

Contact: Brooke Daniels
617-369-3605
bdaniels@smfa.edu



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The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Presents
“Permanent War: The Age of Global Conflict” January 29–March 7, 2015

Guest curator Pamela Allara brings together international artists to examine the current state of perpetual war and some of its historical antecedents

Boston, MA (December 11, 2014)—In the century since World War I, coined "The war to end all wars," battles have raged around the globe. Recently, the nature of warfare has dramatically changed and wars no longer begin with formal declarations or end with peace treaties. Instead, violence spreads underground, with terror surfacing in ever-changing locations; drone warfare merges politics with computer games; news from far-off battlefronts is devastatingly immediate. The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's (SMFA) spring exhibition, "**Permanent War: The Age of Global Conflict**," tackles this difficult subject of modern warfare with guest curator Pamela Allara. On view in SMFA's Barbara and Steven Grossman Gallery and Mrs. E. Ross Anderson Auditorium January 29–March 7, 2015, the exhibition brings together 16 artists who explore how the lives of military and private citizens are surveyed, manipulated, controlled, and threatened in an era of perpetual warfare.

"The many commemorations in Europe of the centenary of World War I inspired me to propose a war-themed exhibition to Joanna Soltan, SMFA Curator," says Allara. "Although the nature of war is rapidly changing, its death and destruction remain. The artists included in the exhibition examine our state of constant war with insight, courage, and not infrequently, ironic humor."

The artworks have been organized into five themes, including an introductory work by SMFA faculty **Paul Stopforth**, whose drawing "Empire Building" (2003) is based on stone forts built by the British during the Anglo Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902)—a metaphor for 'empire builders' throughout history who chose occupation and militarization over engagement and negotiation.

Mechanized Bodies features a lookbook of **Adam Harvey's** photographs of his *Anti-Drone Wear* (2013) clothing which includes *hijabs* and *burquas* designed to hide the wearer from heat detecting technologies; South African artist **Paul Emmanuel's** film *3SAI: A Rite of Passage* (2008), which explores the construction of masculinity through the head-shaving ritual of young military recruits; SMFA faculty **Ken Hruby's** installation *Short Arm Inspection* (1993), which plays off the military slang referring to the medical inspection of male soldiers' genitalia; and **Trevor Paglen's** video *Drone Vision* (2010), which explores military symbology and government secrecy, blurring the lines between science, contemporary art, and journalism.

Combat as Performance includes SMFA faculty **Claire Beckett's** photographic series *Simulating Iraq* (2010), which explores the constructed Iraqi and Afghani 'villages' in desert of Fort Wayne, CA designed to prepare U.S. soldiers for guerilla-style insurgency combat; **Lamia Joreige's** three-channel video installation *Replay* (2000), which stages photographic fragments to reflect on individual memories and the collective history of the Lebanese civil wars (1975–90) and the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah; and **Coco Fusco's** single-channel video *Operation Atropos* (2006), which chronicles Fusco's participation with six other women in an immersive workshop led by former U.S. military interrogators designed for people in the private sector to learn techniques for extracting information.

Living in a War Zone brings together **Jamal Penjweny's** video *Another World* (2013)—exhibited in the Iraqi Pavilion of the 2013 Venice Biennale—which documents the clandestine activities of Iraqi men forced to smuggle liquor and arms in order to earn a living and photographs from SMFA faculty **Bill Burke** that chronicle his trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, in search of members of the Khmer Rouge.

Conflict as Media Entertainment features photographs from **Mark Tribe's** project *Rare Earth* (2012), which explores landscapes in combat video games as a symbolic setting for paramilitary fantasy; **Harun Farocki's** video installation *Serious Games II: Three Dead* (2010), which delves into topics of technology, politics, and coercion, revealing increasingly complex relationships between people and machines, vision and violence; and **Richard Mosse's** *Killcam* (2008), which intercuts footage of hospitalized Iraqi war veterans entertaining themselves with war-themed video games with leaked footage of bombing missions in Iraq, merging trauma with play, reality with *simulacra*.

The final theme, Landscape as Cemetery, includes visual artist **Sig Bang Schmidt** and poet **Steve Dalachinsky's** collaborative project *The Great War (WWI)* (2002–14) in which Schmidt digitally painted a group of black and white WWI photographs and Dalachinsky responded with accompanying poems reminding us that war is above all, about destruction; a selection of SMFA alumnus **Matthew Arnold's** photographs from the *Topography as Fate: North Africa Battlefields of World War II* series (2014), which documents forgotten battlefields that still bear evidence of the violent action that raged there; and SMFA faculty **Bonnie Donohue's** photographs of abandoned military storage bunkers from "Vieques: A Long Way Home" (2006) and "Reclaiming Vieques: Memory and Imagination (Vieques, Puerto Rico)" (2014), exhibitions which examines cultural, economic and health consequences of the U.S. Navy's sixty-year occupation of Vieques, Puerto Rico as a military base and bombing range.

"Permanent War: The Age of Global Conflict"

January 29–March 7, 2015

Mrs. E. Ross Anderson Auditorium + Barbara and Steven Grossman Gallery

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

230 The Fenway, Boston MA 02115

<http://www.smfa.edu/permanent-war>

Exhibition hours: Monday–Saturday, 10 am–5 pm; Thursday, 10 am–8 pm; closed Sundays and holidays.
Admission to the exhibition and related events is free.

Related Events

January 29, 5–7 pm: Opening reception

February 2, 12:30 pm: Artist talks with SMFA faculty Bill Burke and Bonnie Donohue

February 12, 6:30 pm: Curatorial presentation and tour with guest curator Pamela Allara

February 19, 6:30 pm: Reading by poet Steve Dalachinsky

February 23, 12:30 pm: Artist talks with SMFA faculty Claire Beckett and Ken Hruby

About the Curator

Pamela Allara is an art historian, curator, and critic. The author of a monograph on Alice Neel, Allara taught modern and contemporary art for many years at Tufts University and Brandeis University. Her recent research has investigated social activism in contemporary South African art. In 2012, she organized "The Boston-Joburg Connection: Collaboration and Exchange at Artist Proof Studio, 1983-2012" for the Tufts University Art Gallery. Her articles have been published in *African Arts*, *Nka and de Arte*, among others. She is currently a Visiting Researcher in the African Studies Center at Boston University.

About the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:

Founded in 1876 and accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA), is one of only two art schools in the country affiliated with a major museum—the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Our mission is to provide an education in the fine arts—for undergraduate and graduate artists—that is interdisciplinary and self-directed. This education values cultural, artistic and intellectual diversity; it embraces a wide range of media; it stresses the development of individual vision and its relation to culture in general; it values equally the knowledge gained by thinking and doing; it is deeply engaged with the world as a whole. While the School's mission is constant, its practice is always transforming. For more information about our programs and partnerships, visit www.smfa.edu.