

PRESS RELEASE

MyWar – Identity and Appropriation under War Condition

12 March - 30 May 2010

Galleries 1, 2, Media Lounge and public spaces

Private View: 11 March



Milica Tomic *One Day* (2009)

In a period of global unrest, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) presents a timely exhibition. *MyWar* explores conflict in a digitally networked world through the work of 12 international artists. Their work investigates the realities and myths of war at a time when the boundaries between the public and the private are being steadily eroded.

The exhibition follows two lines of enquiry. In the first, the artists adopt a radically personal approach to war. In his video work *Episode I* (2004), Dutch artist Renzo Martens reflects on the narcissism of news media and the role of the camera in places of political unrest. Travelling to war zones, the artist turns the camera onto himself and asks the war's victims, not what is happening to them, but what they think of him. In contrast, video pieces by Belgian film-maker Sarah Vanagt and Turner Prize nominated artist Phil Collins highlight the activities of young people in places of conflict, whether its mimicking the horrors of adult life in innocent role-play games (*Begin Began Begun*, 2003), or dancing along to pop music in a Palestinian disco marathon (*They Shoot Horses*, 2004).

Other works in the first strand communicate a longing for personal connection and empathy in a networked world. Young people are at the heart of Harrell Fletcher's work, *Humans at War*. The American multi-disciplinary artist directs a real life social networking exercise that asks children to find people with war memories and confront war as a lived experience, not a televised media event.

In her intervention *One Day* (2009), Serbian artist Milica Tomic documents her own re-enactments of scenes from Belgrade's 1940s partisan war and asks whether the appropriation of such events and memories is possible.

The complexity of Western empathy is explored in S.W.A.M.P's *Improvised Empathetic Device* (2005) – a piece of equipment that inflicts pain on its wearer with every soldier's death. Meanwhile, the *Huggable Atomic Mushroom Cloud* (2004) by British design duo Dunne and Raby offers a playfully ironic plush object for therapeutic comfort and solace, for those who empathise too much.

In the second thread of the exhibition, artists explore the ways web technologies have infiltrated global wars. Joseph DeLappe's artistic intervention *dead-in-iraq* (2006-ongoing) adds the names of real war casualties to virtual online recruiting game *America's Army* to counteract the anonymity of a mediated war and memorialise its victims. Thomson & Craighead's *A Short Film About War* (2009) gathers first person war images and stories from blogs to construct a new, global narrative of a ubiquitous war, distributed across the Internet, without boundaries. Oliver Laric exposes the reality of mediated truth by commissioning an airbrush artist for *Versions* (2010) – a collection of six images that further appropriate an official image released by the Iranian government that was revealed to be Photoshopped, and widely ridiculed in an Internet meme.

Knowbotic Research's new work *Hawara_Checkpoint.exe* (2010) offers a fictional ending to the moving news story of a would-be suicide bomber, where the young Palestinian boy escapes from deadlock by turning into a Transformer-like robot. Finally, Harun Farocki's video piece *Immersion* (2009) explores the idea of computer-aided trauma therapy for veterans.

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Notes to editors

An exhibition by FACT, Liverpool and Edith Russ Site for Media Art, Oldenburg, in cooperation with ISEA2010 RUHR. Curated by Andreas Broeckmann, Heather Corcoran and Sabine Himmelsbach.

Artist list

Renzo Martens (Netherlands), Sarah Vanagt (Belgium), Phil Collins (UK), Harrell Fletcher (US), Milica Tomic (Serbia), S.W.A.M.P (US), Dunne & Raby (UK), Joseph DeLappe (US), Thomson & Craighead (UK), Oliver Laric (Turkey), Knowbotic Research (Germany/Switzerland), Harun Farocki (Germany)

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