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Picturing Peace

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*To me Art's subject is the human clay,
And landscape but a background to a torso;
All Cézanne's apples I would give away
For one small Goya or a Daumier.*

W.H. Auden *Letters from Iceland*, 1937.¹

It appears that British poet W.H. Auden was no fan of art for art's sake, but instead admired those artists who chose to remain engaged with human existence as they saw and experienced it. Printmaking today would offer Auden many more names to add to his list, but it is still easy to see why he respected the work of Goya. Goya's work is an astute and unflinching study of the complexities of human relationships and the potential for physical and psychological damage they entail; the spare tonal and linear qualities of his small black and white etchings highlight the timeless quality of his observations. Goya's *Disasters of War* (1810-13), for example, remains one of Western art's most moving indictments of the awful individual instances of human suffering that collectively make up the experience of war. Contemporary printmakers engaged in the art of protest could in turn be inspired and despairing when studying Goya's *Disasters*: inspired by his command of image making, and despairing in that not much appears to have changed in terms of the ongoing realities of the content of his work. Peace is still hard to come by.



Figure 1. Michael Reed, *Feeling Blue and Seeing Red* (1995-97), Silkscreen on paper, 42 x 120 cms, Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu; gifted to the gallery by Michael Reed, 2000, 2000/217. Reproduced with permission of the artist and Christchurch Art Gallery.

As if engaged in silent dialogue with Goya, New Zealand artist Michael Reed's screen-printed diptych, *Feeling Blue and Seeing Red* (1995-97, see figure 1) revisits much of the anguish expressed in the Spaniard's work. *Feeling Blue and Seeing Red* is a complex, multi-layered self portrait of a socially engaged artist lamenting the human cost of war; made all the more poignant by the fact that some fifteen years after its production, many of the fifty six armed conflicts cited in the left hand panel of the print have not yet ended. Like Goya's chronicle of the Franco-Spanish war, *Feeling Blue and Seeing Red* could therefore serve as evidence that art cannot make the world a more peaceful place. Yet it also affirms the conviction held by generations of socially engaged artists – in particular those printmakers who use the immediacy and relative accessibility of their work to protest against ignorance, injustice and violence – that in the face of ongoing human suffering, art for art's sake alone will not do.² Indeed, there is no shortage of relevant subject matter for socially engaged printmakers and, collectively, the work of Reed and fellow artists Thomas Kilpper, Daniel Heyman, Ehren Tool and Diane Victor may appear to confirm Walter Benjamin's compelling definition of late modern history as a "chronic state of emergency."³ Individually, they also cite specific examples of the kind of human behaviour which undermines peace everywhere. Even in a seemingly quiet backwater like New Zealand attention should be paid to the militarisation of everyday public and private life and the evolving social consensus regarding the devaluation of certain forms of human existence. Not many of us will be immune to or unfamiliar with "reversed feelings of victimisation, as dominant social groups and social classes demand strong policing to put despised subordinate or marginal groups in their proper place."⁴ Not surprisingly, much of the work discussed in this article examines the systematic subordination, dehumanisation and destruction of the 'Other.'⁵

In this context, this paper adopts the position of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who in *Modernity and the Holocaust* suggested that the Holocaust (as an act of the collective dehumanisation of various instances of the 'Other') was not an isolated event to be contemplated like a picture on the wall. Instead, Bauman argues, the Holocaust should be thought of as a window, and

looking through that window, one can catch a rare glimpse of many things otherwise invisible. And the things one can see are of the utmost importance not just for the perpetrators, victims and witnesses of the crime, but for all of those who are alive today and hope to be alive tomorrow.⁶

Alongside sociologists like Bauman, socially engaged artists, too, have the ability to render visible what we may otherwise overlook, especially regarding the violence which continues to blight the lives of peoples around the world. While the catastrophe that was the Holocaust defies all attempts at a definitive visual representation, artists can respond to Bauman's suggestion that, as an historical event, the Holocaust contains an important message "about the way we live today – about the quality of the institutions on which we rely for safety, about the validity of the criteria with which we measure the propriety of our own conduct and of the patterns of interaction we accept and consider normal."⁷ This is a task made infinitely more challenging, but also all the more urgent, by the assertion that the Holocaust destroyed all previously accepted norms of appropriate human conduct.⁸ The tradition of socially engaged art serves as a reminder that any binding notions of such norms never existed. The Holocaust was not the first or last instance of the systematic and violent abuse of human rights, and the implementation of universally accepted standards of appropriate human conduct remains as elusive as ever.

Governments around the world preside over a collective of institutions designed to guide human interactions at all levels of society and to safeguard the rights of all citizens, but their repeated failings (especially when these occur in the modern 'civilised' nations) remind us that some of the lessons we should have learned from the Holocaust are being ignored. Time and again "all those

intricate networks of checks and balances, barriers and hurdles which the civilizing process has erected and which, as we hope and trust, would defend us from violence and constrain all our ambitions and unscrupulous powers, have been proven ineffective.”⁹ A case in point is the state-initiated persecution of private individuals in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), as documented by the extensive files compiled by the GDR’s *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (better known as Stasi) from 1950 to its dissolution in October 1990. As the ‘Shield and the Sword’ of the ruling SED party, the Stasi used a myriad of surveillance and interrogation techniques to manipulate the trajectory of individual lives or to destroy them altogether.¹⁰ For the purposes of the Stasi, the ‘Other’ was defined as any potential enemy of the state, and the abstract concept of the ‘state’ and its necessary protection was used to cloak the actions of a ruling political class defending its hold on power. German artist Thomas Kilpper’s exhibition *State of Control* (2009) recalls this particular instance of state sponsored subordination of the ‘Other’ whilst also connecting it with previous histories. As he transformed part of the abandoned Stasi headquarters in Berlin-Lichtenberg into a print-based installation, Kilpper touched on different aspects of surveillance and repression in Germany, in a complex narrative reaching all the way back to the persecution and subsequent assassination of Rosa Luxemburg in the early twentieth century.¹¹

Supported by a team of assistants Kilpper carved into 800sqm of PVC floor coverings. Prints were taken of individual sections and displayed in a mostly informal manner, either free floating or on the internal support structures of the area. A giant banner encompassing all of the imagery was hung from the façade of the building. Although the work was not solely based on the human figure, the many portraits included in the installation served to both summon the perpetrators of state persecution and to commemorate their victims. The installation also allowed the audience quite literally a rare view of many things previously hidden, that is to say a first-hand encounter with a crucial site of yet another contested chapter in German history. At the same time, Kilpper’s own responses to the building encouraged the public to become more critical viewers of the location and the conflicted memories it encapsulates. Furthermore, *State of Control* demonstrates that socially engaged art forms part of an “embedded system of interdependent activities, connected to the practices of social actors in other spheres,” such as journalism or film-making.¹² The numerous publications documenting the activities of the Stasi, including Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck’s film *The Lives of Others* (2006) confirm this observation, as do the artistic practices that arise from social and political movements agitating for peace and social justice elsewhere in the world.¹³

While Kilpper’s *State of Control* focused on specific instances of the legitimized abuse of power, Michael Reed has turned his attention to globally interlocking institutions whose interests continue to threaten the safety of individuals everywhere. For some years now his theme has been the international arms trade and the political entities shoring up the interests of this particular aspect of the global economic network. Not surprisingly, he can draw on near inexhaustible source material. Entire economies thrive on the production and sale of weapons and images of armed violence dominate our newscasts, TV, cinema and computer screens. To deal effectively with the complex social, economic and political mechanisms which fuel armed violence everywhere, Reed relies on a combination of word and image within an increasingly eclectic range of formats and print making techniques. A compelling example of his approach is *Binding Statements* (1999, see figure 2), an installation of dyed and screen-printed, stretched cotton-crepe bandages, which reveal the slogans and practices used by international arms manufacturers in their pursuit of profit at any price.

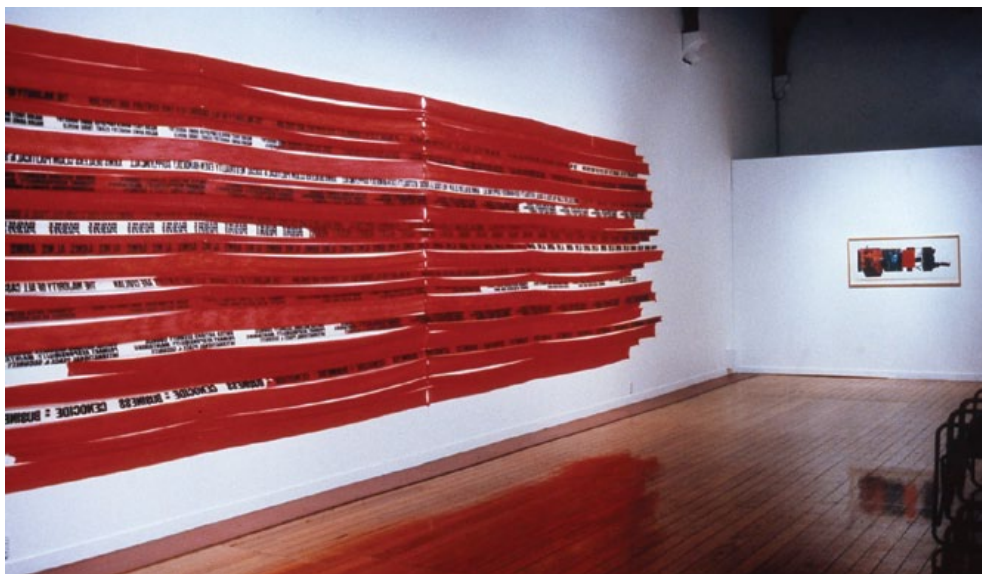


Figure 2. Michael Reed, *Binding Statements* (1999). Cotton crepe bandages, some dyed red, with black silkscreen printing, approx. 180 x 920 cms, Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, purchased 2000, 2000/209.1-43. Photographer: Michael Reed. Reproduced with permission of the artist and the Christchurch Art Gallery.



Figure 3. Michael Reed, *Good Grunt* (2007). PVC, silkscreen on paper and cotton crepe bandage, variable dimensions. Collection of the artist. Reproduced with permission.

The work was inspired by the fact that the largest arms producers, the United States, Russia, Germany, France and the United Kingdom are all permanent members of the UN Security Council, which, given the harm their weapons cause in third-world countries, calls into question the integrity of the council and the UN itself. Bandages also feature in Reed's more recent work. In 2007, he submitted *Good Grunt* (see figure 3), a mixed media piece, to the 14th Tallinn Print Triennial. The work is perhaps best described as a medal of dishonour and depicts masked soldiers brandishing machine guns against backdrops based on a nursery wallpaper and a child's drawing respectively. The inscription reads 'From the cradle to the grave' on one side and 'In memory of childhood' on the other. The already blunt and uncompromising iconography is complemented by the even more sinister text printed on the bandage attached to it. Here Reed quotes a drill chant used in the preparation of US Navy personnel for the invasion of Iraq:

Bomb the village, kill the people, throw some napalm in the square.
 Do it on a Sunday morning, kill them on their way to prayer.
 Ring the bell inside the schoolhouse, watch those kiddies gather round.
 Lock and load with your 240, mow them little motherfuckers down!¹⁴

Reed does not present us with an emblem of bravery, of courage under fire, or human compassion in times of conflict. Instead we are confronted with the kind of rhetoric designed to remove an individual's capacity for the kind of moral judgments that should make it impossible for a heavily armed soldier to kill any defenseless civilian, let alone children. The process of dehumanisation is here shown to work both ways. Soldiers are encouraged to suppress the essential human qualities of compassion and respect for human life, while their potential victims are reduced to worthless, nameless entities.

Reed's line of enquiry, as expressed in *Good Grunt*, links his work to that of his frequent collaborator, Daniel Heyman. Recent work by Heyman, an American artist living and working in Philadelphia, complements Reed's in that it engages with the the American-led invasion of Iraq. Of particular concern to Heyman are those former Iraqi detainees of Abu Ghraib, who were not only wrongfully imprisoned, but also subjected to unspeakable episodes of torture and humiliation at the hands of their American captors. In 2006, human rights lawyer Susan Burke invited Heyman to witness the first of many interviews with the victims of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and since that time Heyman has repeatedly travelled to Amman and Istanbul to attend further such meetings.¹⁵ The experience has resulted in a series of informal yet highly moving portraits of his Iraqi sitters. An early example of this is the drypoint *Disco Mosul* (2006, see figure 4), which depicts the seated figure of a multiple amputee seemingly entangled in the transcripts of his victim's statement.



Figure 4. Daniel Heyman, *Disco Mosul* (2006).
 Drypoint, 56 x 68.5 cms. Reproduced with
 permission of the artist.

Heyman's 2010 exhibition *Bearing Witness* continued this theme, but consisted mostly of painted images. Once more the artist confronted his audience with the fact that the prisoners of Abu Ghraib were exposed to similar, if somewhat less methodical forms of the dehumanizing treatment once endured by the prisoners held in Nazi concentration camps. Accordingly, few of the rules of normal life were allowed to apply at the prison, such as the right to expect that the treatment of individual prisoners would be governed by a measure of common decency or the right to influence one's fate through rational behaviour.¹⁶ Their experiences are captured in some of the most shocking narratives imaginable:

I am a Farmer. I was 22 years old at the time of the arrest. In the interrogation I was forced to the ground, my hands tied to my feet behind my back. The interpreter hit me with his fists and kicked me with his army boots. I vomited blood. For 9 days I was not allowed to leave the cell and use the bathroom. Then I was sent to Abu Ghraib in a hood. They told me to undress. I removed all but my underwear. I was taken to the showers and forced to take off my clothes, the hood was put back on and I was walked to a cell naked in front of others with a hood. With the cell doors closed it was hard to breathe, 1 meter by 4 meters and I had no food for three days. The door was opened a crack once an hour. Another detainee said that the third day, a female soldier would want to have sex with me. The 3rd day, a male and female soldier came and he said that she wanted to have sex with me. I refused, Islam does not allow this....¹⁷

As was the case with any number of the other victims, this prisoner's resistance to rape was punished with even worse forms of torture, employing the whole gambit of methods available to the warders, short of actually killing this particular inmate. As described by Heyman's sitters, very few of the interactions with their captors appear to have followed acceptable formats of interrogation aimed at soliciting any factual or reliable information. Instead the narratives are dominated by the experience of systematic degradation and the dehumanisation of ordinary human beings, who were not soldiers or militants, but farmers, doctors and teachers. Heyman emphasises the civilian status of his portraits by retaining an informal air (see figure 5). Drawn freely and at times brightly coloured, they reference few of the stylistic concerns that govern more traditional examples of portraiture.



Figure 5. Daniel Heyman, *I am a Farmer* (2008). Gouache on Nishinoushi paper, 66 x 71 cms. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

However, the accessibility of Heyman's work, intertwining as it does verbal and visual signifiers of his sitters' experiences at Abu Ghraib, does not undermine the seriousness of its purpose. *Bearing Witness* calls to mind the critical debate surrounding visual representations of the Holocaust and in particular Ernst van Alphen's suggestion that, to prevent such an event from recurring, it may be most appropriate for artists "to invoke verbal memories written down by those who were there," thereby allowing viewers to "keep in visual touch with a past no image can represent."¹⁸ Heyman brings together words and image to highlight – and safeguard – the lessons humanity should learn from recent history. In these moments word and image come together.

These works map out a specific purpose for socially engaged art in the 21st century. It can, as Heyman's colleague Robin Wagner has rightfully pointed out, participate in "the restoration of a self-fashioned life as something recognizable and communicable."¹⁹ In her study of the nature of social interactions in Nazi concentration camps, German sociologist Maja Suderland used the term 'territories of the self' to describe each individual's experience of the self-fashioned life within the predetermined limitations of the camp. This is a territory bounded by the complex intersections of historical circumstance, cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs and '*Bildung*.'²⁰ According to Suderland, the territory of the self, which can also be understood to mean one's cultural identity, can only be relinquished in death.²¹ In the case of Heyman's sitters, territories of the self may have been irrevocably altered but, as the re-assertion of their personal identities and belief systems suggests, they have not been conquered.

Behind the moving and disturbing testimony appearing in Heyman's exhibition hides another no less complex and disturbing narrative; one already alluded to in Reed's *Good Grunt*. While the United States (as part of the 'coalition of the willing') invaded Iraq flying the flag of democracy, it failed to prevent a human rights catastrophe. The events at Abu Ghraib, and the photographs which first brought them to world-wide attention, therefore confirm that however much some of us want to believe that humankind is set on a path towards peace "the unimaginable ought to be imagined."²² The media frenzy fuelled by US army specialist Sabrina Harman's album of terror further deepened the humiliation suffered by the prisoners but also furnished part of this century's most powerful iconography of dissent.²³ An example of this is the picture of a detainee referred to as Gilligan, who was posed in a poncho and hood, with electrodes attached to his body.²⁴ As Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris have pointed out:

[the] image of Gilligan achieves its power from the fact that it does not show the human form laid bare and reduced to raw matter but creates instead an original image of inhumanity that admits no self evident reading ... the picture transfixes us because it looks like the truth, but looking at it, we can only imagine what that truth is: torture, execution, a scene staged for the camera? So we seize of the figure of Gilligan as a symbol that stands for all that we know was wrong with Abu Ghraib and all that we cannot – or do not want to – understand about how it came to this.²⁵

By comparison, Gourevitch and Morris describe Harman's many more brutal images of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib:

[They are] repellent, in large part because they have a terrible, reductive sameness. Except from a forensic point of view, they are unambiguous, and have the quality of pornography. They are what they show, nothing more. They communicate no vision, shorn of context, they offer little if anything, to think about, no occasion for wonder. They have no value as symbols.²⁶

Gourevitch and Morris use aesthetic tools to describe their experience of viewing the image of Gilligan but draw a line where their tools no longer function. Perhaps this is also because the image of Gilligan has an iconographic history, it directly links to the Western tradition of image making that takes us right back to Goya's *Disasters of War*. Did Harman know this when she composed the

image? In their analysis of Harman's images, Gourevitch and Morris rely on aesthetic judgments, possibly informed by the frequent appearance of the hooded figure as a symbol of persecution in the tradition of Western art. What they do not examine is the deplorable ineffectiveness of this kind of symbolism. As pointed out by Stephen Eisenman, a clear visual similarity exists between Goya's depiction of a hooded and bound *Victim of the Inquisition* (c1810-14) and Harman's photograph of Gilligan, but the "very purpose of the former was to foreclose the possibility of a future world like that exposed in the latter."²⁷ Eisenman also offers a compelling interpretative framework for Harman's more explicit images, which moves beyond the aesthetic considerations proposed by Gourevitch and Morris. He links the graphic images of torture at Abu Ghraib to the long-standing function of Western art "as a handmaiden to arrogance, power and violence," as seen, for example, in Renaissance frescos commemorating the crusades and the Christian subjugation of Islamic peoples.²⁸ While Harman's pictures were never intended to be seen as works of art, they do belong to a Western pictorial tradition that for centuries has celebrated and vindicated the subordination of a perceived 'Other.'²⁹ The work of socially engaged artists can therefore be described as an alternative to that tradition, designed to insist on the equality of all human beings.

In this context, the use of 'symbolic figures,' such as the haunting image of 'Gilligan,' is not unproblematic. Symbols, as they become detached from their original context, can be used and interpreted in ways that retain little connection to their earlier meanings – a good example of this being the commercial exploitation of Che Guevara's youthful portrait. Perhaps it was an awareness that any viewer "brings with him or her a host of contemporary preoccupations which interact with the rhetorical mandates of what she or he is looking at," which persuaded Heyman to abandon his earlier use of Gilligan's hooded figure and instead develop an approach that allows his sitters some sense of control over future interpretations of their portraits.³⁰ Not only does their testimony remind us of the lessons Abu Ghraib offers to all of us who are alive today and hope to be alive tomorrow, but it also allows the Other, the naked and beaten prisoners of Abu Ghraib, to shed their hoods in order to reclaim their sense of identity and their right to be more than symbols of yet another instance of human cruelty.

As alluded to above, the perpetrators of Abu Ghraib had of course ample opportunity to offer their own narratives, to try to explain what enabled them to victimise others to the degree they did, and many more expert commentators added their broader, contextual observations on the subject.³¹ Indeed, anyone aware of the ongoing construction of the Other in societies across the globe can provide any number of plausible, even compelling reasons why the concept of universal respect of human rights and dignity has remained just that, a concept that too often is discarded at will. This most fundamental threat to peace, the creation of the '*Opfer*' repeats itself everyday, even in societies not directly affected by war.³² Institutionalised violence, poverty, racism, child abuse, domestic violence, and indeed the glorification of all forms of violence in our popular media all contribute to this process.

To remind us that the victims of this process do not necessarily reside safely elsewhere, *Bearing Witness* included the portraits and testimony of two of the seven African American men whom Heyman met at the National Comprehensive Center for Fathers (NCCF), in Philadelphia in 2008 (see figure 6). Through a range of targeted programs and support networks the NCCF aims to help African American males who are alienated from their families (and may have a criminal record) to reconnect with their children and become socially and economically responsible members of their community.

Once again, Heyman depicts his sitters seemingly enmeshed in personal narratives, their words describing their individual experiences of growing up in an urban, racially divided and socially deprived context. But in contrast to the former prisoners of Abu Ghraib, these men appear to be at ease

with the process of portraiture, their gaze engaging the audience far more confidently than their Iraqi counterparts. Their stories are more familiar to Western audiences, and are therefore perhaps less harrowing. They outline in some detail the appalling waste of human potential which blights US society today. The failure of state schools to meet their students' needs, the disintegration of family networks, the impact of drugs, gang warfare and organised crime, and institutional racism, are all cited as contributing factors as the men try to explain why they eventually ended up involved in violent crime, in prison or out on the streets.



Figure 6. Daniel Heyman, *I Was Born in North Philadelphia: Portrait of Eric White* (2008). Gouache on paper, 61 x 76 cms. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

Both men were obviously damaged by notions of the Other that permeate a racially divided society, but their stories also highlight the widespread acceptance of violence in a society which encourages the single-minded pursuit of individual interests and material success.³³ But, as in the images of his Iraqi sitters, Heyman's portraits of his American subjects also contain an element of hope. They picture the possibility of peace insofar as they document the re-humanising processes set in motion by those who do not accept the victimisation of others – be they human rights lawyers, the founders of the NCCFP or even the artist himself. "My work," Heyman writes, "as it continues to develop, is centred on the notion that art can tell stories, and that stories can lead to understanding and understanding to healing."³⁴ No artist can fully control an audience's interpretation of the stories he or she is trying to tell but, as Heyman demonstrates, art can celebrate and support the recuperation of non-violent identities as a first important step towards peace.

The work of Ehren Tool can also be interpreted as an act of 'recuperation,' but in the case of this former US marine and veteran of Desert Storm, it serves to remake the artist's own sense of self. He is not alone in this. Numerous US veterans use art-making as a means to process their experiences and to voice their distress about the human cost of armed violence. Indeed, Tool cites the initiators of 'The Combat Paper Project' as personal heroes.³⁵ Tool himself makes ceramic cups, stamped and imprinted with images of soldiers, weapons and other signifiers of the destructive legacy of war (see figure 7). The vessels also reference the body and the sanctity of human life.³⁶ Once completed the cups are given away and on occasion sent to people in positions of power. Tool's process is simple, and at first glance so is his message. "Nothing," he says, "can release me of the obligation to try and make things better," even if there is ample proof that art alone cannot bring about peace.³⁷ But his cups also point to a sense of personal disorientation: "I have had some difficulty dealing with the gap of what I thought I was doing joining the marines and the outcome. I have lost my ability to point my finger at anyone."³⁸ Based on the realisation that "everyone is someone's kid" Tool's work is therefore not just a reminder of the human cost of war, but is also about the lessons he is trying to learn about the essential humanity of all people and the social mechanisms that teach us how to create and persecute the Other in the first place.³⁹



Figure 7. Ehren Tool, *Untitled (Cups)* (c.2010).
Silkscreen on ceramic, variable dimensions.
Reproduced with permission of the artist.

The kind of healing alluded to by Heyman and Tool, and so vital to the emergence of peace is, of course, constantly exposed to a range of contextual factors which can paralyse the process altogether. Until relatively recently, for example, the incessant violence meted out to Black South Africans by members of pro-apartheid government institutions

inspired much protest art. In the book *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*, artists Holly Metz and Sue Coe document this practice and delineate what was once the biggest threat to peace in South Africa, namely state-sponsored violence, legitimized to shore up the rule of a racist regime.⁴⁰ Post-apartheid South Africa should therefore furnish a rich iconography of peace inspired by the upbeat concept of the Rainbow Nation. Who could forget the enticing publicity for the 2010 Football World Cup, which included people of all ages and colours united by their passion for 'the beautiful game' in a country of near paradisiacal beauty? Beyond this affirmative propaganda hides a very different reality, compellingly summarized for an audience unfamiliar with the political and social landscape of post-apartheid South Africa in Diane Victor's *Disasters of Peace* (begun 2001). In clear reference to Goya's *Disasters of War*, and produced by similar means in a similar format, Victor's exquisitely detailed drypoints tell the story of a very different kind of peace, one marred by the constant and at times hidden abuse of power in all spheres of life in contemporary South Africa. As Elizabeth Rankin has observed, Victor's work was in part triggered by the media's obvious neglect of some of the most awful crimes.⁴¹ She therefore depicts individual instances of violence with purposeful and unforgettable intensity, but also tries to reference entire 'genres' of abuse. As if acting in self-defence, Victor also uses her art to expunge images of the unspeakable from her mind's eye while bearing witness on behalf of those whose fate would otherwise go unnoticed.⁴²

In Sheep's Clothing, for example, introduces the theme of child abuse (see figure 8). Here a large male is burying his face between the legs of small child who has been given the head of a lamb. The use of such darkly humorous symbolism introduces the surreal feel that animates much of Goya's work, but Victor also acknowledges more contemporary aspects of visual culture. In *Graphic* she adopts the format and staccato rhythm of a graphic novel to depict repeating instances of crimes such as murder and car-jacking.



Figure 8. Diane Victor, *The Disaster of Peace: In Sheep's Clothing* (2001-08). Etching and aquatint, 28 x 32 cms. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

Citing the example of Diane Victor's *Disasters of Peace*, Bronwyn Law-Viljoen has recently argued that in the past two decades many South African artists have represented violence, and by implication the failure of post-apartheid society to bring about peace, "not in ideological or political terms, but as an intimate and domestic disruption of life."⁴³ Following the demise of the racist regime, which used violence as a means to support its own political ends, they now "seek to understand violence as endemically *human*."⁴⁴ Victor herself plays down the political dimensions of her work and instead hopes "to make people think slightly."⁴⁵ Like Goya before her she is most interested in "physical and psychological interactions between people and the damages that these interactions invite," as affected in her case by the complex post-colonial context of a nation seemingly at war with itself.⁴⁶ Her work lays bare the rupture between the rhetoric of social harmony and lived experience, where

the abuse of power at any level of society extinguishes peace at every turn. As borne out by the particularly disturbing, and once censored, *Made to Measure* which alludes by way of an imagined x-ray to the rape of a baby girl, men in particular appear to find many instances of the Other to violate in contemporary South Africa.⁴⁷

Against a backdrop of social cross-currents and economic challenges too complex to discuss here, such abuse cannot be explained by way of feminist theory alone. It is, however, important to note that Victor inserts an important female perspective into the context of contemporary, socially engaged art and that, although shocking in content, her work pictures a kind of peace. South Africa, in the eyes of the international community, is not at war. South Africa's peace, however, is one where lives continue to be shattered by ceaseless acts of violence and social divisions are thrown into sharp relief. If Diane Victor wants to make people think a little, then she appears to be pointing to the fact that peace begins at home, in the everyday interactions of people with each other. That said, if we take into consideration the anthropological point of view that "without culture we would hardly know what to feel," the evidence would suggest that, in a multi-cultural, post-apartheid, post-colonial society, feelings about how to interact with each other (and the place of violence within these interactions) respond to clearly conflicting sets of values.⁴⁸ When combined with the assumption that a propensity to violence is a genetically encoded 'natural' aspect of the human species, then Victor's *Disasters of Peace* serves as a compelling reminder that the journey towards peace *for all* in contemporary South Africa will be a long and difficult undertaking. Even so, in her more recent work, a reference to hope, the driving force behind any peace initiative, has appeared in the shape of powerful horses. As "symbols of potency and spirituality"⁴⁹ they suggest the kind of human agency that may yet bring about positive change, or the kind of personal healing described by Heyman.

If artists today set themselves the task to picture peace, beyond the tired symbolism of the dove, the rainbow or the olive branch, or images of children of all colours happily and safely at play, where would they start? In the first instance, 'peace' is a concept that defies any definitive visual representation. Like 'justice,' 'truth' or 'art,' the term 'peace' suggests a single entity, yet "represents a multitude of particulars, that, in exhibiting seemingly endless diversity, display anything but categorically neat uniformity."⁵⁰ Similarly, all actions that threaten peace cannot ever be referenced in their totality by a single sign. All artists can do is address a multitude of particulars. Experience tells them (and us) that peace, or all manifestations of peace, in each age is threatened by new sets of political, social and economic circumstances.⁵¹ On the global stage, it seems too much needs to change before any encompassing form of peace can break out, and there appears little reason to believe that the broad instruments of civilisation, such as education, the law or the church can protect us from future atrocities. If instead peace begins at home, it is important that artists encourage us to remain vigilant. Not only do these artists picture specific, historical instances of violence (or violations of peace) but they also reference those more constant features of the human condition which give rise to them, namely the breakdown of compassion and empathy at both individual and institutional level. Goya and his heirs remind us that each new generation needs to stay alert to those kinds of human interactions that threaten peace everywhere, in particular our tendency to dismiss, dominate and demonise the Other.

- 1 W.H. Auden, *Letters from Iceland*, letter to Lord Byron, pt.3. stanza 20, in *The English Auden: Poems, Essays, Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Edward Mendelsohn, (London: Faber and Faber, 1977).
- 2 Ralph E. Shikes, *The Indignant Eye: The Artist as Social Critic in Prints and Drawings from the 15th Century to Picasso* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
- 3 Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillipe Bourgeois, eds., *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 226.
- 4 Scheper-Hughes and Bourgeois, *Violence in War and Peace*, 225.
- 5 The term 'Other' is here not used in its wider, phenomenological sense. Instead, I reference Simone De Beauvoir's interpretation and especially her assertion that "otherness is a fundamental category of human thought." See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: David Campbell, 1993), 7ff.
- 6 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), viii. Also of interest in this context is Mark Davis and Keith Tester, *Bauman's Challenge: Sociological Issues for the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).
- 7 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, xii. For detailed discussion of the visual image in relation to the Holocaust see Ernst van Alphen, "Caught by Images: Visual Imprints in Holocaust Testimonies," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2003), 8.
- 8 Van Alphen, "Caught by Images," 112.
- 9 Craig Calhoun et al., *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 431.
- 10 Karsten Dümmel et al, *Was war die Stasi?* (St. Augustin and Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2009).
- 11 Michele Faguet, "Thomas Kilpper: Former GDR Ministry For State Security/Neuer Berliner Kunstverein," *ArtForum* 2009, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_2_48/ai_n55430905/ accessed 19 January 2011.
- 12 Violaine Roussel and Bleuwenn Lechaux, *Voicing Dissent: American Artists and the War on Iraq* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.
- 13 Dümmel et al, *Was war die Stasi?*, 56. See Roussel and Lechaux, *Voicing Dissent*. The authors stress "that creating 'political art' tends to be less and less legitimate and 'doable' following the criteria and hierarchies of the art worlds themselves." Roussel and Lechaux, *Voicing Dissent*, 19.
- 14 Reed sourced this chant, as recalled by Navy vet Charles Anderson, from Clare Hurley, "'The Ground Truth': The Cruel Fate of Iraq War Veterans," <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2006/oct2006/grou-o25.shtml> accessed 18 January 2011.
- 15 Elizabeth Rankin, "Signs of Subversion: Printmaking and Politics," paper presented at Impact 6 Print Conference, Bristol, 16-19 September 2009.
- 16 For an extensive discussion of the treatment of prisoners in NS concentration camps, see Maja Suderland, *Territorien des Selbst* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004).
- 17 Daniel Heyman, "I am Farmer," 2008, in *Bearing Witness-Recent Works*, 4 March – 9 April 2010, List Gallery, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Philadelphia. The work quotes the statements given by Taha, 26 August 2008, as recorded in Istanbul.
- 18 Van Alphen, "Caught by Images," 112.
- 19 Robin Wagner, "The Subject's Bearing: Recuperation of Dignity in Daniel Heyman's Portraits," *Bearing Witness-Written Examinations* (2010), published in conjunction with Daniel Heyman, *Bearing Witness-Recent Works*, List Gallery, Swarthmore, Philadelphia.
- 20 'Bildung' is a term which relates to a person's educational achievement, but also to their social status as connected to the extent of their learning.
- 21 Suderland, *Territorien des Selbst*. Suderland investigates how individual notions of cultural identity allowed the inmates of Nazi concentration camps to resist the various processes designed to strip them of their essential humanity, thereby turning them into non-humans or a form of 'vermin' to be exterminated at will.
- 22 Calhoun et al, *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 429. In this context, it is interesting to consider the research currently undertaken by Dr. Omar McDoom, who is investigating the social and political circumstances that led to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. See Chris Arnot, "What Caused the Genocide in Rwanda?" *The Guardian Weekly*, 21 January 2011, 46.
- 23 Elizabeth Rankin, "Mediating the Media: The Graphic Art of Daniel Heyman and Diane Victor." Paper presented at the AAANZ annual conference, Canberra, November 26-28, 2009.
- 24 For an example of the use of this photograph see Milton Glaser and Mirko Ilić, *The Design or Dissent* (Gloucester, Mass.: Rockport, 2006), 66. Heyman used the image in the installation *Clean up America* (2007), which incorporated several figures of Gilligan cast in soap.
- 25 Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, "Exposure. The Woman Behind the Camera at Abu Ghraib," *The New Yorker*, 24 March 2008, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/03/24/080324fa_fact_gourevitch accessed 18 January 2011.
For further analysis of photographs taken at Abu Ghraib, see Stephen S. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, (London: Reaktion, 2007).
- 26 Gourevitch and Morris, "Exposure."
- 27 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, 13.
- 28 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, 122.
- 29 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, 9.
- 30 Michael Ann Holly, "Reciprocity and Reception Theory," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde, 455.

- 31 See, for example, Seymour M Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); Bruce Tucker and Sia Triantafyllos, "Lyndie England, Abu Ghraib, and the New Imperialism," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 38, no.1 (2008): 83-100.
- 32 'Opfer' (meaning victim, most often in the sacrificial sense) is the term used by German schoolyard bullies for the targets of their abuse.
- 33 Their fate is symptomatic of the ethical dilemma which undermines peace in most modern societies, and which was summarized by Jean-Paul Sartre as follows: "All violence presents itself as the recuperation of a right and, reciprocally, every right contains within itself the embryo of violence." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 177. Quoted in Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, "The Intimate Violence of Diane Victor's 'Disasters of Peace'," *Critical Arts*, 24 (2010): 423.
- 34 Daniel Heyman, "Foreward [sic]," *Bearing Witness-Written Examinations* (2010), published in conjunction with Daniel Heyman, *Bearing Witness-Recent Works*, List Gallery, Swarthmore, Philadelphia.
- 35 "The Combat Paper Project," <http://www.combatpaper.org/>
- 36 For a discussion of Tool's working process and ideas see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1mRbpyogRA>
- 37 Ehren Tool, email message to the author, 3 February 2011.
- 38 Ehren Tool, email message to the author, 3 February 2011.
- 39 Ehren Tool, email message to the author, 3 February 2011.
- 40 Sue Coe and Holly Metz, *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* (London: Random House, 1984).
- 41 Elizabeth Rankin, "Mediating the Media."
- 42 Sean O'Toole, "Diane Victor," *Artthrob*, 66 (2003), <http://www.artthrob.co.za/O3feb/artbio.html> accessed 18 January 2011.
- 43 Law-Viljoen, "The Intimate Violence of Diane Victor's 'Disasters of Peace'," 418.
- 44 Law-Viljoen, "The Intimate Violence of Diane Victor's 'Disasters of Peace'," 419.
- 45 Sean O'Toole, "Diane Victor."
- 46 Sean O'Toole, "Diane Victor."
- 47 Elizabeth Rankin, "Mediating the Media." *Made to Measure* was shown as part of the *Disasters of Peace* series at the Centre of Human Rights at the University of Pretoria's Law Faculty. It created such an outcry that the work had to be removed, even though (as Rankin observed) one would expect lawyers to be inured to the abuses they are dealing with on a daily basis. Rankin cites South African statistics, which show that 40% of rape victims are under eighteen, and 20% are under eleven, including infants.
- 48 Scheper-Hughes and Bourgeois, *Violence in War and Peace*, 15.
- 49 Goodman Gallery, "Diane Victor/ Transcend," <http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/135> accessed 18 January 2011.
- 50 Paul Crowther, "Against Curatorial Imperialism," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde, 503.
- 51 Tony Addison and Tilman Brück, *Making Peace Work: The Challenges of Social and Economic Reconstruction* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009). Although optimistically titled, this United Nations publication offers little evidence that peace on a global scale can be made to work, and adds climate change and long overdue trade reforms as further challenges to ongoing projects of social and economic reconstruction.