship between museum politics and contemporary art.¹ Meanwhile, medical historians